

Pushing Back the Darkness

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[0 : 00] going to have a call to worship and we're going to share this together. At our last Kirk session we were speaking about the struggles that we have when we're in person with not being able to sing and it feels more passive than we would like. So we're going to introduce some elements where we can participate together so we can speak truth to one another. So our call to worship comes from Psalm 89. I'll read the part marked leader and then we can all read the part marked all if you feel comfortable to do so. So Psalm 89 from the beginning. I will sing of the Lord's great love forever. With my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.

I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself. You said I have made a covenant with my chosen to David my servant. I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations. And now we will sing in our hearts here and you can sing your heart out at home from Psalm 96. We're going to hear the first 10 verses.

O sing a new song to the Lord, sing praises to his name. And his salvation day by day, let all the earth proclaim.

His glory and his mighty deeds to every land declare. How great and awesome is the Lord, with him no gods compare.

The Lord made heaven's high. All power and majesty are his, he dwells in glorious light. All nations to the Lord ascribe, the glory that is due. Glory and strength ascribe to God and praise his name on you.

[2 : 57] Enter his courts with joy and bring an offering with you.

Worship the Lord in holy fear. All earth before him bow. Tell every land the Lord is king. Established is the earth.

And cannot move. The Lord will judge the peoples in his truth.

Now let's stand together for our time of prayer. Let's pray. Lord, your word calls us to praise you.

To ascribe to your name the glory that is due. We thank you for all that we've been able to hear and read of your glory, which is matchless.

[4 : 19] There is no other God who compares with you. We thank you for all that. We thank you for your covenant promise to King David, that you would send a king who would rule forever.

We thank you for that promise that you are a God who brings salvation, that you act in faithfulness to your word in order to save a people for yourself.

And Lord, we thank you as we come to Advent that we see all these great realities and truths and promises being fulfilled in the sending of your son Jesus to become one of us, to be a God made flesh and to dwell among us so that we might see your glory, the glory as of the one and only full of grace and truth.

We thank you that Jesus came to live among us in order to live that perfect life of obedience that we could never live and to die as a perfect sacrifice, as our substitute, taking on himself the penalty for our sin, so that in Jesus we might truly be saved, saved from the wages of sin, which is death, to enjoy eternal life with you.

Lord, we thank you that Jesus has come as our good shepherd to call us to himself, to call us into life and to lay down his life for us.

[6 : 04] Lord, we thank you that we can look to Jesus, to walk away from his word, to walk away from your love, that we take for granted our saviour and our salvation, that we don't always want to hear your voice, and we will often resist it and disobey.

Lord, we thank you that we can look to Jesus, the lamb who was slain, to recognise by faith in him and by his wounds we are healed.

So in our weakness we come to him to find our strength and our hope. Lord, as we look to Jesus, our king, may you give strength to our faith.

Lord, we thank you for your word that we will hear read and preached, and we ask that you would take that word and you would plant it in our hearts, and that you would change us, that for some you would save us, for others you would strengthen our faith, so that together we might know real joy this advent, the joy of knowing Jesus as Lord and saviour.

Lord, thank you that we can share together in worship, and that one way we can do that is by praying together. We thank you for the prayer that Jesus gave to his disciples, the Lord's Prayer, which we can now pray together, saying, Our Father, who is in heaven, hallowed be your name.

[7 : 43] Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Now, our Old Testament reading this morning, it comes from the book of Isaiah, Isaiah and chapter 46.

If you have it in your Bibles, or on your device, you can look that up, and otherwise the words will be on the screen. We're going to hear together the first nine verses.

Isaiah chapter 46 from the beginning. Let's hear God's word together. Bell bows down, Nebo stoops low, their idols are born by beasts of burden.

[8 : 50] The images that are carried about are burdensome, a burden for the weary. They stoop and bow down together. Unable to rescue the burden, they themselves go off into captivity.

Listen to me, you descendants of Jacob, all the remnant of the people of Israel, you whom I have upheld since your birth, and have carried since you were born. Even to your old age and gray hairs, I am he, I am he who will sustain you.

I have made you, and I will carry you. I will sustain you, and I will rescue you. With whom will you compare me, or count me equal?

To whom will you liken me, that we may be compared? Some pour out gold from their bags, and weigh out silver on the scales. They hire a goldsmith to make it into a god, and they bow down and worship it.

They lift it to their shoulders, and carry it. They set it up in its place, and there it stands. From that spot it cannot move. Even though someone cries out to it, it cannot answer.

[9 : 55] It cannot save them from their troubles. Remember this. Keep it in mind. Take it to heart, you rebels. Remember the former things, those of long ago.

I am God, and there is no other. I am God, and there is none like me. Amen. This is God's word.

Now, before I hand over to Keith, to lead us in our first Advent study, I'm going to pray again. We can remain seated while we pray this time. Lord God, we thank you for the testimony of your word, that you are a God without equals.

Lord, we ask that you would help us to learn the reality of verse 9, that I am God, and there is no other. I am God, and there is none like me.

That we would learn it, so that we would place our confidence, our hope, our dependence, on you alone. Lord, we pray that in our preaching, in our Advent devotionals, in our praying and serving, we would want above all else, that you would be glorified, and recognized as the one true God, and Jesus as your son, whom you have sent to be our Savior.

[11 : 21] Lord, we pray that that message would be heard, as Christians and churches, through this city, through this country, and around the world, seek to appoint people, to the good news of Jesus, the son you promised to send, to be Savior.

Lord, we pray for some of the churches, in our denomination today, we're asked to pray for London City, and we thank you for the connections, that we have with that church, and we pray for them, as they find themselves back, in a lockdown situation, we ask that you would encourage, and strengthen Andy, and Harrison, and those who work down there, and we thank you for new life, we thank you for growth, in that church, and we pray, that you would continue, to be with them, and watch over them, especially those who, have been isolated, because of, the long-term effects, of COVID.

We are also asked to pray, for the church up in Kenyuse, and we pray, for Alistair Wilson, as he looks after the church there, and we pray, for every member, of that small church, and we pray, that

you would encourage them, in their faith, we pray, that you would enable them, to continue, to hear your word, and to be built up, in their faith, and we pray, for that town, in that area, of Scotland, that gospel ministry, and the word of the gospel, might flourish, in the lives of men, and women, and boys and girls.

Lord, we also pray, for the church, in hard places, and we think, of the work, of 20 schemes, recognizing that, where they, are engaged, in ministry, so often, there are high levels, very high levels, of unemployment, addiction, family breakdown, a lack of hope, and a lack of opportunity. Lord, we pray, that you would give wisdom, you would give perseverance, that you would give, much of your Holy Spirit, so that the church, would flourish, in some of our housing schemes.

[13 : 30] Lord, we pray, for the church, in hard places, because there is, depopulation, because the church, is so small, and fragile, because there is, so much apathy, or resistance, and again, we pray, that you would build up, your church, and you would tear down, barriers of opposition, so that men, and women, and boys, and girls, would love to hear, the message, that would save them, and bring them, true life.

We also pray, for parts of the world, where the church, is persecuted, forced to meet, in secret, forced to meet, under intense, scrutiny, facing, government opposition, local opposition, challenges, from other religious groups.

Lord, give our brothers, and sisters, faith, and hope, and love, and courage, and boldness, and wisdom, as they seek, to live for you. Lord, we continue to pray, for the governments, of the world. We pray wisdom, for them. We pray, humble dependence, on your word. We pray, that you would enable, them to deliver, justice, and peace.

Lord, we recognize, ultimately, that these come, from you, as the true king, but we pray, as we're called to, for those you have placed, in governments, in rule over us.

[14 : 54] Lord, we also pray, for some of the ministries, that we support, in this city, recognizing, the challenges, and the needs, that they are looking, to address.

We pray, for the work, of Bethany Christian Trust. Thank you, for all that they do, with families, who are at risk, with those, in the homeless, community, with those, who are struggling, with addictions. We remember, the work, of Friends International, as they look, to welcome, and show kindness, to international students, as they look, to share something, of the love of God, with them.

Lord, we pray, that you would, give encouragement, to those, who are involved, in those ministries, and may, men and women, and boys and girls, from Scotland, and around the world, come to hear, and to believe, in Jesus, as their King, and Saviour.

And now we pray, as we come to, hear your word, that you would enable us, to be free of distraction, that your spirit, would speak, pray that, you would bless Keith, as he brings, your word, to us, that it would do us, all, lasting good.

[16 : 03] We pray, for our good, and for your glory. Amen. So, I'll hand over to you now, Keith. Thank you. Good morning.

As James said, my name is Keith, and it's a pleasure, to be worshiping with you, this morning. This morning, we're going to be reading, from Matthew 1, verses 18 through 21, as we begin, our first week, in an Advent series.

Now you may, if you're anything like me, have noticed, that some people, have started to celebrate, Christmas a little bit, early this year. And I actually read, an article this past week, about that phenomenon, how people have pushed up, the Christmas season.

And in this article, it was actually interviewing, several different people, to examine, the positive effects, of celebrating Christmas early. And there were a couple quotes, in here that I found, quite notable, that I wanted to, quote for you this morning.

One was from a female, who's a licensed, clinical social worker, and this is what she said. When we feel uncertain, it can help us to focus, on what's in our control.

[17 : 11] We may not be able, to control the spread, of the coronavirus, or travel to see our loved ones. But we can put up, Christmas holiday decorations. We can bake our favorite treats, and light our favorite, seasonal candles.

Putting up decorations, brings a sense of novelty, and fun to everyday life, which is no small feat, in a world where, every day feels the same. Someone else is later, quoted an article saying this, who would have imagined, that we'd be in a global pandemic, and not be around, our friends and family.

We've got to go, full force Christmas wonderland. We have to have, walls of trees, green and red lights, garlands. We're thinking about, even putting up snow. We've started so early, that by Christmas, it might look like, an enchanted village, in our home.

As we see people, face, these troubling times, of this pandemic, I think people are, perhaps, noticing this year, more than most, the darkness, that is around us.

And maybe this year, more than most, they're trying to push back, by holding on, to Christmas cheer, in order to, cause some form, of distraction, right? To kind of, to separate themselves, from the death, and the sickness, that is surrounding them.

[18:21] Maybe you've had, that same desire, yourself. You've been anticipating, this Christmas season, for the cheer, and the joy, that it brings. But it's this darkness, that we recognize, that some are trying, to gloss over.

That's the subject, and the setting, of our story today. And we see, in this darkness, that God, is at work. So turn with me, if you will, to Matthew, chapter 1, verses 18, through 21.

Matthew 1, 18, through 21. This is how, the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, came about. His mother, Mary was pledged, to be married to Joseph. But before they came together, she was found, to be pregnant, through the Holy Spirit.

Because Joseph, her husband, was faithful to the law, and yet did not want, to expose her, to public disgrace, he had in his mind, to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord, appeared to him in a dream, and said, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid, to take Mary home, as your wife.

Because what is conceived, in her, is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth, to a son, and you are to give him, the name Jesus, because he will save, his people from their sins. This is the word of the Lord.

[19:31] Pray with me. Lord, as we look, at this passage, we ask that you, soften our hearts, that you prepare our minds, and open, our ears Lord.

Help us to see, this Christmas message, message Lord, with new eyes. May your spirit, be in us, and among us. We pray this, in Jesus name. Amen. Now, as, has been stated, this is the first week, of Advent.

And as I've learned quickly, in my short time, in Scotland, the church calendar, is not something, that has been well recognized, by Scottish churches. But I think, in celebrating Advent, and observing Advent, there provides, a structure, which is to our benefit, as we prepare, for Christmas. A lot of people, kind of, lump Advent, and Christmas, into one thing, but it's actually, very distinct. Advent, Advent, is meant to prepare us, for Christmas.

Christmas is a time, of preparation, a time of celebration, while Advent, is a time, of preparation. Advent, actually means, coming, or arrival. So, as we observe Advent, we're actually, remembering, how God's people, waited, centuries, and centuries, for the coming, of their Messiah.

[20:46] It's a time, for us to wait, to celebrate, the birth of Christmas, birth of Christ, at Christmas. But it's also, a time, for us to wait, for the second coming, of Christ, as well.

And so, as we think, about this Advent season, it's easy for us, to just get swept up, in the Christmas feelings, of the cheer, and the holidays, and the decorations, but Advent, Advent really, does something, that the church, really needs.

It allows us, time, to look inward. It allows us, time, to consider, our own, sinfulness, our own, desperate need, for a Savior. And so, if we look, at the very beginning, of the Bible, if you're familiar, with the Bible, you know, that it starts, with the creation, of the world, in Genesis, and we see, that God has created, a perfect world, and placed, man and woman, in the Garden of Eden. And we see, Adam and Eve, they lived, in perfect harmony, with each other, and with God, until sin, entered the world. We see, that God had given them, free reign, of the garden, but it told them, to not eat, of one particular tree.

But we see, Satan comes in, as a serpent, and he deceives them. He tempts them, to question God's goodness, and they eat, of that fruit. And when they do, sin and death, enter the world.

[22:04] But we see, at the very beginning, when sin enters the world, God reveals, tells to us, in the Bible, that he has, a rescue plan, in place, to save his people, from their sins. So in Genesis, verse, chapter 3, verses 15, is the very first, announcement, of the gospel, where God says, to the serpent, I will put, enmity, enmity between you, and the woman, and between your offspring, and hers, he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.

And so as we continue, to work through the scriptures, we follow the offspring, of Eve. We see how God, chose to bless a man, named Abraham, and through his family, promised to send a Messiah. So if we look, at the very first, part of Matthew 1, it lists the lineage, of Jesus. This is the family, that God promised, the Messiah would come from.

It starts with Abraham, and moves through King David, all the way to a poor man, named Joseph. And this is where we see, God's rescue plan, put into place. So as we consider this passage, and consider God's rescue plan, I want us to focus, really on two things today.

One is God's method, and the second is God's mission. So let's first consider, the method of God's rescue plan. When we think of methods, maybe think about, earlier this week, I purchased a tent, for our back garden, kind of a gazebo thing, that would allow us, to have people over, since we can't have them, in our house, at least provide some shelter, from the elements, on our back porch.

[23 : 36] And when it arrived, in this big box, I kind of opened it up, and it had a piece of paper, with a link to you, a YouTube video, with instructions, on how to assemble it. And I kind of threw that, to the side, and just started, trying to build this tent, and realized after several minutes, I wasn't doing it right somehow.

So I went back, to the YouTube video, and realized there was a method, to get this tent, assembled the right way. And so in the same way, God has used, a specific method, to bring about, his Messiah.

It says, in verse 18, that Mary was pledged, to a man named Joseph, but before they came together, she was found, to be pregnant, through the Holy Spirit. The method, that God uses, in this case, is that his Savior, would be born, through a virgin.

And so right out of the gates, we see this emphasized, right? It points out, that Joseph is not, the father of Jesus. Jesus comes about, by the working, of the Holy Spirit. Now it's important, to remember, in biblical times, when someone, was betrothed, to someone, that's different, than what we think, of a modern day, engagement.

This was a solemn, vow, between a man, and a woman, that wasn't entered, into lightly, and that if it, there was to be, any separation, it was considered, the same as what, we think of, as a divorce.

[24 : 54] During that year, of betrothal, that would usually last, the woman still lived, with her family, and didn't come together, with her husband, until after they were married. And so any sort, of sexual impurity, was considered, a form of adultery.

And so that's what we see, in these verses, when Mary tells Joseph, that she's pregnant, we see that Joseph, is understandably troubled. This is his wife to be, this is the woman, that he loves, and it appears, as though she has been, unfaithful.

And so as he mulls, over what to do, and he considers, how he should go, about divorcing her, we see an angel of God, come to him, in a dream, in verse 20, and say this, Joseph son of David, do not be afraid, to take Mary home, as your wife, because what is conceived, in her, is from the Holy Spirit.

And so we see, in these few, short verses, it's made abundantly clear, that Jesus is born, of a virgin. It says twice, in these verses, that he is from, the Holy Spirit.

It states that Mary, and Joseph had not, come together. In fact, if you look forward, to verse 25, it also confirms, that Joseph did not know Mary, until after Jesus was born. Not only that, but if we look at the way, that Joseph responded, right?

[26 : 11] His initial desire, to divorce Mary, because of her, suspected infidelity, confirms, that he knew, he was not the father. But we see, that God has a plan, for Joseph as well, in this case.

He wants Joseph, to be the earthly father, of Jesus. So he gives him, the responsibility, to name this child. That would give him, the opportunity, to present himself, Joseph, as the legal parent, of Jesus.

And so we see, that in doing this, God is fulfilling, his promise to his people. He said that this Messiah, would come, through the line of David. Joseph is a descendant, of David. Therefore, God is keeping his promise, to his people.

So you may question then, why, does he have to be, virgin born? Why did Jesus, why couldn't he just be, the biological son, of Joseph? And this is a fact, that many in our day, and age, disbelieve, right?

They think it's just, fairy tale, to think that Jesus, could be born of a virgin. It really has no bearing, on his character, or who he was, as a person. But I think it's very important, that we see in this story, as it points out, it is a necessary method, in God's rescue plan.

[27 : 21] It is an essential part, of the Christmas story. And so I want to look, at a few reasons, why this, the gospel shows us, that this is the case. First of all, we see that the virgin birth, is a fulfillment, of Old Testament prophecy.

We see in the Old Testament, it's always this forward facing, right? There's anticipation, there is foreshadowing, of a coming Messiah. And so we see that, in Isaiah, chapter 7, verse 14, which says, the Lord himself, will give you a sign.

Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name, Jesus. The virgin birth, is important, because, it's what God said, would happen.

It is God's mean, of fulfilling his promise, to his people. Secondly, it's important, because it demonstrates, that Jesus, is a supernatural person.

God, Jesus came, and is fully God, and is fully man. And this is hard, for us to fathom, hard for us to understand, but we need to recognize, that Jesus didn't come, as a mere baby, born by natural, sexual means.

[28 : 29] He is the son of God, who assumes, human likeness. He is fully God, and fully man. And we see, because of this, it allows us, to see Jesus, in a different light.

We see that we are able, to relate to him, that we know Jesus, can relate to us. We see throughout, the New Testament, in the Gospels, where it talks about, Jesus suffering, and Jesus being tempted, in the same way, that we are.

It says in Hebrews, 4:15, for we do not have, a high priest, who is unable, to sympathize, with our weaknesses, but one who, in every respect, has been tempted, as we are, yet without sin.

So Jesus, as a man, provides us, an example, for holy living. But not only that, though he is 100% man, he is also, 100% God.

So let's not, overlook this miracle, that becomes so easy, for us just to take, for granted, during Christmas. This is the eternal, omnipotent God, who comes, who comes in human form, as the fruit of Mary's womb, as it says in Luke.

[29 : 40] Jesus is not separate, from God. He is God, and therefore, he is someone, who we can worship, someone who is worthy, of all of our praise. And lastly, we see the virgin birth, is important, to the Christmas, story, because it provides, a way for Jesus, to be born, and to be able, to escape, the corruption, and the pollution, of our sinful human nature.

Since Jesus was born, from the Holy Spirit, he wasn't defiled, by sin. He was born, and still was, the sinless son of God, who is able to, fulfill the law, that we can't keep.

He is our sinless savior, who is able to go, to the cross, and be our sinless, substitute, where his innocent blood, would be shed, for our sins. So yes, the virgin birth, is absolutely, important, and vital, when we consider, the Christmas story, and the birth of Christ.

So don't let, be led astray, by bad theology, or secular doubt. The virgin birth, this divine conception, is essential.

Because if Jesus wasn't born, by this means, he wouldn't have been any different, than anyone else, that is listed, in the first part of Matthew. It's only because, he was our sinless substitute, that he can make atonement, for sins.

[30 : 59] And so if that's the method, by which God, institutes his rescue plan, by sending a savior, through a virgin birth, and let's look secondly, at his mission. In verse 21, it says, she will give birth to a son, and you are to give him, the name Jesus, because he will save, his people from their sins.

We see in the verse, in this verse, that God is the one, who names this virgin child, Jesus. Now over a decade ago, my wife and I, did missions work in China, and we were there for a year, and we taught English, at a university.

And over the course of that year, each of us had, nearly 300 Chinese students, that we taught. And because our Chinese, was very poor, and these names, were very difficult, for us to remember, what was common was, we have these, our Chinese students, pick an English name, that we could remember them by.

And it was really neat, to see the wide variety, of names that were selected, while we thought they'd pick, what we consider normal names, because Chinese names, have a significant meaning to them. They wanted English names, that also had, a significant meaning.

So I had students, that were named, I had a lucky star, I had a rainbow, I had a snow, I had three girls, named Echo, which seemed rather fitting.

[32 : 18] So in the same way, that these students chose names, that had meaning, or significance to them, we see that God, does the same thing, in the selection, of Jesus's name. We see in the Old Testament, how God changed, Abram's name, to Abraham, to mean the father of many.

So in the same way, he looks here, at his son Jesus, and we see that, and we see exactly, what it means. Jesus is the Greek form, of the Hebrew name Joshua.

And Joshua is a contraction, for Yahweh save. Yahweh is the name, the Hebrew name, the proper name for God. So Jesus means, God saves.

And we see this, listed numerous times, in the Old Testament, this repeated reference, to God as our Savior. If we look in Isaiah 43, 11, it says, I, I am Yahweh, and besides me, there is no Savior. In Isaiah 45, 21, there is no other God, besides me, a righteous God, and a Savior. There is none, besides me. And so we see, just like in the Old Testament, where it's emphasizing, who is doing the saving, Matthew does the same emphasis, in the New Testament.

[33 : 26] It's actually really interesting, if you go back to the Greek, to look at the sentence structure, how he's emphasizing, who is doing the saving. In this last phrase, where it says, because he will save his people, from their sins, in the Greek, the first word, is the pronoun he.

And it's followed by the verb, which says, he will save. So it's literally translated, he, he will save. Matthew's making it, eternally clear to us, that it's Jesus alone, who does the saving.

It's Jesus, who has the power to save, and no one else. And so we also see, that the saving, is a for sure thing, right? He says, he will save, not he might save, or he can save.

Jesus did not come to earth, to create possibilities, for us to be saved. Jesus came, to save us fully.

And so we see, that Matthew is making it, very clear, that we cannot save ourselves, right?

No matter how hard we try, especially this Christmas season, no matter how hard, we try to cover up, the darkness in our lives, and around us, with Christmas sentimentality, and adding more lights, to the tree, there's nothing that we can do, to save ourselves.

[34 : 32] Because I guarantee, that next Christmas, when it rolls around, we're going to be dealing, with the same kinds, of struggles, right? Lord willing, the coronavirus, will be under control, but there'll still be sickness, there'll still be sadness, there'll still be isolation, and depression, and poverty.

There's nothing, that we can do, that's going to change that. It is Christ, alone, who saves. And so, who does he save? It says very clearly, he saves his people.

And this is not just referring, to the nation of Israel. We know, that the Jewish people, were waiting, hundreds and hundreds of years, for this coming Messiah, but Jesus, as a part of his rescue plan, is opening up, the plan of salvation, that all may be saved, through him.

Paul says, in Romans, there is no difference, between Jew or Greek. The same Lord, is the Lord of all, and gives richly, to all who call on him. Everyone, who calls on the name, of the Lord, will be saved.

And so, he then applies to us, not only in our lineage, in our nationality, but also in our goodness, right? There's nothing that we can do, to earn God's favor.

[35 : 35] Jesus himself said, that he came to, not call, he came not to call the righteous, but to call sinners, to repentance. And so, we see that Jesus alone, does the saving.

We are the objects, of that saving. What does he save us from? It saves us from, our sin. And this, is the mission, in which God came, in which Jesus came.

He didn't come, to save us from, our circumstances. And though while, especially at Christmas, we think about, calling out to God, to save us from these times, give us peace, from our circumstances, we need to recognize, that it's not our circumstances, that bind us, it's our sin, that we need saving from.

And so, as we enter this Advent season, we need to recognize, that the true Christmas spirit, doesn't avoid the thought, of sin and death, but it looks directly at it. Because until, we deal with the bad news, we're not going to fully appreciate, the good news.

We need to recognize, that we are all sinners, that sin has separated us, from God, that the penalty, for sin is death, and it's only through, the son of God, who is our sinless substitute, that we may have life.

[36 : 50] Paul says, that Jesus came into the world, to save sinners, of whom I am, the worst. Does that resonate with you, if you're not a believer? Do you feel like, you can apply that, to your lives, to recognize, that you are a sinner, in need of grace?

The reason that Jesus, was born as a virgin, is so that he could live, a sinless life, and be our sinless substitute, on the cross, that we may be freed, from the punishment of sins, and have eternal life.

And the neat thing is, it's the same Holy Spirit, that brought life, to Mary's womb, that's the same spirit, who Jesus offers to us. It's that same spirit, that provides us, with the power, and the ability, to have faith, that we may also have, newness of life, in Christ.

And so you may look, around yourself, and say, well, you know, Jesus might have come to earth, but I'm not quite sure, what he came to save, or fix, because, the world's still, a pretty messed up place. But as we look, at Advent, as we observe this season, that's exactly, the thought, that is worth examining.

For although, we await a time, for the birth of Jesus, that we celebrate, on December 25th, we also wait, for a time, where Christ, will come again. And we know, that at that time, he says, that he will come, to judge, the living, and the dead.

[38 : 13] He will come, to overthrow, Satan eternally, and destroy death. You know, earlier this week, I was running along, Union Canal, and where it starts, just west of the meadows, there's this large mural, on the side of the wall, I don't know, if it's new or not, it was the first time, I saw it.

And it says, perfection, is a matter of time. And while it's a, it's a good thought, and it kind of, brightened up that building, I wondered, do people really believe that? Is that something, that you believe, that perfection, is just a matter of time?

That if you wait long enough, or try hard enough, you can solve, the problems of this world? I think that, you know, I think we're really trending, in the opposite direction, right?

It's not time, that's going to save us, it's only Jesus, by his blood, that we can be saved. So I think, as we look, at this Advent season, if you do not know Christ, I encourage you, to allow the Holy Spirit, to soften your heart, to recognize your need, for a Savior.

To recognize the darkness, is not just around you, but it is inside, each one of us. And to turn to Jesus, knowing that he is coming again, and will judge, those who are not found in him.

[39 : 31] We have, a sinless Savior. And that is the hope, of Christmas, that lights, and candy, and candles, cannot provide. And so, for those of us, who are in Christ, understand, that this Advent season, is something, that we may observe, once a year, but it is really, a life in which we live.

We live in this stage, between the first coming, of Christ, and his second coming. We live between, this tension, of what is now, and what we know, things ought to be.

And so, I encourage you, to have hope. Keep the faith, because perfection, is coming. It's coming, in the form, of Jesus. So, this Advent season, let us look forward, with eager anticipation, when Christ will return, in all his splendor, in all his glory, when he will destroy, the serpent, eternally, when he will establish, a new heaven, and a new earth, and we may live, in unity, with Christ, our Savior forever.

Amen. Pray with me. Heavenly Father, as we are surrounded, by darkness, help us to recognize, the darkness, that is, within each one of us.

Help us to recognize, God, that we, are in need, of a Savior. And so, help us to turn, to Christ, who was born, of a virgin, who lived, a perfect life, our sinless Savior, who became, our sinless substitute.

[41 : 14] Lord, allow that truth, to permeate our lives. Allow that to be, the source of our joy, this Christmas, and throughout the year. We pray this in Jesus name.

Amen. We're now going to sing, O Come, O Come, Emmanuel. We'll remain seated, and sing in your hearts, if you hear, if you're watching, live stream, please feel free, to sing along.

Amen. O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, and, O Come, Emmanuel, and, O Come, Emmanuel, and, O Come, Emmanuel, and, O Come, Emmanuel.

Who mourns, in lowly, and, O Come, Emmanuel, and, O Come, Emmanuel, until the Son of God draws near, God draws near.

Rejoice, Rejoice, Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel, shall come to me, O Emmanuel.

[42 : 29] Yes, I am. O come, great Lord of Christ, who loath of all on silent night, who gave Israel's rise to holy love, in cloud and majesty and glory.

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to Israel.

O come, bright morning star as Jesus, our spirits behind your atletons.

O come, great Lord of Christ, who loath of all on silent night, and the light of the day will be.

O come, great Lord of Christ, who loath of all on silent night, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to Israel.

[43 : 55] O come, strong He of David, come, and open wide our heavenly host.

Make strength the way that leads our high, and close the path to bear the reed.

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to Israel.

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to Israel.

I am. I am. I am. I am. I am. I am.

[45 : 05] If you can stand with me to receive our benediction. Our benediction comes from the book of Revelation. to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood to him who testifies surely I am coming again be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever amen