

Harris Creek Baptist Church

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Series: Till He Comes

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### **The Coming of Jesus**

Harris Creek how are we doing? Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas! I, on cyber Monday, saw a sweater on sale. And I just thought, “Hey, that would be the perfect sweater to wear Christmas Eve service.” It was a Christmas sweater, so this was a one time a year—it’s going to go, it’s going to come our, it’s going to get put away, and then I’ll maybe wear it next Christmas. I just thought, “That’s the perfect sweater!” It was like a double XL tee, which is hard to find, but a tall sweater. And I was like, “I’m getting it! I’m going for it!” It was on sale, and it came—it gave me the delivery date—it was a range. And it was a big range that stretched beyond Christmas and I thought, “Oh no!” When’s it getting here? And so now I feel like I’m gambling a little bit, like I don’t know when it’s going to get here; maybe it’s for next Christmas.

So every day I’d come home and I’d look out the front door to see if my sweater had arrived. I’m watching for it. And this is the time of year that packages show up, there’s a lot of online Christmas shopping that is done. So every day there’s usually an amazon package or something out there that is somebody’s Christmas gift or what not. So I would go out there with lots of false hope, and this wasn’t amazon, it wasn’t prime, it was something very different than prime. It was coming from overseas. I should have known better, but it was like, “Where is my sweater?” And last week it arrived. Such a joyous occasion! I was like, “This is awesome! My sweater is here!” I’m going to wear it, it got here just in time! I’ll wear it to Harris Creek’s Christmas service! The

next day my daughter in high school—16 year old—says, “Dad! I need a Christmas sweater for school tomorrow! Do you have one?” To which I say, “My sweater’s not going to fit you. You can’t wear one of my sweaters.” In the back of my mind I’m thinking, “I do have one...it’s new. I’ve got a new one...” And she goes, “Dad, Gen Z wears everything big! Don’t you know anything.” And I was like, “Well that’s really unfortunate...” And I’m thinking I don’t want to lend my sweater to you, but I’m a good good father... So I’m like, “Okay great! Yes! I just so happen to have a new sweater—haven’t even worn it yet, you can wear my new sweater.” So she wears it to school the next day. And then I see her at the end of the day in my sweater all baggy on her. And I say, “Hey, how did my sweater work out?” To which she says, “Yeah, about that...” And she turns her sleeve over, and it’s stapled together all the way up the sleeve. I said, “What did you do to my sweater.” She’s like, “Dad, it just had a string hanging out, and all I did was pull it. And it all came unravelled. My whole arm, like I just kept pulling the string, and all of a sudden my whole arms hanging out. I’m thinking don’t do that, and it’s stapled shut.

As I think about that, right, it's like, what is the string in your life that, if you pulled it, everything would come unraveled? In the Scripture, we're taught—maybe you've heard this—that Jesus is the red thread throughout the Bible. Now, this is something I grew up reading; the stories are painted on nurseries, you know, Noah's Ark with the rainbow or whatever, the Old Testament story, and it wasn't until I was an adult that I realized that all of these stories—historical stories like these—aren't just legends. These aren't—no, no, like a creative Disney writer sat down and thought, 'Oh, there's a guy with a colorful coat,' you know? These are historical stories that people documented, and I never realized that all of those stories were foreshadowing an event that one was to come, that we would place our hope and trust in. That he is the thread that holds

our life together. And I've heard that you cannot learn that, you don't realize that Jesus is the thread that holds your life together until you've tried to grasp for every other thread; whether it's finances, bank accounts, whether it's who you know, who you follow, whether it's your job, whether it's your friends' relationships, whether it's sports, right? Whatever you say, 'Hey, this is your GPA, this is what I'm going to put my hope on,' and if it's anything other than Jesus, you're going to see your whole life unravel at some point. Done ministry long enough, I've sat in enough family counseling sessions, marriage counseling sessions to understand that if you put your hope and trust and faith on anything other than Jesus, you get to the end of the game, and you realize you played it wrong. Nobody wants to do that, like nobody wants to realize, 'Oh gosh, I was playing the wrong game, I was keeping score in the wrong way, I was looking at the wrong scoreboard. I put points up in the wrong place.' But if we've relied on anything else to hold our lives together other than the red thread of Jesus, we have.

And so I want to look at Old Testament stories. Last week, we taught 14 chapters, and uh, as if that wasn't a big enough challenge, I thought today we would go through 39 books. Uh, we'll do it quickly, and kids, if you're in the room, I'm going to need your help. And so as I ask questions, this can be interactive, but we're going to look at the thread of Jesus woven throughout the Scriptures in the Old Testament. And then we're going to get to the New Testament, and before you leave today, I want to show you some unlikely characters at the Nativity. And so you know the Christmas story, hopefully, you've heard it at some point. It's told in all kinds of places, including Charlie Brown at this time of year. In the city of David, that means the city that David came from, Bethlehem, a Savior has been born, and he will be called the Messiah. And there's Mary, who was a virgin impregnated by God. There's Joseph, Jesus's stepfather. Uh, the

shepherds are the first to hear; the angels show up to them in a field and tell them, 'Hey, that a king has been born, you need to go and see him.' Right? In all of this—super humble beginnings—he's not born in a palace the king of the world, but in a barn, a place where animals were kept. And there he is.

And so as we tell that story and we look to all the Old Testament stories that point to that, I hope we learn something. And then again, as I said, we want to look at who he shows up to first. So as we look at this red thread, the Red Thread woven throughout the Scriptures, I'll say this: our family uses the Christmas Devo, the Jessie tree, and so this is just one where it has these ornaments and the ornaments tell a story that point to the coming savior, the one that we celebrate this time of year. And so just kind of as we go through that, the first ornament is the fruit. Now why would that be, kids? Who is that? Adam and Eve, right? We taught this week one that there was the fall; through one man, sin was ushered into the world. God says, 'Hey, you can enjoy all of this, but do not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil,' and they do. And then you see the gospel appear in Genesis chapter 3, three chapters into the first book of the Bible. It's called the Proto Evangelion, which means the First Gospel, that from the seed of that woman, Eve, there's going to come one that is going to be empowered to crush the head of the serpent and to set the people free. And that's what we're looking for as Jesus, as we're saying, 'Hey, come, Jesus, come, Lord Jesus, we need you, we see him show up right away in Genesis chapter three.

And as we come along, we get to a story that we skipped; it's like a giant boat. Why is that? Noah, Noah's Ark, you know, the animals came two by two, right? What you may not realize

about Noah is, in this story, this man is ridiculed by everyone because of what he's doing. It's never rained, and he's building a boat, a giant boat, an ark in the middle of a desert. Well, as the story progresses, what happens is God's wrath pours down from heaven, and anyone who places their trust in this wooden structure is raised up to Salvation. In the same way or a similar way, Jesus is going to show up, and God's wrath is going to rain down on him. He's going to protect us because of our sin from the wrath of God. As God's wrath reigns down on him, anyone who trusts in the work of the wooden cross will be lifted up to Salvation. These stories are more than what they seem.

As we continue the Red Thread throughout the Scriptures, we get to a ram. Anybody know why? Yeah, Abraham and Isaac. We looked at this story; it's crazy. Abraham's beloved son goes up a mountain, Mount Mariah, carrying wood on his back to be a sacrifice. God provides a ram caught in thorns in a thicket. That ram is a substitute sacrifice, a 10-cent Seminary word, substitutionary atonement. That ram is going to die in the place of Isaac so that Isaac can go free. And in a similar way, God is going to send his son to the world to die in our place so that we don't have to so that you and I can live forever and ever. And just as a reminder, it's history; this happened. These stories are recorded in these books. And so as we follow the red thread, we get to this coat. Anybody know why? Joseph, not Jesus's stepdad, but Joseph with his 11 brothers. Joseph betrayed by his brother, sold into slavery for 20 pieces of silver. He goes into the tomb of prison, raises up, and is seated at a position of authority to save the nations. And in a similar way, Jesus is going to come into this world, be betrayed by those closest to him for 30 pieces of silver. He's going to be resurrected from the dead, be seated at the right hand of the father in a position of authority to save the nations.

Follow the thread; we get to this door with blood on the sides and the top, who does this represent? Moses, the deliverer. Ten plagues were sent, the last one is that the firstborn son is going to die unless you're protected by the blood of a spotless lamb placed on the doorway side to side and up top so that it runs down. Thousands of years before anyone saw a cross, they make the sign of the cross over the doorway to protect the people inside so that they would not die. And one day, in a similar way, Jesus is going to come into the world as the Spotless Lamb to die, and our sins would be covered by his blood so that we would not die but have eternal life.

These stories, like it, it's too creative to be written by anyone; it's history, right? And so here's one, it's a window, a window with a red cord hanging out of it. Anybody know who that is? Rahab. So as God's people are going to go into the promised land, they send spies to scope it out. Those spies are certainly going to be caught and killed, except for one prostitute named Rahab. She says, 'I will protect you,' she covers for them and says, 'In exchange for this, will you let my family and I live?' They said, 'Hey, we will. But outside your window, hang a Scarlet thread, hang a scarlet cord. And when we come in and devour the city, you and your family will be set free.' In a similar way, God is going to send his son into the world, and his blood will be a sign for us that we will go free, that we will not die but live forever and have eternal life.

In that same story, the next ornament is a Ram's Horn, which would have been, you know, an ancient trumpet from Antiquity. Anyone know who that's for? It's a tough one. Joshua, Battle of Jericho. They're going to take possession of the promised land; they're going to fight a war. But they're going to do it in a really interesting way rather than actually grab their swords and spears and say, 'Hey, let's go.' God says, 'I want you to march around this city for seven days, and on the

seventh day, I want you to blow your trumpet.' As they blow their trumpet, the walls come tumbling down, and they were able to seize the city. In a similar way, Jesus is going to come into the world, live a perfect life, die for our sins, raised from the dead, and he's coming back. At the blast of a trumpet, we are going to be ushered into the promised land, and all the evil in this world will come tumbling down; it will be destroyed, and we will be able to go into a place where we will dwell forever and ever and ever.

These stories, there're more than what they seem; there's another story being told. As we continue to progress through the Old Testament, we get to the crown of a king. Anybody know who that is? An unsuspecting king, a shepherd watching over his father's sheep. There's a battle being fought, but it's not really being fought because the Philistines have one guy mocking God's people on the Philistines' behalf. David basically goes to see his brothers at war, and he comes carrying the charcuterie board, you know, some cheese and crackers. And he hears Goliath, you know, murmuring murderous threats against God's people, blaspheming God's people; he's like, 'What's wrong with you? Are you not going to do something here?' And they're like, 'Hey, be quiet, little man, be quiet. You don't know what you're talking about.' And he's saying, 'Hey, send somebody to fight me.' David's like, 'Hey, I'll go fight him.' Dude, you have a slingshot; are you serious? He goes, 'No, I've got the most high God on my side. I'm going to put a rock through his forehead.' So it's an interesting kind of battle. David is called the champion; in Hebrew, it's the bo-between; it's the one who fights on behalf of an army. One day, God's going to defeat evil, but we don't even need to do anything; we don't need to go to battle. God fights the war on our behalf. Then David, that Shepherd boy, he becomes king of the land, and it says the Messiah, the one who's to come, the one we're looking for, is going to sit and reign on his throne.

Then there's a lion, anybody know why? Who is it? Daniel and the Lion's Den. King Darius says, 'You can't pray.' Daniel, being a faithful man, prays every day; he doesn't even hide. He sits at his own window now because of the king's decree; he has to be thrown into the lion's den to be devoured by hungry lions. He goes in, and everybody thinks that it means certain death. The king, King Darius, goes the next day and finds him alive; he says, 'Do not fret, for the Lord has sent an angel to protect me.' And in the same way, one is going to come who would go into the tomb; it certainly was death, except for 3 days later, he raises out of the grave. And in the same way or a similar way that the kingdom that Darius ruled over all then repented and turned their hearts and their eyes toward the lord, the people of this land would repent and turn their eyes and the hearts toward the Lord.

Then I have a whale; who's that? That's right, nailed it! The prophet Jonah. God says, 'I want you to go and call the Ninevites to repentance.' Ninevites are bad people; Jonah's like, 'No way, I'm out.' He runs to Tarshish; God sends a giant fish to swallow him. Jonah sits in the tomb of that fish for three days and three nights; he's spat out on the shore, and the Ninevites repent when they see the resurrected Jonah, if you will. And in a similar way, Jesus is born in Bethlehem, lives a perfect life; he's going to go to the cross and be placed in a tomb for three days and three nights. And when he raises from the dead, he calls the people, you and I, to repentance.

Repentance means that we would turn from our way and follow the one true God.

These stories right now, it can be indicting for some of us; it's like children know them, and some of you are realizing for the first time, like wow, they're not as they seem; they point to a bigger story. And that's not just it because then you have the prophets, right? Isaiah, Jeremiah, these guys that said, 'Hey, there's one to come.' In Isaiah chapter 7, it says that he's going to be



born of a virgin, that the Messiah is going to be born of a virgin. This is 700 years before the birth of Christ. In chapter 9, he says, 'For unto us a child is born, unto he says, 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and he will be called wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting father, Prince of Peace.'

And then you go into Micah, who says he will be born in the town of Bethlehem. 700 years again before Jesus is born, we're told that he's going to be born in the town of Bethlehem. Bethlehem means the House of Bread; you have the bread of life placed in a feeding trough in a town called The House of Bread. There are so many clues, so many clues in the Scriptures telling us who God is and what he's doing. And then you have Malachi, who references the temple, which was destroyed in 70 AD, giving us a small window for Jesus to show up on the scene prior to the temple being destroyed. These prophets, they were the voice of God. God was speaking through them. There's really not a credible critic saying that they weren't written hundreds of years before Jesus shows up. But nobody listened; everyone was trying to predict when the Messiah would come. But then they gave up; they got busy with sports, work, marriage, raising kids, and life. They got distracted.

So then there was 400 years of nothing, like 400 years of silence. Nobody's talking on behalf of God; nobody hears God until watch... (Video of painting Old Testament Stories, tracing history until the Messiah in the Manger)

Galatians 4:4-5 says, '**But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption to sonship, so that we might become God's children.'**

Twenty-one years ago, I was at a club, and someone invited me to church. As I've said many times from the stage, I sat in the back row, hungover. I wanted to win at life, wanted to be a millionaire before I was 30. I had the car, the condo, the job, the watches, and the suits. And I started wrestling with what's it all about. We're all going to die. What's going to happen to us? We don't even know our great-great-grandfather. It's like, who's going to leave a mark on this world that's really going to last? And I thought if there's a God, that I got to know Him. And I started looking at world religions—the Hindu faith, the Buddhist faith, the Jewish faith, Islamic faith, you know, and just kept going.

I kept tripping over a baby in a manger, born 2023 years ago, in an event that reset the calendar that every atheist acknowledges him by the date on their iPhone or Android. It's like, how did he do this, right? That's what we celebrate at Christmas. You should feel three things. One is joy that God came here, made His dwelling among us, that God is with us—Emmanuel. The joy from that, that we've been set free. The second thing is hope that we're going to live forever. Like, we know the world is broken, and there's disease and death and sorrow and grief here. But one day, we're going to be somewhere where none of those things exist.

But also, there's a weight to it. That baby, it's a crazy story, that baby born in Bethlehem was born to die, that his blood would be shed, and it was going to be gruesome. And all the religious people, all the people in the synagogues, all the people that gathered just like this, just like us here, all of them missed it. There wasn't a Pharisee or a Sadducee or a rabbi or a teacher of the law, a teacher of the Torah present—none of them. They weren't there; they all missed it. They got caught up in their religious games. Let's go to this place, let's read from the scrolls, let's go do

a Bible study. They did their things in and out and in and out and in and out, and they missed it. Nobody was looking for him except for three guys—Magi.

It's crazy, shows up in Matthew 2. It's in your Bible, and I don't know that we've ever been like, 'Wait, who are these guys?' But you know, Protestants, we don't put a lot of weight at times—I'll say, enough weight—on church tradition. But we actually know a lot about these guys. There's been other history books in reference to them. There's cave writings that date back to the 3rd century that talk about the Magi. You might hear, maybe there were more; we just know there were three from the gifts. We actually, there's considerable evidence that there were three; we even know their names: Balthazar, Caspar, and Melchior. They came from the East, most likely Arabia. In fact, we actually have their remains; you may not know that, but we have their bones. They've been found, preserved, and kept. The Magi, almost any nativity set that you see, will have these three guys bringing gifts to the king. They traveled nearly a thousand miles. Think about how crazy this is: the first people to worship Jesus were Pagan Sorcerers, astrologers, not one religious person. He came to set the captives free; he came to seek and save the lost. That's Scripture, right?

This is what it says in Matthew 2: "**Then Herod, Herod's King (not a good guy), called the Magi secretly and found out from the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me so that I may go and worship him.'** That's not what he wanted to do. **'After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was born. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child and his mother Mary, and**

**they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.”**

Why gold? Because he's a king, king of the universe, king of all Kings; he's God. This gold would have funded their exile through Egypt. Joseph, being a carpenter, would have no means of making money when he's on the run, and so they would have used this gold to fund that.

Frankincense—the word baked in there is incense. We see in Exodus that frankincense was offered by the high priest as worship to God. Why? Because Jesus is the high priest; he's the ultimate go-between. You don't have to confess your sins to a priest, if you will. You don't have to go to a certain kind of place to be absolved. Like, you and I can talk to God right now because of Jesus; the veil was torn, and we have access to the one who created the heavens and the Earth because of the baby in the manger.

And myrrh, it's a crazy one—myrrh was the first-century embalming fluid. It's a weird gift for a baby; it's the equivalent of showing up to the baby shower with a bottle of formaldehyde, like, 'Here you go.' 'Oh, thanks for that, neat, neat.' Because he was human; he was born to die. Do you understand the significance of this? He could die for your sins. Who's going to die for my sins? For someone to die for all of our sins, whoever would trust in him, they would have to be an eternal God to pay an eternal payment. So, fully God, but they also would have to be the exact representation of the ones they die for—fully human, fully God, fully human. There's only been one: that child. There's 33 perfect years and died the death that you and I deserve.

And we think, 'Man, why are we talking about the cross so much at Christmas?' Because you look forward to the Cradle so that you could look forward to the Cross so that you could look forward to the second Christmas. He's coming back. And you've got to understand the religious people missed it. And I think there's such a temptation for you and me to get so swept up in the current of this world, to try to win at the world, only to die and find out we lost at life. And I tell you, if I got you for one time a year or two times a year, I'm going to beg and plead: listen, you pull that thread, you know, what is the thread that, if pulled, your whole life unravels. If it's anything other than Jesus, you're going to find out. You know what I'm saying? If the thread that could be pulled in your whole life unravels is anything other than Jesus, you're going to find out one day what it is, because it's probably going to happen. And I hope today is the day you say, 'You know what, 2024, I'm leaving the world behind. Man, I'm going in 100%.'

And if you're here and you're about to find out, truly, if you're really in with this Jesus guy, here's how you know, you're ready? You tell people. You tell them you found something good, and you want to share it with others. So, when you go to eat, you tell the server. When you stay somewhere, you tell the person behind the front desk. When you work with someone, you're like, 'Hey, can I tell you?' And they're going to think you're so weird because you think a baby was born in Bethlehem, who lived a perfect life, died, and came back to life. That's crazy, unless it's true. Unless it's true. And if you believe it, I just don't know. I'd love for someone to share with me because I'll stop saying this. If you can believe it and not share it, I don't know how that's possible, but I'm open. I'm teachable. I'll listen. I want to hear.

But what we're going to do in a minute, we're going to sing a song, and then we're going to light a candle, do our candlelight service, and that light is going to spread throughout this room. And

don't pull out your lighters, okay? Because we'll know you smoke. No, I'm kidding. Don't pull out your lighters. Don't pull out your lighters because what's going to happen is these guys back here, top row, it's going to be angsty, man. They're going to be waiting for that light to get to them. And in the same way, there are people all throughout this city. I talk to them almost every single day who don't know Jesus. I think they do. They go to church. They grew up in church. They own Bibles. They've memorized Scriptures. But they don't know Jesus. And they're waiting for you to make it clear for them.

Father, as we lift our voices to you, remind us who you are and what you've done for us. That we sit here with the joy of Christmas, the hope of Christmas, and the weight of Christmas until He appears. Till He appears. Abraham, till He appears. Joshua, till He appears. Joseph, till He appears. Daniel, till He appears. Jonah, till He appears. Moses, till He appears. Rahab, till He appears. Ruth, these stories pointing us to a greater story. And so, Lord, we worship you. In Jesus' name. Amen.