

The Redeemer Will Come

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Preacher: Rev. Andrew Ong

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. Good morning, I'm Melissa Arsuniega and I'm part of the North Berkeley Tuesday Night Community Group at the Wesolowskis.

Today's scripture reading is from the book of Isaiah, chapter 59, verses 1-21, as printed in the liturgy. A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God.

Your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear. For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt. Your lips have spoken falsely, and your tongue mutters wicked things.

[1 : 12] No one calls for justice. No one pleads a case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments. They utter lies. They conceive trouble and give birth to evil.

They hatch the eggs of vipers and spin a spider's web. Whoever eats their eggs will die. And when one is broken, an adder is hatched.

Their cobwebs are useless for clothing. They cannot cover themselves with what they make. Their deeds are evil deeds. The acts of violence are in their hands.

Their feet rush into sin. They are swift to shed innocent blood. They pursue evil schemes. Acts of violence mark their ways. The way of peace they do not know.

There is no justice in their paths. They have turned them into crooked roads. No one walks along. They will know peace. So justice is far from us.

[2 : 14] And righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but always darkness. For brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. Like the blind, we grope along the wall.

Feeling our way like people without eyes. At midday, we stumble as if it were twilight. Among the strong, we are like the dead. We all growl like bears.

We moan mournfully like doves. We look for justice, but find none. For deliverance, but it is far away. For our offenses are many in your sight.

And our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us. And we acknowledge our iniquities. Rebellion and treachery against the Lord.

Turning our backs on our God. Inciting revolt and oppression. Uttering lies our hearts have conceived. So justice is driven back.

[3 : 15] And righteousness stands at a distance. Truth has stumbled in the streets. Honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found. And whoever shuns evil becomes a prey.

The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one. He was appalled that there was no one to intervene.

So his own arm achieved salvation for him. And his own righteousness sustained him. He put on righteousness as his breastplate. And the helmet of salvation on his head.

He put on the garments of vengeance. And wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak. According to what they have done. So will he repay. Wrath to his enemies.

And retribution to his foes. He will repay the islands their due. From the west. People will fear the name of the Lord. And from the rising of the sun.

[4 : 15] They will revere in his glory. His glory. For he will come like a pent-up flood. That the breath of the Lord drives along. The redeemer will come to Zion.

To those in Jacob who repent of their sins. Declares the Lord. As for me. This is my covenant with them. Says the Lord. My spirit who is on you.

Who will not depart from you. And my words that I have put in your mouth. Will always be on your lips. On the lips of your children. And on the lips of their descendants.

From this time on. And forever. Says the Lord. The grass withers. And the flowers fall. The glory for God. Say it forever. Thank you Melissa.

For that scripture reading. Good morning everyone. My name is Andrew. I'm one of the pastors here. And I look forward to getting into God's word with you this morning. Will you pray with me? Father we pray that we would come into your presence.

[5 : 24] Attentive to your word this morning. That we would believe that we shall not live by bread alone. But by every word that comes from your mouth.

Help us to see that what is preached is not mere thoughts. Mere religious teachings. But life itself. From our creator.

Our maker. And our redeemer. And in the preaching of your word. Oh God we pray that you would convince and convict us. Of the sinfulness of sin. And the sweetness of our salvation in Jesus Christ.

Oh God to quote our children's director Jane George. We for every one look we take at our sin. Look to you. And look to Christ. A hundred times. A thousand times more.

And would we know the goodness of the good news. That Jesus has come. And he's coming again. So be honored in the preaching of your word we pray. In Jesus' name.

[6 : 25] Amen. So in case you're new. Well clearly we are a church here that intentionally celebrates. Or observes I should say. The season of Advent.

Advent. And if you're like me. Like Jonathan mentioned earlier. I didn't grow up observing Advent. And if you're like me. You might need to also know. Again like Jonathan mentioned. That Advent means coming.

All right. Coming. That's what we are here to focus on. And to me. This theme of coming. This theme of Advent. Advent is probably one of the most compelling themes in all of Christianity to me. This theme of a Messiah. Of a salvation that is coming. Coming as in not yet arrived. But still definitely on the way. Right? A salvation that is sadly not yet here.

And yet a certain salvation that is not yet here. I think Advent so beautifully captures and communicates these two realities that authentic Christianity has always tried to hold together both pain and promise.

[7 : 30] Right? This notion of a sure hope. Not some escapist opiate for the masses. Right? But a hope that's organically even tied to the story of suffering itself.

There's a pastor I've been reading. Vanessa Stricker. She puts it like this in her Advent devotional. Suffering is the birthplace. Of hope. And this hope is not mere wishful thinking like, oh I hope the Warriors win another championship this year.

No, Christian hope. Though unseen and unrealized is something that's sure and secure in the mind of God. And therefore it's something to be expected and anticipated by God's people.

I like how Ann Voskamp puts it. The practice of Advent is participating in the ancient expectancy of the Messiah. And ardently expecting him again.

So really, and especially in this season of Advent, the Christian faith permits, even demands, that we keep it real. That's what we're here to do in worship today. We're here to keep it real.

[8 : 30] Real about all our brokenness. All our yearnings. Every hurt. Every longing. It's all real. And yet just as real as our every yearning is the hope that we have in the Messiah who has come.

And who's coming again to save the world. To make all things new. To make all things right. Now every Advent here at Christ Church, in order to sit and stew in this both Ann pain and promise reality, we lend our ears to the Hebrew prophets, as Jonathan mentioned.

The Holy Spirit-inspired voices of old who also yearned for a coming Messiah, a coming salvation. And so for these next four Sundays, as Jonathan mentioned, we're going to be heeding the prophetic voice of Isaiah.

Now opening up our passage today, we're actually in the final chapters of Isaiah. This prophetic voice to a post-exilic Israel. Those who returned from Babylon to Israel.

Those who never thought that they would even see the promised land again. So just for context, this return from exile was a major event in the life and history of Israel.

[9 : 31] After seeing their walls, their kingdom, their temple destroyed, after yet another captivity underneath another pagan nation, because they broke their covenant with God, many of them wondered, you know, are we even going to be a people anymore?

So this was a huge event. God bringing them home out of Babylon. It was like being delivered out of Egypt all over again. A major, major salvation event. A major answer to prayers. A major mercy from God.

And so you might think that after this major mercy from God, all right, surely, surely by now, after 70 years of exile, surely Israel had learned her lesson, right? Surely Israel would finally get it right, be all that Yahweh intended for her to be.

A light to the nations. A servant of justice and shalom in all the world. Surely this was going to be the beginning of the new Jerusalem and God's eternal kingdom, right? But can I ask, have you ever hit rock bottom?

Like, found yourself in the pigsty just like the prodigal son, a victim of your own folly? And have you ever experienced incredible mercy, incredible deliverance from God?

[10 : 37] And have you ever promised God in response? Like, wow, God. Wow, God, thank you. I promise. I promise I'll be faithful from now on. I promise I'll do whatever you want me to do. I promise I'll do exactly what you want me to do.

Be who you want me to be. I will never let another drop of alcohol touch my tongue. I will never put another toxic substance into my body. Never view another pornographic image. I will never lose my temper again.

No more cutting. No more vomiting. No more self-harm. Never again. Have you ever said such a thing to God? Made such a promise to Him after seeing His mercy and His kindness towards you? I know I have.

But how many of us have kept our promises? How many of us have responded to the mercy and deliverance of God with a flawless faithfulness? See, Israel's story is a mirror of ours, particularly in their cycle of sin, their cycle of straying from God.

If Israel's story and ours are any indication, sin is powerful. There is something menacingly powerful about sin. There's this powerful pull to sin that perpetuates a pernicious pattern that destroys everything it touches.

[11 : 45] And here at the end of Isaiah, the same spirit that was in Isaiah at the beginning of his ministry calling Israel to repent or else they would go into exile, the same spirit calls out to post-exilic Israel yet again.

To repent again. Because even after this second great salvation event in their nation's history, this newly delivered Israel has not been made truly new.

This new post-exilic Israel isn't yet the new Israel, the new Jerusalem. Their sin and its toxic effects have continued just as before.

And so the question that this raises is, can God's hand really save? Or is the sin of God's people more potent than the strength of God's hand? And I wonder how many of us have pondered this question ourselves.

Like, can God really save us? Even from ourselves? The other week I got a call from a good friend of mine. He reached out to me. He was distraught because of the damage that his porn addiction was wreaking on his relationship.

[12 : 46] And he said to me, I want victory over this. And I want to believe I can have victory over this. But I feel so helpless. Yes. And I'm afraid that victory will elude me and destroy everything that I love.

And maybe this morning you find yourself in a similar pit. A pit you've even dug for yourself and thrown yourself into yet again. And then like, you want to cry out for God's help, but you know that you would be crying out to God for help with unclean lips.

And that your misery is largely a misery of your own making. And so you feel helpless, defeated, and undeserving. And you find it hard to believe that God can save you because this is the 77th time, maybe even the 490th time that you've fallen harming yourself and those around you.

And you feel like you'll never find victory. Never be who you want to be. Never be who God wants you to be. And you wonder, can God really save me from my mess?

Can God really save us from our mess? Or is his arm too short to save? Well, that's what our prophetic word speaks to this morning.

[13:54] Verse 1. Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. And this is God's news.

This is God's good news for us this morning. That even when sin splits, spoils, and stumbles, our covenant God, he sees, he steps in, and he saves. That's the good news of Advent.

That even when sin splits, spoils, and stumbles, our covenant God sees, steps in, and he saves.

Now, man, I wish I could just end here on verse 1 because this really just preaches itself, right?

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.

And I'm sure you would love me to end the sermon right here as well, right? But we cannot ignore verse 2. Verse 2, the word but. But, right?

Like, yes, the Lord is capable of saving. The Lord does hear our cries for salvation. But, verse 2, but your iniquities, your dang iniquities, your sin, your perverse, immoral conduct and behavior.

[14:57] You see, the God of the scriptures can save. He loves to save. But we have to understand that salvation, the salvation that he offers is neither cheap nor easy. It isn't some flippant, okay, no big, I forgive you, all good.

The salvation offered in Christianity isn't a mere sweeping of our mess under the rug. No, our mess is far, far too big for that. This past Thanksgiving weekend, our daughters came down with some pretty bad fevers.

That's why Chelsea and them are not here. And just on Friday night, my eldest daughter, Cammie, she leaned over the top of her bunk bed and she vomited. And it landed on her little sister and her bunk below all over the floor.

Her mess was huge. I could not sweep it under the rug. It took, it required a daddy getting out of bed at 2 a.m., holding her to the toilet, holding her hair back in case she had any more, cleaning her up, rinsing her mouth, re-brushing her teeth, changing her and her sister's bedsheets, getting on his knees to clean up the splash zone, to sanitize that, and worst of all, on a sermon writing week, all right?

And my point is that while this little girl's daddy was willing and capable, totally able to clean up her mess, and while her daddy would be willing to do it a thousand times more because he so loves her, it wasn't no big deal.

[16:28] It cost him. So you see, in the same way, God's arm isn't too short to say, but this must never give us the impression that our sin isn't a big deal.

And unless we see the sinfulness of sin, we will never savor the sweetness of salvation. So in this Advent season, just as we acknowledge both pain and promise, we have to be a people who acknowledge both sin and salvation.

So that's what we're going to look at in this prophetic voice. And according to the prophetic voice we're looking at today, the sinfulness of sin, like I said, it splits, spoils, and stumbles. So look with me at verse 2.

Look how it splits. But your iniquities have separated you from God. Your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear. Christchurch, what if we saw sin for what it really was?

Not simply that thing we want to do, but that our strict Heavenly Father forbids. But what if we saw sin as that which splits us from God, from our Father altogether, that which separates us from our Maker, our Sustainer, our Redeemer, and our Friend?

[17:38] What if we understood sin to be that one thing, that one thing that keeps God from doing the one thing he most wants to do with his image-bearing creatures, that one thing that keeps God from hearing us and being with us?

See, sin isn't just bad just because God says so. It's the root of everything gone wrong. It is anti-Godness, separating us from God and therefore life itself.

Jackie Hill Perry, she quotes a Puritan and then puts it in her own words. She says, She says, There is nothing so unlike God than sin.

Nothing so awful as that presence within us that is repelled by God's voice, sickening at its core, vomit by another name. See, again, sin splits us from God.

It splits us from God and therefore it splits us from each other. Look at verse 3. In Israel, sin resulted in human beings shedding the blood of other human beings and muttering lies to one another.

[18:45] And you might think, okay, that's their problem. It's not my problem. My lies aren't that significant and I'm definitely no murderer. But don't you see? Don't you see that while you may not

have taken a gun to a bar this week or to a school this week or in your lifetime, the root sin that gave birth to these heinous sins we grieved in the news this week, the self-interest, the disregard for other image bearers, the flawed and backward thinking that led to these atrocities that we kind of so flippantly just self-righteously condemn, all of that exists within each and every one of us.

How many degrees of difference is there between the callousness in my heart toward the unsheltered person I drive past every day and the Colorado Springs shooter's callousness of heart toward the bartender that he shot and killed?

Sure, there is a difference. There is a difference in degree, but categorically, is it not very much the same? Sin produces a world in which everyone is only looking out for themselves.

Sin is the belief that God is not good and therefore his creation is not good and that therefore our neighbors are our competitors and that in this free-for-all of life, we can and must do whatever it takes to advance our own interests because no one else will look out for us, surely not God.

Because God cannot be good, according to the serpent's lie from the beginning. And that is what sin does. This is what happens when we are split from God and from one another.

[20 : 19] Everything gets spoiled. Everything is spoiled because everything was meant to be in communion with God and with one another. Blood was never meant to be on our hands, nor guilt on our fingers, nor lies upon our lips, nor wickedness on our tongues.

And we're not just talking about the spoiling of individuals, but the spoiling of whole societies. In Israel, both before and after the exile and the return, verse 4, no one even wanted justice.

Think about that, the forsaking of justice and how this spoils whole entire societies. In Israel, like today, people who pled their cases and went to court, they didn't plead on the basis of justice and integrity, but only on the basis of self-interest, employing empty arguments and utter lies, giving birth to more and more evil, vipers and spiders, multiplied, creeping and crawling everywhere.

And again, sin is both, again, it's both individual and societal. That's what the scriptures teach. Like, while many of our progressive friends might emphasize the corporate, systemic, structural sins of society, and while many of our conservative friends might emphasize the personal, private, and particular sins of individuals, the scriptures teach that sin has spoiled both, individuals and whole societies.

We don't just have a problem with individual racists, but we have a systemic racism problem. And we don't just have a public policy problem when it comes to mass shootings.

[21 : 55] We have a unique story after unique story of wicked, immoral, hateful individuals who are also broken, hurting, and lonely individuals, self-destructing and taking others down.

It's individual and it's corporate. That is the pervasiveness of sin. And so just like in Israel, verse seven, we see feet rush into sin. They're swift to shed innocent blood.

They pursue evil schemes. Acts of violence mark their ways. Verse eight, the way of shalom we do not know. There is no justice in our paths. Our roads are crooked and none of them lead to peace. We can't even agree, right? We can't even agree on what justice and peace are, right? Half of us say that this road is crooked. The other half say that it is straight and neither tribe has found shalom.

And see, this is what's so insidious about sin and how it spoils everything. Sin isn't just some wrongdoing or immoral act that's just plain to everyone to see, but it's a force of evil that spoils our very sight.

[22 : 54] It straight up blinds us and causes us to stumble. Like it turns everything backwards and upside down. Verse nine, therefore justice is far from us and righteousness does not reach us.

We hope for light, but behold darkness. For brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. Like the blind, we grope along the wall, feeling our way like people without eyes.

At midday, when the light should shine brightest, we stumble as if it were twilight. Verse 11, we growl like bears, moan like doves. We become less human, more like beasts, animals, not made in God's image.

Yearning for justice and deliverance, but finding none nearby. And the backwardness continues, verse 13. Rebellion and treachery against the Lord, turning our backs on God, inciting revolt and oppression, uttering lies our hearts have conceived.

Verse 14, sin driving justice back, making righteousness stand at a distance. Truth stumbling in the streets, honesty unable to enter. Truth nowhere to be found.

[23 : 58] And everything is so backward that whoever shuns evil becomes prey like a target. This is what sin does, not just in an individual, but in a community.

And this is probably the scariest thing about sin. We can be separated from God, spoiled rotten, and stumbling along in the darkness, going further and further down the road of our own self-inflicted dehumanization.

We can be so backwards, so upside down, and yet not even know it. Because just as Jesus said, people love the darkness rather than the light. You know, H.G. Wells tells this story, it's titled, The Country of the Blind, in which the protagonist's name is Nunez.

He discovers a community that's been struck with blindness for many, many generations. Every single person in the community has been blind, and it's been that way for many generations.

They've kind of evolved and adapted to a life together without sight for a very long time.

And no one even knows what sight is. They rise up every day in their windowless houses, and they have no idea what their eyes were made for. And so this protagonist, Nunez, he tries to convey to them what sight is, what a gift he has to offer them as someone who can see.

[25 : 12] But they have no concept, cannot even imagine what it might mean to see. But the thing is, not only are they unable to understand him, but they think that there's something wrong with him and not themselves.

This guy with this strange imagination and his obsession with this thing he calls sight, and they think that the problem is with his eyes. And so when the doctor suggests they cure Nunez of his insanity by removing his eyes, they're like, oh, thank heavens for science.

And he initially even consents to have his eyes removed, to be a part of their community and to join them in their darkness, because they will not acknowledge his gift of sight.

And see, this is an illustration of the power of sin and how it splits, spoils, and stumbles so, so stealthily that we might not even notice. We modern Western people, right, who like to think that we're so advanced, so developed, so objective, so clear-headed, but might it be that in so many ways we are like beasts, stumbling along in the darkness as we ignore the prophetic word of God calling us back to him and into his light.

Christ Church, our world is a mess. Our country is a mess. Our lives are all a mess. The church is a mess. Our church is a mess. This church, Christ Church, is a mess.

[26 : 41] It really is. And call me old-fashioned, call me a fundamentalist, a fire and brimstone preacher, but we have a huge problem, and it's a sin problem.

And you will hear that preached here at Christ Church, that we have a sin problem, and that's the root of every other problem. And it's deeper, and it's darker, and it's more dangerous than we would ever dare imagine.

And it's separating us from God, spoiling our lives, spoiling others' lives, our society. It's producing dehumanized, beast-like creatures stumbling around, unable to tell, light from darkness, blood is being shed, lies are being spoken, and the sin would have us believe that the problem is merely outside of us.

But no, we have a sin problem, both inside and out. And if this doesn't produce a sense of urgency, and sobriety, and repentance within us, then we only illustrate the prophetic point here, about even God's people stumbling in the darkness, unable to see his light.

The truth of the matter, the truth of Advent, is that our sin begs for salvation, begs for a Savior. But the problem is who?

[28 : 05] Who? You know, throughout this text that we read this morning, this prophetic word, there's been a repeated refrain. Verse four, no one calls for justice. No one pleads a case with integrity.

Verse eight, no one will know peace. Verse 16, he saw that there was no one. He was appalled that there was no one to intervene. Let that sink in. No one.

No one? Yeah, no one. You know, I've told this story before, but there's this old documentary I saw years ago called Waiting for Superman. And in it, this activist, educator, Jeffrey Canada, he talks about how he grew up in the 50s, in the South Bronx of New York, and how he was a big comic book reader.

And he loved comic books because the idea of Superman gave him hope that even in the depths of the ghetto, he says, he could still have hope. But then around fourth grade, he says, one of the saddest days of his life was when his mother told him that Superman didn't exist.

And he was crying, and he was crying, and his mom just thought, oh, he's crying just because, you know, it's kind of like someone finding out that Santa isn't real. Did I burst anyone's bubble here? But he said no.

[29 : 19] He said no. I was crying because at that moment, I realized that there was no one coming with enough power to save us. Jeffrey Canada was heartbroken by the reality that there was no arm long enough, no arm strong enough to save.

And Christchurch, have we experienced this kind of hopelessness, this kind of desperation? Or do we find it hard to relate? Because so many of us, myself included, live such privileged and comfy lives.

But what if our privilege, what if all our comfort, what if they're not actually gifts from God, but actually demonic distractions from the devil? Distractions keeping us from seeing our need for a Superman, our need for a Savior.

Distractions keeping us from seeing the problem of having no one to intervene, no one to save. If we cannot understand this, our dire need for a Savior, then we won't ever understand the Christian faith.

That is Apostle Paul writes, Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written, there is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands.

[30 : 35] There is no one who seeks God. All have turned away. They have together become worthless. There is no one who does good, not even one. Their throats are open graves. Their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips.

Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Ruin and misery mark their ways in the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in God's sight.

Friends, this is us. This is us. And this is a problem. The situation of sin, the toll of sin, the wages of sin is utter hopelessness across the entire swath of fallen humanity.

And no one can bring the salvation that everyone needs. No one. No one. Not one. But the good news, the beauty of our prophetic word this morning is that when God saw that there was no one to intervene, He did.

He intervened. Verse 16. He saw that there was no one. He was appalled that there was no one to intervene. So, His own arm achieved salvation for Him and His own righteousness sustained Him and this is the gospel.

[31 : 50] That God saw our appalling conditions split, spoiled, and stumbling from sin and that no one could save us but Himself and so He stepped in willingly, out of love, to save His people.

Like a warrior, it says here in verse 17, He put on the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation, garments of vengeance and a cloak of zeal, all vestments far too pure and far too heavy for any fallen human to put on.

And He came, verse 8, to repay wrath to His enemies, retribution to His foes and to repay everyone what they were due. True justice. Unleashing a flood, it says in verse 19, by the breath of His mouth like the judgment waters of Noah.

The full wrath of God unleashed yet again upon the earth, upon all that is wicked. But the incredible plot twist of this salvation story is that this divine warrior chose to fight in a manner that no one would have expected from any Messiah figure.

He came to do this in a manner one might even consider unbecoming of the God of the universe.

See, in bringing this wrath, this flood, and retribution against the wicked, something had to be done so that His own covenant-breaking people wouldn't also be swept up and destroyed along with God's enemies, though they surely deserved it as well.

[33 : 06] So what did God do? He came. Advent. He came. And coming to this world with His breastplate of righteousness, He exchanged, He traded it to His sinful people for them to wear His righteousness instead.

And in exchange for His righteousness, He donned their shameful breastplates of unrighteousness. In exchange for His helmet of salvation, He donned a crown of thorns.

And for people's justification, He bore their retribution, the very wrath of God, the whole weight of the ocean of God's judgment against that, all that is evil and wicked and sinful.

He bore it all for us, put sin to death, all of it with His body nailed to a cross, emptying His very own spirit in order that His spirit might never depart from us.

And this is the good news of Advent. Verse 20, the Redeemer will come. The Redeemer has come in the flesh to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins, declares the Lord.

[34 : 13] For while God's people, us included, have broken covenant again and again, verse 21, God says, as for me, as for me, this is my covenant with them.

My spirit who is on you will not depart from you, nor my words, says the Lord. And I love that. God is like, yeah, you went ahead and you did you. You broke covenant.

You departed from me. But as for me, my covenant, my spirit, my words will not depart from you and that is the gospel. The amazing grace of God.

Yeah, you did screw up. You did make a huge and impossible mess of yourselves and all those around you. But as for me, God says, but as for me, he says, in the person of Jesus, God's son, the one who the prophets waited for, the one we wait for who's coming again, in the person of Jesus, God has spoken to us.

The initiative is all mine. The cost is all mine, says the Lord. For even when your sin has left you split, spoiled, and stumbling in the darkness, your covenant God has seen, he stepped in and he saves in Jesus Christ and he's coming again and friends, he's well worth the wait.

[35 : 31] He's well worth the wait. Will you pray with me? Well, Lord, I just come before you recognizing that even having heard your word this morning, some of us are not even convinced that we need to wait for this so great salvation from our sin, from our darkness, and I pray that you would convince us, oh God, of the sinfulness of sin.

Again, that we might know the sweetness of salvation in Christ. Lord, if we do not see the great privilege that it is to have a God who comes to us, who does not just stand up there with his arms crossed waiting for us to come to him, but who comes to us even when we run away, if we don't see the good news in that, God, I pray that you open our eyes, rescue us from our darkness, and make us worshipers of Jesus Christ, the one who came, the coming one.

Help us to hold this, Lord, in this season, the season of waiting. Help us to hold this pain and this promise. Help us to be people of hope.

Not the kind of wishful thinking hope, but the hope of Christianity, the hope of the world, the sure hope that you promised us in Christ. Lord, be worshiped this morning.

Be worshiped in this Advent season. We yearn for you. We long for you. And we thank you that it's just a matter of time and the help is on the way. Thank you, God.

[37 : 23] In Jesus' name. Amen.