



Jason Smith – The Whole Story of Christmas

Part 1 “Promise in the Silence”

The story of Christmas begins not with angels and shepherds, but with *silence*. For 400 years after Malachi, there was no prophetic word. But God's promise still stood.

The birth of John the Baptist breaks the silence and prepares the way for Jesus. This week we'll see that God's delays are not His denials—and His promises always arrive right on time.

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2, 6; Malachi 4:5–6; Luke 1:5–15a, 57-60

Consider which parts of my heart are “closed” or hardened and need God’s preparation to receive His work?

Feel reassured that God’s timing is perfect, and nothing is wasted when He is orchestrating His plan.

Surrender areas of your life that feel barren, broken, or in silence to God’s timing and control.

Good morning, church! I want to welcome you today as we step into the second Sunday of Advent, a season where we prepare our hearts to fully embrace the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Advent is a time of eager anticipation, a season when God’s people remember and celebrate the incredible truth that the eternal God took on flesh and came among us as a baby.

Today we also begin a new sermon series called The Whole Story of Christmas.

During this festive season, it's easy to focus on familiar pieces of the Christmas story, the manger, the shepherds, the wise men, and miss some of the deeper details that make the story so powerful.

Over the next few weeks, we want to look closer, to be inspired again by the fullness of what God has done. Before there was a stable and a star, there was a promise spoken into silence.

For 400 years between the Old and New Testaments, no prophetic word was recorded. To many, it seemed as though God had gone silent.

But the truth is, He was still very much at work, preparing to fulfill His promises in a way greater than anyone could imagine.

Remember the Christmas Eve feeling many of us had as children. Do you remember lying in bed, staring at the ceiling, knowing that something good was coming the next morning?

The tree was lit, the stockings were hung, the presents were waiting, but the night seemed to stretch on forever. It felt like silence. Waiting. Anticipation.

For kids, Christmas Eve is one of the hardest nights to sleep because the promise of what's coming is so big. Maybe you remember sneaking down the hallway, trying to catch a glimpse of what was under the tree.

You could see the boxes, neatly wrapped in shiny paper, bows sparkling under the lights. Maybe you longed for that one gift, a new bike, a dollhouse, a train set, or the latest gadget you'd circled in the Sears catalog.

Whatever it was, the excitement wasn't just about the gift itself. It was the waiting, the anticipation, the joy of knowing that morning would bring something good. The night was long, but the promise was worth holding onto.

In a way, that's what God's people experienced during those 400 years of silence between the Old and New Testaments. It must have felt like the longest "Christmas Eve" ever.

No prophets, no new words from God, just waiting. And yet, just like children on Christmas Eve, God's people were waiting for a promise that had already been made.

They didn't know exactly when or how, but they knew a Savior was coming. But here is the whole story, even in the silence, **God had already spoken.**

Long before the manger, long before the shepherds, God had given His people a promise to hold onto that was penned by a prophet named Isaiah.

Isaiah 9:2, 6

**The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;**

those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.
For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon^[b] his shoulder,
and his name shall be called^[c]
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

God's people had to trust in what they knew to be true, even when their circumstances suggested otherwise.

Isaiah spoke these words about 700 years before the birth of Jesus, during a time when the kingdom of Judah was facing political instability, social injustice, and the threat of powerful enemies.

People were weary, fearful, and longing for hope. Isaiah's prophecy wasn't just poetic words—it was a promise from God to a people who were hurting, a declaration that light would break into their darkness, that a child would come who would bring peace, justice, and salvation.

1. TRUST IN THE DARK WHAT YOU KNOW TO BE TRUE IN THE LIGHT

The incredible thing is, Isaiah's words were spoken centuries before they would come to pass. God's people had to hold onto a promise without seeing it fulfilled yet. They didn't have the nativity.

They only had the word of God and the faith that He is always faithful.

Sometimes, our lives feel a lot like the dark period between God's promises and their fulfillment. Maybe you've prayed for something for years and haven't seen it yet.

Maybe you're longing for healing, restoration, or clarity in a situation that seems hopeless.

Like the people waiting for the Messiah, we are called to hold onto what God has already said. His Word doesn't change. His promises don't expire.

Have you ever driven past a Christmas tree lot in town? The truth is, before those trees were on the lot, they were tiny seeds planted in the ground. For years, no one could see much happening.

The seeds were hidden beneath the soil, growing slowly, taking root, and being shaped by seasons of rain, sun, and snow. It would have been easy for someone walking past the freshly planted seeds to think nothing was happening.

But those tiny seeds were alive. They were growing, preparing to become something far greater than anyone could see at the moment.

That's exactly how God works in the silent seasons of our lives. Even when it feels like nothing is happening, His promises are taking root.

What He plants will grow, flourish, and come to fulfillment in perfect timing.

The final book of the Old Testament, Malachi, tells us what God was up to in those years of silence. They were not wasted. God never wastes anything.

Not a moment, not a season, not a single heartbeat of waiting is wasted. Even when the world felt still, God was preparing the way for something greater.

Malachi 4:5-6

⁵ “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. ⁶ And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.

These are the final words of the Old Testament. Malachi’s words remind God’s people, and us, that He is always at work behind the scenes.

He promised that before the “great and dreadful day of the Lord,” The prophecy speaks of Elijah, who was long dead by that time, but Elijah is a type, a foreshadowing, of the one God would send.

He would send a messenger to prepare the way, turning hearts and restoring relationships.

In other words, **God was orchestrating hearts, families, and circumstances so that when the Savior finally arrived, the world would be ready to receive Him.** God was laying the groundwork for the promised one.

2. GOD IS WORKING TO TURN HEARTS

In context, God's people had become divided, hardened, and distracted. Families were broken, and hearts were distant from Him. God knew that for His promises to be fully received, hearts needed to be ready.

A Savior was coming, but to receive Him, people needed to be prepared inside, not just outside. Christmas is full of decorations, lights, and gifts—but the true heart of Christmas isn't in the tree or the presents.

It's in hearts that are ready to welcome Jesus. God wants us to be spiritually prepared, just as He prepared the world for the first Christmas.

One of my favorite Christmas stories is about the Grinch who stole Christmas. **(SHOW PIC)** For years, his heart was “two sizes too small.” He watched the Whos down in Whoville celebrate Christmas with joy, music, and feasting, and he couldn't understand it.

The noise, the lights, the gifts, it all seemed meaningless to him because his heart was hardened. But then, something changed.

He saw that Christmas wasn't about the presents, the decorations, or the feasts, it was about the love, the community, and the joy that came from hearts being open.

His heart grew three sizes that day, and suddenly he was ready to celebrate Christmas in a way he had never before.

And that's precisely what God wants to do in our hearts this Christmas season. Just like the Grinch, our hearts can get small.

Life, pain, disappointment, busyness, and distractions can all make it difficult for us to truly see and celebrate Jesus.

Maybe there are relationships that are strained, hurts that have lingered, or patterns in our hearts that keep us from fully embracing the joy of Christmas. Malachi reminds us that God is still at work, turning hearts, restoring relationships, and preparing us to receive His Son.

Even now, in the midst of our routines, our distractions, and our busy schedules, God is quietly softening hearts, opening doors, and helping us see what really matters.

The whole story of Christmas, even all the way back in Isaiah and Malachi, gives us eyes to see how God prepares us for the love, joy, peace, and hope that God made available to His people then.

And this is where the story of John the Baptist comes in. All the promises, all the preparation, all the silent work of God, Malachi's prophecy points us directly to him. John didn't just appear by chance; he was God's carefully sent messenger, the one who would prepare the way for the Messiah.

Luke 1:5-15a, 57-60

⁵ In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah,^[a] of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

⁸ Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty,⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. ¹¹ And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

¹² And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. ¹³ 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.

¹⁴ And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

John's birth was miraculous. His parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, were advanced in years, and yet God intervened with a promise fulfilled in a way that could only be described as supernatural.

Just as Malachi foretold, He came to prepare hearts, to awaken people to the reality that God was about to break into history in the person of Jesus.

3. GOD'S PROMISES ARRIVE IN PERFECT TIME

John reminds us that God's timing is perfect. Those 400 years of silence weren't wasted; they were the quiet preparation before the great moment of God's intervention.

God's plans are never rushed, never forgotten, and never delayed without purpose. A barren womb. Years of waiting. A period of silence that must have felt endless to Zechariah and Elizabeth.

And yet, none of that could stop God. What He promised, He fulfilled: miraculously, beautifully, exactly when it was meant to happen. That's the same God at work in your life today.

There may be areas where you've prayed for breakthrough, for healing, for restoration. Maybe you've waited years, and it feels like nothing is happening.

Perhaps you've faced disappointment, heartbreak, or silence from God. But God is not silent. He is at work behind the scenes, shaping, preparing, and positioning you for His promises to come to life.

This Christmas, ask yourself: What in your life feels barren? What relationships, dreams, or seasons have felt like a long silence? What parts of your heart have grown small, like the Grinch's, or are ready to receive something new? Give those things to God.

Trust Him. Surrender them to His timing. He can take what seems impossible, hopeless, or "too late," and birth something new, something greater than we could ever imagine.

God's work in our lives isn't always visible at first. Seasons of waiting, silence, or "winter" may feel endless.

But God is orchestrating events, preparing hearts, and sending exactly what is needed at the perfect moment. This Christmas, remember that

God is faithful. He is at work turning hearts, restoring relationships, and bringing life where there seems to be none. Trust Him.

Let's pray together.