

Come Lord Jesus - A Gospel Meditation from Christmas Sing 2024

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Date: 07 December 2024

Preacher: Caleb Valentine

[0 : 00] All right, what are you waiting for?

Everyone at any point in their lives, they're waiting for something. Waiting for a promotion, waiting to hear back from college applications, waiting for retirement, waiting for a child they hope to have, waiting for a package they're tracking to arrive at their front door, waiting for a special person who might be their spouse, waiting to turn 16.

A lot of people aren't exactly sure what they're waiting for, but they know it's not arrived yet. It's like that scene in *The Incredibles* where Mr. Incredible sees the kid on the trike and he says, what are you waiting for? The kid says, I don't know, something amazing, I guess.

And Mr. Incredible says, me too, kid. So what are you waiting for right now? If you find out what someone is really waiting for, you can learn a lot about who they are.

In Luke chapter 1, we meet a priest named Zechariah who is waiting. If you have a Bible, turn to Luke chapter 1. Zechariah the priest is waiting and he's been waiting for a long time.

[1 : 21] In verses 5 through 7. It says, So on a personal level, Zechariah and his wife have been praying and waiting for a child for their entire adult lives.

We can assume at least 30 to 40 years of marriage, living righteously, praying for a baby and it never happened. And now it's too late.

Decades of waiting and nothing. We also need to see that Zechariah is also participating on a societal level with waiting that has been ongoing for generations.

He's a priest of Israel at this point in history under Roman occupation and that comes with a lot of baggage. If you think about this time, Israel looked to most of the world like a totally failed nation. In its entire history, Israel had had maybe one or two flash-in-the-pan moments of greatness. And that was it. So let's trace that through a little bit.

[2 : 49] God makes his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And when their descendants have multiplied, he brings them out of Egypt with miraculous signs and destruction that puts fear into the heart of everyone who hears about it.

But they receive God's covenant law and they're off to a great start and en route to the promised land. They're faithless and they end up wandering for 40 years and they lose a whole generation. Finally, they enter the land under the command of Joshua.

They have significant victories, but they fail to fully conquer the land as they've been promised, as they've been commanded. And this leads to them becoming just like the brutal people around them. You remember our time in the book of Judges. They're finally in the land and they spend their first few generations in a death spiral of oppression and degradation and violence. Eventually, God agrees to give them a king.

And the first one, Saul, is kind of a false start. He ends in sin and tragedy. And next up, God anoints David. The greatest king Israel has ever known.

[3 : 45] And Israel begins its extremely brief moment in the sun as a nation. David was the greatest king Israel ever had.

He established Israel in strength. And his son Solomon, after him, massively expanded the wealth and prestige of Israel. It was the high watermark for Israel as a nation.

David and Solomon. But it ended so quickly because both David and Solomon planted the seeds of national downfall through their own sin.

So short in their whole history. One father, one son, and it was over. The nation split, followed by generations of civil war and idolatry and the breaking of God's covenant in every way.

It was all downhill from there. Israel was conquered and exiled and occupied. And even when God's people were turned to the land, it was under foreign rule.

[4 : 44] And then after that, as far as we can tell, for hundreds of years, God goes silent. And that's where Zechariah, the priest of Israel, finds himself in Luke chapter 1.

A childless old man in a failed nation, serving as a priest to a God who hasn't spoken for hundreds of years. Waiting.

Waiting. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting for God to do something. Waiting. Waiting for a day when all of Israel's sin and failure might be overcome by some new gracious act of God.

Waiting for that son of David that has talked about who would rule forever. Waiting. And I don't think it's too much of a stretch to imagine that there might have been some days when Zechariah was serving as priests that he thought to himself, what's the point?

What am I doing here? There is no end to this waiting. And then one day, God says, it's time.

[5 : 55] And he sends the angel Gabriel from his very presence to Zechariah. Luke 1, verses 11 through 19. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he'll be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he'll be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

And Zechariah said to the angel, How shall I know this, for I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years? And the angel answered him, I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

[7 : 01] So in this moment, not only does God promise Zechariah a child, He says that this child will be the prophet of God who will prepare the way for the Lord himself.

Zechariah and Elizabeth have been praying for a child for longer than I've been alive. And Israel have been waiting for God's salvation for longer than the United States has existed. And all of a sudden, Zechariah finds out that God is jumping into action now to end all of their waiting, and it's starting with him and his family.

Can you imagine the overwhelming joy and disbelief and giddiness of like, It's happening right now with me, with my wife.

And after Zechariah's son, John the Baptist, is born, that broken dam flood of joy is expressed in a Christmas song.

A really awesome Christmas song in Luke chapter 1, verses 67 through 79. And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we, being saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant.

[8 : 38] The oath that he swore to our father Abraham to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, John the Baptist, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high, to give light to those who sit in darkness in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

That's the joy at the end of the waiting. And I don't know if you noticed, but most of that song was not about Zachariah's son. Most of that song was about the other son.

That's the joy at the end of the waiting. And so what are you waiting for right now? Is it worthy of your waiting? Christmas is about the end of our waiting being found in Jesus.

And we live on the other side of that timeline-splitting, merciful, light-giving visit from on high. Jesus has come. He revealed God to us like never before.

He died to deal with our sin that ruins everything. He rose again to be a source of new life in the universe. He ascended to sit at the right hand of God.

[10:12] He sent his Holy Spirit to his people. And we get to live in that amazing part of history right now. Jesus has come.

But we Christians are also waiters. For everyone who believes in Jesus, waiting is part of our identity as well.

In 1 Thessalonians 1, 9 through 10, Paul is writing to these Christians about how the word of their conversion is spread. And he gives this awesome little summary of what it means to be a Christian. He says, For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

What does it mean to be a Christian? It means we've turned from our old empty ways of life. We've believed in the one true God, and now we wait for his Son from heaven, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

[11:22] We're waiters. And we've been waiting a long time. 2,000 years. But the Son is coming.

There is an end to our waiting, just like there was an end to Zachariah's. And at the end of the Bible, Jesus, who testifies to these things, says, Surely I'm coming soon.

And we say, Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.