



# Fantasy as Faith: Imagining the Dream Again

Advent 2025 – Week 1: HOPE

**Series:** Heavenly Elements: An Advent Journey with Earth, Wind & Fire

**Element:** Wind | **Sermonic Hymn:** Fantasy by Earth, Wind & Fire

**Scripture:** Isaiah 2:1–5, Isaiah 40:31

# What Is Advent?

**Advent** is the sacred season of *expectation and preparation* leading to Christmas. The word "Advent" means *arrival or coming*. It's a time to reflect on the coming of Christ in the past, present, and future, a season where we open our hearts to the movement of God's Spirit in our lives and communities.

During these four weeks, we journey together toward the manger, preparing our hearts to receive the Christ child anew. This is not merely a countdown to December 25th, but a spiritual discipline of watching, waiting, and awakening to God's presence.

## Hope

Sacred imagination

## Peace

Wholeness and calm

## Joy

Deep-rooted gladness

## Love

God's embodied presence

This year, we journey with God through celebration, wholeness, and divine imagination, discovering how the Spirit moves through rhythm, creation, and sacred sound.

# Why Earth, Wind & Fire?

## Black Spiritual Genius

Earth, Wind & Fire expressed *Black spiritual genius* through groove, lyrics, rhythm, and light. Their music became a soundtrack for liberation, celebration, and transcendence. They reminded us that *joy is sacred*, groove is theology, and music is ministry. In their harmonies, we hear the echo of our ancestors' praise.

## Elements of Creation

Their name reflects the *elements of creation*, echoing Genesis 1: Earth (the formless ground), Wind (the hovering Spirit), Fire (God's transforming presence). These aren't just poetic metaphors, they're the building blocks of God's creative work. In naming themselves after these elements, they claimed their role as co-creators with the Divine.

## Advent Soundtrack

Their lyrics echo the themes of Advent in ways that move our feet and stir our souls. *Hope*: "Keep Your Head to the Sky." *Peace*: "Devotion." *Joy*: "September." *Love*: "Sing a Song." This isn't just nostalgic music, it's sacred rhythm with prophetic vision, inviting us to dream God's dream alongside the beat.

# Opening Scripture

## Isaiah 40:31 (NRSVUE)

"But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

This ancient promise speaks directly to our modern weariness. To wait for the Lord is not passive resignation, it is active expectation. It is standing on tiptoe, scanning the horizon, trusting that what God has promised will come to pass. The Hebrew word for "wait" here carries the meaning of hope mixed with confident expectation, like a rope twisted together from many strands, each thread representing our faith, our patience, our trust.

Let's explore together what it means to hope again, to spread our wings when the world has clipped them, to run toward God's vision when our legs feel heavy with disappointment.

# Isaiah 2:1–5 – God's Fantasy

## The Mountain Lifted High

In days to come, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, a place where heaven touches earth and justice flows like water.

## Weapons Become Tools

They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. The instruments of death are transformed into tools of life and cultivation.

**Isaiah 2 is God's fantasy**, a vision of restoration and divine justice that seemed impossible in Isaiah's time and still seems far-fetched in ours. But Advent hope is not nostalgia for what was. It's dreaming *forward* with God, imagining a future so radical it can only come from the Divine imagination. This is the blueprint heaven has for earth.

## Nations Stream to Wisdom

Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, that he may teach us his ways." The nations seek not conquest but divine instruction.

## Peace Embraced

Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. War is not just ended but forgotten, its very techniques unlearned.

# Element Focus: Wind



## Presence

The breath of God



## Movement

Stirring and shifting



## Imagination

Divine creativity

In Genesis 1:2, *the Wind* (in Hebrew, *ruach*, meaning both wind and spirit) hovers over the chaos before creation begins. This divine breath moved over the formless void, pregnant with possibility. The same word describes the Spirit that gives life to Adam, the power that parts the Red Sea, the force that speaks through the prophets.

In Isaiah 40, the same Spirit strengthens the weary, renews the exhausted, lifts up those whose wings have been clipped by disappointment and oppression.

**Wind equals Presence. Wind equals Movement. Wind equals Divine Imagination.**

This week, we ask: Can you feel the Wind moving again in your life?

# Hymn Reflection: "Fantasy" by EWF

*"Every man has a place, in his heart there's a space, and the world can't erase his fantasies..."*

This song is not just escapism or wishful thinking. It's **sacred imagination**, a theological statement wrapped in funk and soul. When Maurice White and his brothers crafted these lyrics, they were doing more than making music for the dance floor, they were creating a soundtrack for survival and transcendence.

## Dreams Beyond Trauma

It invites us to dream beyond our trauma, past our pain, through the barriers that systemic oppression has placed in our path. The fantasy isn't denial, it's defiance against any force that would limit our God-given imagination.

## Soul and Spirituality

It blends soul music and spirituality in ways that honor both the Saturday night and Sunday morning of Black experience, refusing to separate the sacred from the celebratory.

## Isaiah's Call

It mirrors Isaiah's call to hope, the prophet's insistence that we can envision a future different from our present, that God's dream for us is bigger than our current reality.

**Fantasy is the soundtrack of hope.** When we allow ourselves to imagine God's preferred future, we participate in the creative work of bringing heaven to earth.

# Theological Insight

## Fantasy ≠ Foolishness

Too often, we've been told to "be realistic," to lower our expectations, to accept things as they are. But God calls us to something higher, something bolder. Biblical faith has always required imagination, the ability to see what is not yet as if it already is.



### Isaiah 2: The Vision

God paints the picture of what could be, swords into plowshares, nations learning war no more.



### Isaiah 40: The Strength

God provides the power to chase the vision, wings like eagles, running without weariness.



### Advent: The Gap

We live in the space between promise and fulfillment, holding both the dream and the discipline.

### Fantasy = Faith in Action + Imagination + Endurance

*God gives us the fantasy and the fuel. Hope is both blueprint and power source.* The vision without strength leads to despair. Strength without vision leads to aimless wandering. But when we combine Isaiah's dream with Isaiah's endurance, we become participants in God's redemptive work. We become the ones who believe impossible things before breakfast, who see mountains moved before they budge, who call those things that are not as though they were.

# Discussion Questions



Use these for journaling or group dialogue. Take your time with each question. Let them sit in your spirit. Don't rush to easy answers, sometimes the questions themselves are the gift.

## Your Fantasy

What is your fantasy? What are you hoping for? What vision has God planted in your heart that seems too big, too bold, too beautiful to speak aloud? Name it. Write it down. Give it breath.

## Stopped Dreaming

Where have you stopped dreaming? What disappointment, what betrayal, what systemic barrier convinced you to lower your expectations? When did you decide that hoping was too risky?

## Wind's Movement

Where do you need the Wind of God to move in your life? What area feels stuck, stagnant, or lifeless? Where do you need divine breath to hover over your chaos and speak creation?

# Community Reflection

## Reflection Prompt

*"Dreams require fuel. Hope demands action."*

It's one thing to have a vision. It's another thing entirely to take the first step toward it. Hope without action is just wishing. Faith without works is dead. The fantasy God gives us requires our partnership, our courage, our willingness to move even when the path isn't clear.

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### What step are you taking?

What concrete step are you taking toward the vision God placed in you? Not someday. Not when circumstances change. What step today? This week? What small act of obedience moves you closer to your Isaiah 2 moment?

Take a moment in your small group or in your personal reflection to share honestly. Create space for truth-telling. Sometimes naming what holds us back is the first step toward freedom. Remember, the same Wind that hovered over chaos wants to breathe new life into your stuck places.

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### What needs surrender?

What idol, distraction, or weight needs to be surrendered so you can move? What are you holding onto that's preventing you from soaring? What comfortable compromise is keeping you earthbound when God has called you to mount up with wings?

# Group Prayer / Call & Response Litany

Join together in this responsive reading. Let the rhythm of call and response remind you that you're not alone in this journey. Our hope is communal, our strength is shared, our fantasy is collective.

**Leader:** When the world tells us to settle...

**People:** We dream anyway.

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**Leader:** When Babylon wears us down...

**People:** We wait on the Lord.

**Leader:** When the future feels far...

**People:** We remember the Fantasy.

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**Leader:** When our strength runs low...

**People:** The Wind renews us.

**Leader:** When hope seems foolish...

**People:** We choose faith anyway.

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**All Together:** We soar. We run. We walk. Because our hope is in the Lord. Amen and amen.

# Listening Assignment

## Spiritual Practice This Week

Music is ministry. Sound is sacrament. This week, we're inviting you into a practice that honors both the spiritual and the soulful dimensions of our faith journey.

- **Listen Intentionally**

Listen to *Fantasy* by Earth, Wind & Fire at least once while praying, journaling, or walking. Don't just hear it, receive it. Let the rhythm become your prayer, let the melody lift your spirit.

- **Meditate on the Lyrics**

Focus particularly on this lyric: *"You will find other kind that has been in search of you..."* What community is searching for you? What purpose has been seeking you out? What divine appointment are you about to encounter?

- **Ask God**

*"What is the dream you're birthing in me?"* Sit with this question. Journal your response. Don't censor yourself. Let God speak through the music, through the silence, through the stirring in your spirit.

## Memory Verse

# Isaiah 40:31

**"But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength..."**

— Isaiah 40:31 (NRSVUE)

This week's challenge is simple but profound: Say this verse aloud each morning. Let it shape your breathing and your imagination. Speak it before you check your phone. Declare it before you face the day's demands.

When you say "wait for the Lord," breathe deeply. When you say "renew their strength," feel your shoulders straighten. When you say "mount up with wings," lift your arms. When you say "run and not be weary," feel your feet ready to move. When you say "walk and not faint," ground yourself in God's sustaining power.

Words have power. Scripture spoken becomes Scripture embodied. Let this ancient promise become your modern reality. Let Isaiah's vision become your daily confession. Let God's fantasy for your life take root in the soil of repeated declaration.

# Weekly Challenge

## This Week's Challenge

Faith requires action. Hope demands expression. Dreams need documentation. This week, we're inviting you into four concrete practices that will move your fantasy from thought to reality.

### Write Your Fantasy

Write down your "chapter 2" fantasy, your Isaiah 2 vision for your life. Be specific. Be bold. Don't edit for feasibility, write what God is whispering to your spirit. What does peace look like in your family? What does justice look like in your community? What does wholeness look like in your life?

### Identify the Blockage

Identify what's blocking your hope. Name the fear, the disappointment, the cynicism, the exhaustion. What voice tells you to stop dreaming? What experience convinced you that hoping is dangerous? Write it down. Bring it into the light.

### Commit to Action

Commit to *one act* of faith toward your fantasy. Not ten acts. Not a complete transformation. Just one step. One phone call. One conversation. One application. One prayer. One surrender. What is the next faithful step?

### Let the Wind Move

Let the Wind move again. Stop trying to control every outcome. Stop demanding to see the whole path before you take the first step. Open your hands. Open your heart. Open your imagination. Invite the Spirit to hover over your chaos and speak creation. Say yes to divine movement, even when you don't understand the direction.

Remember, beloved, you are not alone in this work. The same God who gave Isaiah the vision gives you the strength to pursue it. The same Wind that moved over Genesis chaos wants to breathe life into your dreams. Mount up. Run forward. Walk steadily. Your hope is not in vain.