



# Links Players

## Advent Fridays, 2023 - Hope

*For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope. (Romans 15:4, ESV)*

Have you ever given up in the middle of a round? On the other hand, have you ever experienced early miscues and then recovered?

Early blunders create a watershed moment; we either fold like a paper napkin or find the resolve to endure an early “quad” to secure a positive outcome by the time we walk off the eighteenth.

Ever hopeful, you believe four or five birdies will get you back into the fight. Standing on the second tee box, you envision better moments waiting to greet you.

Refusing to give up, you search the archives of past experiences and find it: Eureka!—the one move you needed to find good form, and you are off to the races. The past gave you strength in the present in anticipation of a positive future.

One of the more important things to note about developing a robust biblical hope is our need to look to the past. That might sound contradictory since hope, by definition, is a certain state of affairs we anticipate in the future. How does this work?

As Paul writes to the church in Rome, he closes his letter by reminding them that what was written in former days (i.e., Old Testament) was written for their present encouragement so that “...we might have hope.” Did you get that?

Paul brings together the past, present, and future by tying them to the person and work of Christ the Lord. How does he do it? Paul reminds us that we are to look back to those moments when God kept his promises in the past to gain strength in the present, being assured he will keep his future promises.

The First Sunday of Advent celebrates the gift of HOPE! We enrich our lives by remembering the first advent—Christ Jesus appeared two thousand years ago in fulfillment of Old Testament promises.

As we look to the past and his first arrival to “...put away sin by the

sacrifice of himself”(Hebrews 9:26), we simultaneously celebrate with inexpressible expectation his second appearance when “...the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever. (Revelation 11:15).

As C. S. Lewis reminds us, “...the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, and the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven.”

As we approach the first Sunday of Advent, 2023, let’s stir our souls by remembering the past as it inspires us with unwavering confidence about the future.

**Prayer: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, you are the same yesterday, today, and forever.**

**READING** - Romans 15:4; Romans 8:18-24; Romans 5:1-5.

1. Discuss the round(s) where you had an awful start but recovered and shot a low score. This should be a fun exercise!

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2. In today’s suggested reading, Paul has more than a few things to say about “hope.” Ponder, list, and discuss the various aspects of hope.

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3. Application: How might recalling the past actions of God in Scripture (and in your life experiences) inform your present circumstances and future expectations? Encourage one another in this!

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