

ADVENT REFLECTION | *Snowstorm Hope/Silence*

Imagine it's snowing and you're driving on a country road. The snow is coming down pretty heavily and it's making it hard to see where you're driving. Because you decided to take the back roads you're heading down a country road in the middle of nowhere when all of a sudden, you hit a patch of ice sending you spinning off the road.

You get out to assess the damage. You try to see if there's anyone around, but the snow makes it hard to see farther than a couple meters. You grab a shovel from your trunk and try to clear some of the snow surrounding the tires but your hands quickly grow numb. A chilly realization sets in as you take in your surroundings. There's no cell reception. Gas is running low, so you can't keep your heater on for much longer. For some reason, your phone map brought you a different route and you have no idea where you even are. It's getting colder and darker and the snow is piling up around your car by the minute. Things *seem* bad.

Except – Could it be? – there's one bar of service! You quickly call for a tow truck. The service is spotty but you breathe a huge sigh of relief as the operator on the other end confirms your location and estimates a mere 20 minutes till a tow shows up. You hang up the phone and can't believe your luck. You look around. It's funny, but your surroundings seem... different.

As you lean against the hood of your car, the snow that once felt ominous and foreboding now seems nostalgic and comforting. You look up past the giant flakes into the dark grey sky overhead and realize how peaceful it really is out here. You take a deep breath of the refreshing crisp air and drink in the beauty around you, knowing help is on the way.

Isn't it amazing how context changes our perception? Knowing how things will end, can allow us to totally see things differently in the present.

There's a poem we find in the book of Psalms that says: "God is a safe place to hide, ready to help when we need him. We stand fearless at the cliff-edge of doom, courageous in seastorm (or even snowstorm!) and earthquake." Later on, in the same poem, it says: "Step out of the traffic! Take a long loving look at me, your High God... above everything!" As some other translations encourage: "Be still! And know that I am God."

In the traditional church calendar, today is the beginning of Advent – the four Sundays that lead up to Christmas – and the Advent theme for today is "hope." At Christmas, we don't just look back and remember a one-time event. We actively practice hope in the fact that when Jesus came, lived, died, and was resurrected, that it changed everything for rest of time! God's kingdom is here already and continues to unfold all around us. The tow truck is on its way.

So where do you need to experience hope in your life today? What feels like a lost cause? Where have you given up? Where do you need a fresh injection of courage in the middle of a

storm? Where do you need reminded that God is in control, that the kingdom is at hand and that the tow truck has been called?

Over the next few moments, I want to invite us to bring that before Jesus. We're going to practice this together. Not fighting. Not running. Not panicking. But keeping still before God knowing the end is already written. Knowing that as we practice resting in Jesus, we are simultaneously boldly declaring our hope in Jesus.

We're going to spend the next few moments in quiet stillness. For some of us, this will be a challenge, and for others, a welcome break from noise. But for all of us, let's spend the next few minutes keeping still as we rest in the Hope that Jesus offers to us.

*Hallelujah, praise the One who sets me free
Hallelujah, death has lost it's grip on me
You have broken every Chain
There's salvation in your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope.*