

Advent Week #1

Hope in a Time of Conflict

The 1st century Church spread the hope of the Gospel in a Roman Empire facing a variety of conflicts, including spiritual, political, and racial. Mark's Gospel reveals the source of this hope...

1 - Hope Rising - *What is hope? Christian hope goes beyond just "wishing something good to happen". Read Hebrews 11:1 and Romans 8:18-25 and consider how Christian hope is different than worldly hope?*

2 - Watch the Video for Advent Week #1 with Pastor Scott

3 - Read & Discuss how Mark's Gospel gives us hope -

- **Hope in an Emperor?** - The "Pax Romana" (Roman Peace) was a period of time that began with the reign of Caesar Augustus during the time of Jesus' birth. The "Priene Inscription" was distributed around the Roman world to declare the "good news" of Augustus' rule. A coin was also minted celebrating Augustus as a "son of a god" who would bring hope to all his subjects. By the time of the writing of Mark's Gospel, this hope had fallen short! Here's how Mark introduces Jesus' reign:
 - **Note the images and descriptions in the box at right...**
 - **Read Mark 1:1** - *Although Mark does not include an account of Jesus' birth, how does his introductory statement counter the claims of Augustus' birth and reign?*
 - **Read 1 Peter 5:13** - *Mark records the Apostle Peter's account of Jesus' ministry. This verse is insightful in how the Roman Empire was viewed by early Christians. What label does Peter use for Roman rule? How do Peter and Mark warn believers in Jesus about putting hope in earthly governments and powers? How does this message still hold true for us today?*
 - **Read Mark 15:39** - *This verse appears only in Mark's Gospel, written to encourage believers living in Ancient Rome. Why would this scene be important to them? How do the words of the Centurion counter Roman beliefs about Caesar Augustus?*
 - *How does Mark present Jesus as the source of hope in a time of spiritual, political, and racial conflict? How can we present Jesus as a source of hope in our world?*
- **Pray for each other - how do this week's readings inspire you to think, pray, and live with deeper faith and hope?**



The "Priene Calendar Inscription"

Refers to Caesar Augustus as a "Prince of Peace", and states that "the birthday of the divine Augustus was the beginning of the good tidings (gospel) for the world that came by reason of him," portraying his birth as a source of peace and prosperity for the Ancient world.



Denarius Coin of Caesar Augustus

The front shows the 1st Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, son of Julius Caesar. The back shows a comet (or star) that appeared after Julius Caesar's assassination, with the inscription Divus Iulius - "Divine Julius", indicating that Augustus was considered a "son of a god".



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