

Harris Creek Baptist Church  
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Series: A Critical Christmas  
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## God's Promise to Zechariah

Luke 1

Well, Merry Christmas Harris Creek! It's so good to see you here this morning. Whether you're here in the auditorium or out there in the lobby, we're so glad you're here. For those of you out there in the lobby, man I know that you showed up this morning not expecting to be sitting out there. You expected to be inside this room, but I've got good news. I sent our pastor JP out there to check and he told me the Holy Spirit is out there. So y'all are going to be fine! It's going to be a great morning whether you're in here or out there. We're so glad that you're here this morning.

My role on staff is the college pastor. And as the college pastor here at Harris Creek, a part of my role is that I get to do a fair amount of weddings. When I do weddings, I typically do their premarital counseling as well. Whenever we do premarital counseling - in fact I had a premarital counseling meeting last night - one of the questions that they typically ask me is, 'what do you remember about your wedding?' 'Tell me about your wedding or some of the great things that happened at your wedding.' You know weddings are a funny thing because they're one of the most important days of your life, but it all just ends up being kind of a blur. And it's weird that the types of things that I remember, because I only really remember a handful of things.

I remember one, that I was absolutely terrified in like the green room backstage as we were about to go out. I was with all my groomsmen, and I was absolutely mortified. But maybe not for the reason that you think. I was terrified because one of my groomsmen - I don't know why we did this - but I have never put on my ring before. And he gave me his ring. He's like, 'Hey, you should just try on my ring, see how it feels.' So, I put on his ring, and I couldn't get it off. So, I'm telling you it's right before we're about to go out there and I've got guys trying to grab soap, lotion, ice, whatever it is to get this ring off. Otherwise, it was going to look like I had gotten married to someone else earlier that day. That's one thing I remember.

Another thing I remember is that for whatever reason, on the dance floor, I ended up looking like this. (Picture shows on screen of Nate wearing a large blonde wig.) I mean, I was just wiggling out the whole time. I don't know how we got there. I don't know who brought it, but there's a bunch of pictures of me looking like that. I don't know why I remember that, but I remember that.

Another thing I remember from my wedding is something that I realized on our honeymoon. Because on our honeymoon we were just kind of debriefing everything and talking about what a great experience it was. All the things we got to do; all the things that we got to see; and all the people that we got to talk to. And my wife was like, 'You know, I never saw that guy.' I'm not

going to say his name. 'I never saw that guy, one of your good buddies.' I was like, 'Wait, you're right! I don't remember talking to him.' This is a guy that I've known for a while, and we've spent a lot of life together. I was like, 'It's weird that I never ran into him or his girlfriend. I didn't talk to them. Surely they were there.' So, we were looking at some pictures and we couldn't find them in any pictures. Then while I'm on my honeymoon I'm texting my family and texting some of my friends, 'Hey, did this guy show up? Was he there?' I got a response from one of my buddies saying, 'Hey yeah, we all knew that he wasn't there that day, but we just didn't want to tell you.'

It was so disappointing. I was so bummed out that that this guy, a good friend, and his girlfriend had RSVP'd. Yes, we spent about \$70 a head, whatever it might have been for them. They RSVP'd yes, and then they bailed, and I didn't hear anything. You know it's so disappointing when people don't do what they say they're going to do. I thought he was going to show up. I thought he was going to be there and then he wasn't. It's so disappointing when people let you down. And yet all of us experienced that at some point in life. Maybe it's not people not showing up to your wedding. Maybe you've had a boss who's promised you a promotion or a raise year after year after year, and meanwhile you just never get it. Maybe you've had a spouse or a friend promise that they're going to change and then year after year they just don't. Or maybe you have had a boyfriend, or a girlfriend, promise you forever, only to break up with you. It's devastating and damaging whenever people don't do what they say they're going to do, but that's the reality of life!

But we're used to being let down by people and the more we let down by people, the more we build up this fortress around our heart because we don't like that feeling of being let down. So, we eventually just kind of stop trusting people and we end up living a jaded life. And I recognize this even in myself during Christmas season. Because in the Christmas season, you know kids are just dazzled by it all. But then me, at my age, I turn on the Hallmark Channel and I just roll my eyes. I'm like the mailman doesn't always fall in love with the owner of Kim's Christmas Cookies - that's not how life goes. Life is harder than that. It's more complex than that and people will let you down. Life is not a fairy tale and if this is our experience, we begin to let that experience flow into our theology.

We might not say it out loud, but deep down we kind of think that God is like the people in our life. That maybe He's not going to do what He says He's going to do. And silently we begin to question His promises, His provision, His presence, and we're just not really sure we can trust Him. Because we're used to being let down.

This morning what we're going to do is we're going to try to answer the question 'Can God be Trusted?' Can God be trusted? What about the story of Christmas speaks to the reliability of Jesus? Is He a God who will do what He says or is He flaky like everybody else? This morning we're starting off a brand-new sermon series here at Harris Creek called A Critical Christmas. What we're going to do in these weeks ahead is we're going to critically examine the story of Christmas. We're going to dive deeply into the details. Because many of us know the high level story of Christmas: there's a baby, there's a manger, there's wise men and donkeys, and apparently a drummer boy - we get all of those things about the Christmas story. But what we

want to do in these next few weeks is dive deeply into the story. We want to critically examine the story of Christmas because the story of Christmas is so critical to our faith.

And this morning, we're going to start where the Christmas narrative starts. We're going to start in a place that you might not realize that the Christmas narrative starts here. In the Gospel of Luke - Luke 1 - he starts not with the birth of Jesus but with the birth of someone else, the birth of John the Baptist. In Luke, as he's writing this gospel, he interweaves these two stories because they help us understand one another. If we're going to understand the birth of Jesus, we really need to understand the birth of John the Baptist. This is why Luke starts here.

And just some set up on the Gospel of Luke. Luke is one of four gospels that start off the New Testament. It goes Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. And although it's the third book in the New Testament, it doesn't mean that chronologically, it's the third book. It starts at the beginning of the New Testament because they're all talking about Jesus' life. They all start this brand-new era, this brand-new age. And everything prior to that is what we call the Old Testament. And to make a long story short, to oversimplify it, in the Old Testament God made everything perfect and then humankind decided to sin and rebel against God. There's a brokenness, there's an imperfection now to this earth. For the rest of those pages, God keeps telling His people 'I'm going to make it right. I'm going to send a Messiah.' Over and over and over again, He keeps saying, 'I'm coming. I'm coming. I'm coming. I'm coming.' And then it stops. For 400 years, God's people don't hear anything from God. The last book in the Old Testament is a book called Malachi and God has been speaking to His people and then Malachi hits and then there's nothing.

For 400 years, God's people are waiting. They're waiting on a Messiah. They're waiting for God to speak. They're waiting, waiting, waiting in the silence. After 400 years, God breaks His silence. Luke 1, this is what God says, this is how He breaks His silence to His people. He breaks it to a man named Zechariah. You might not know about Zechariah, but Zechariah was an old man who was also a priest. He had spent all of his life doing his priestly duties. When we pick up on this story, this is what he's doing. He's beside the altar burning incense. Whenever the priest would burn incense, the people would gather around and pray to God, because when incense was burned, smoke from the incense would go up to heaven and the people would pray. And as they saw the incense going up to heaven, they'd be reminded that their prayers go up to heaven as well.

So, this is what's going on in this story and this is how God decides to break His silence after 400 years. Luke 1:10. **And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God.**

Now, verse 17 is important. Lean in. Remember this, remember this. Verse 17 - **And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**”

So, Zechariah is doing what he's been doing all day, every day for years and years and years. He's going through the same old routine. He's still burning incense, he's still waiting on a Messiah, he's still waiting for God to speak. He's still waiting on his son. He's still waiting on a daughter. In the middle of that stillness, God speaks. He sends an Angel with a message saying you and your wife Elizabeth, even in your old age, are about to have a son and there's going to be something unique about this guy. He's going to have the Holy Spirit even from the time he's born.

And then the last thing the Angel says is so fascinating in verse 17. Remember this, as I said, God's people have not heard from God for 400 years. The last thing they heard from Him was the book of Malachi. That was the last thing. And the last thing that God spoke to the people in the end of the Old Testament was Malachi 4:5-6, see if you can catch a theme here. This is what God says at the end of the Old Testament, **“See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.”** You see the last thing that God says in the Old Testament is the first thing he says in the New Testament. He's saying Zechariah, all of this stuff that I've promised all this stuff that you've been waiting for is about to come true. So, buckle up and get ready because there's a brand-new day that's about to break forth right here, right now.

So, what God does is He sends an Angel with a promise to Zechariah, saying here is what I will do. Which is point number one. The first thing we can learn from this story of Zechariah is that God makes promises to His people.

### 1. God Makes Promises to His People

If you've been in church, you've heard that before. You've heard pastors say that and that's supposed to be encouraging. It's supposed to be uplifting. God makes promises to His people. It sounds great, but it's a little bit more complicated than what it sounds. Think about this, how would you be feeling if you are Zechariah? After you get over the initial shock of seeing an Angel, what's going through your mind? He spent his whole life waiting. He's been waiting for the Messiah, waiting for God to speak, waiting for a child. And then God appears. Then what does he say? ‘Wait some more.’ Let me read again what the Angel says to Zechariah. This is what the Angel says, **“Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the**

**hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”**

You see Zechariah has been waiting and waiting and waiting and waiting and God shows up and says wait some more, here's what I will do. You know what's not all that helpful? Is whenever someone tells you what they will do. If you're a parent, you realize this in this season. If you have kids asking when they're going to get their Christmas gifts, it doesn't go over all that well when you say, 'Hey, don't worry. You will get them.' That's not a good enough for response for them. It's not a good enough response for kids, but it's not good enough for us as adults either.

Recently, my wife and I, we had a daughter. Which is just fantastic, but there are some life changes that come with having kids. Kids can be expensive. There's a financial cost there and my wife is no longer working full-time, which has been such a sweet season for our family, but just means that our financial situation has changed compared to a couple of years ago. And here's the thing, we're fine. We've got more than what we need, but there are times when I can just get stressed out. I'm just like God, how are you going to provide? How? How are you going to come through? And sometimes I talk to older people about that. I'm like, 'Man, this is the season of life that we're in and here's kind of our situation.' And more often than not they say, 'Nate, don't worry about it. You will be OK. You will be OK.' And I know it's supposed to be encouraging, but I'm just like that's not helpful. I don't want to know that I will be OK. I want to feel OK right now! Because when I hear that, I feel like I'm drowning in the middle of a lake and someone from shore is going, 'Hey, you will be safe. You will be safe!'

I don't want to hear that I will be safe, I want to feel safe right now. I want you to do something about it right now. And so often in Scripture, God doesn't just change things right now, He talks about what He will do. It's not just in the Old Testament. It's not just to Zechariah. It's found in the New Testament as well. Promises to us about God, about what God will do.

- **Philippians 4:19 ~ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**
- **John 4:14 ~ ...but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will be coming them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.**
- **John 14:2-3 ~ My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I'm going to prepare a place for you? And if I'm going to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me. That you may also be where I am.**

And again, maybe this is just me, but sometimes I read those verses and I just think God it would be helpful if you didn't just tell me what you will do, and how about you do some of those things right now. I don't want to wait on those promises to be fulfilled, I just want to see them happen right now. It can be frustrating that, so often in Scripture, God talks about the future. He talks about what He will do. Why do you think that is? Why is so much of Scripture filled with God saying, 'Here's what I will do. Here's what will happen.' Because when He talks about the future, what type of response is required from us? Faith. Faith.

Because the essence of faith is believing God for a future reality that we can't possibly see in our current situation. Hebrews 11:1 says, **Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance. about what we do not see.** You see, we've got a God that makes promises to us because when He makes promises to us, it requires a faithful response.

The first thing we can learn in the story of Zechariah is that God makes promises to His people, but here's the difficulty of that. Here's where it gets a little bit uncomfortable. It's hard to trust God with things later when it doesn't feel like He's doing His job now. Like why should I trust him with my future when I don't like what He's doing with my present. I know that not all of us feel that way currently, but oftentimes during the Christmas season those thoughts and feelings can well up in people.

The Christmas season can bring painful reminders that your life is not perfect. Your life is not the Hallmark movie. Your life is not how you envisioned it to be. Because a lot of times during the Christmas season, you could feel like God has forgotten you. Because while everyone else has the perfect family to celebrate with, your parents are divorced, or they're just barely married. Or the Christmas season is a painful reminder that you and your wife are still childless, because every single Christmas card you get feels like another birth announcement. Or you have been so badly wanting to be married, and all of your friends are either married or getting married and you feel like God doesn't see you or hear you. Or the Christmas season is a painful reminder that that family member is no longer sitting at your table. Maybe they've passed away or ran away. And you may be looking at your season of life in this Christmas season and you're like, 'God, how am I supposed to trust you with my future when I don't feel like I can trust you with my present? And I don't want to hear what you're going to do in some faraway fairy tale land, I want you to do something now. I don't want to hear about what you will do; I want you to do something right now in this moment. I'm sick and tired of waiting on what you will do! Would you do something now?'

You know, I don't think we're the only people who question God's promises like that. I don't think it's wrong to feel that way because a lot of people in Scripture respond that way. I think we're prone to believe that everyone in the Bible just automatically believed God, but that's not the case. Even in this story, when the Angel appears and says here's what God will do, Zechariah responds with some questioning. And this is what he says in verse 17, **Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."** You know, doesn't he just sound tired? Like life has kicked his tail. He spent his whole life waiting for the Messiah, but meanwhile he's still under the oppression of Rome. He spent his whole life waiting for a child, meanwhile he and his wife still remain childless. And I read this, and it just sounds like he's lost the energy to wait on God. He's lost the energy to trust Him. He's just not sure he can trust his God anymore, because Zechariah was used to being let down.

And some of you are used to being let down as well. Maybe you've been let down by a spouse, you've been let down by a boss, by a coworker, by your kids, by friends, by family members and some of you even feel let down by God. You're not sure you can trust Him. You know this is a theme in Scripture, you're not alone. Oftentimes in Scripture, God will make a promise and then God's people will question His promise. It happened with Abraham, Moses, Gideon, Zechariah,

and I could go on and on and on. God makes a promise and then God's people question His promise. Which leads us to point number two.

## 2. God's People Often Question God's Promises

You know, I don't think God is thrown off by our questions or our concerns or our doubts. We don't need to hide those things because God can handle those things. But as we're about to read, God does not respond kindly to Zechariah's doubting and questioning here. It's because of who Zechariah was. It's because of this unique situation. Because Zechariah was an old man and he had followed God all of his life. But he wasn't just a man who had followed God all of his life, he was a priest. So, what he's been doing all of his life is he's been teaching the story of God to the people of God for years and years and years. He's taken the Old Testament stories; he's repackaged them and taught them to the people of God. So, when the Angel of God appears and brings him this message by saying, even in your old age, you and your wife will have a child, it's confusing that Zechariah would respond by saying, 'How can I be sure of this?'

Think about this. If you were raised in church, if you went through Sunday school, if you read through the Bible, why is his response so confusing? Because if you know the Bible, if you know what God's done before, why is this response confusing? Think of some of the most important people in the Old Testament. One of, if not the most important person in the Old Testament, was Abraham, Father Abraham. He's the father of the Jewish people. His story is fascinating. If you don't know his story, here's what it is. Genesis 17:15 - God also said to Abraham, **"As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."** Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, **"Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?"** And then she did.

See Zechariah knew this story. He taught this story. He had this story memorized. Zechariah said he believed this story. And yet when the Angel of God comes and says, 'Zechariah, I've got a message for you that in your old age you and your wife Elizabeth are about to bear a son.' It is confusing that he would respond with saying, 'How can I be sure of this?' Bro. You can be sure of this because God did it before and if He did it before He can do it again. If you believe that He gave Abraham a child in his old age, He surely can give you a child in your old age. What God did before, He could do again. But here's the problem in Zechariah's life, and I bet it's the problem in your life as well. Zechariah is struggling trusting God with his future because he's forgotten what God has done in the past because he's so concerned about his present. Zechariah is struggling to trust God with his future because he's forgotten what God has done in the past because he's so concerned with his present. This happens to Zechariah, and it happens to us again.

In my instance - we have a baby; wife goes down in hours. I'm like, 'God, are you going to provide for us or are you going to come through?' All of my life is a story of God's faithfulness. I've never gone without a need. I've never had want. And yet, in the moment I feel like God's not going to come through. I forget all that and I go, 'God what are you going to do with me? Am I

going to be OK?’ And I struggle to trust Him with my future simply because I don't necessarily like what He's doing with my present.

And this is where Zechariah is at in this story. He's questioning the future faithfulness of God because he's questioning his present situation. Take a look again at what he says to the Angel. Zechariah asked the angel, verse 18 - **“How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.”** God, I know you're telling me what you will do, but how can I trust what you will do when what I am doesn't line up with that? And this questioning of God follows this format. How? Because I am \_\_\_\_\_. When you look at that verse, he's saying how will this be, because I am too old.

And the more I looked at that format, the more I realized that that's often how we question God as well. Our questioning of God often looks like this: How God? Because I am \_\_\_\_? And we can fill in that blank with any number of things. Any number of things that are going on in our current situation as reasons that God won't come through in the future. And we can ask Him, ‘God, how will this be because I am not happy in my marriage.’ ‘God, how because I am an anxious person.’ ‘God, how because I am not wealthy.’ ‘God, how because I am not well-known.’ ‘God, how because I am a failure.’ ‘God, how because I am...’ ‘God, how because I am...’ ‘God, how because I am...’ And God gives us an I will response and we say, ‘God, how because I am...’ ‘How because I am...’ Point number two, the thing we can learn from this story is that often God makes promises, but then God's people often question God's promise.

So, let's see how the angel responds to Zechariah's questioning. Zechariah has just said, ‘How can I be sure of this?’ And hear is what the angel says in response right after, verse 19 - **The angel said to him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.”** So, Zechariah questions the angel and the angel just gives such a baller response – I love it. Zechariah is like, ‘How can I be sure of this?’ and Gabriel goes, ‘Because I am Gabriel. Because I stand in the presence of God.’ Like, do my wings not help? Do you want me to flap them a little bit more? Does me appearing out of nowhere not help you believe? My name is Gabriel! I stand in the presence of God, the God you say you believe in. The God you have been telling everyone, for all your life, to trust. I have come from Him with a message to say that you will have a child. So, it is confusing that you would say, ‘How can I be sure of this?’ You can be sure of this because the one who sent me is sure.

### 3. God Keeps His Promises

The third thing we can learn from this story is that God keeps His promises. You see Gabriel says you don't need more signs or assurances. I don't need to do anything else other than to tell you where I came from. He says, ‘My word is good because the one who sent me is good for it.’ And I want to show you something that I noticed in the Scripture. If you have been here for a long time, you have heard me say this before, but here is what I noticed in Scripture. As I was looking at Zechariah's questioning of God, I was just so interested by the phrasing of it. When he questioned God and said, ‘How will this be, because I am?’ ‘How because I am...’ ‘How



because I am...' The more I looked at that, the more intrigued I got with it. Because the more I looked at the phrase, 'How because I am...' I realized another story in Scripture.

There is another story in Scripture where once again God's messenger appears out of nowhere, with a promise from God and then once again God's people question God's promise. It is in Exodus 3. If you have never read it before, it is a story where God appears in a burning bush. He speaks a promise to Moses. He says, 'Moses, I will use you to lead my people up and out of Egypt and slavery and into freedom.' Once again, God is making a promise and once again God's people are questioning God's promise. This is what Moses says, Exodus 3:11 - **But Moses said to God, "Who am I... Again it is that same thing! God says, "Here is what I will do.' And we say, 'How will this be because I am...' 'How because I am...' ..."Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"**

I love this so much! He says, 'I am who I am. Tell them I am has sent me to you. You are to call me I am.' So, once again God says, 'Moses here is what I will do.' And Moses says, 'How because I am?' 'How because I am?' You see the answer to Moses' question, the answer to Zechariah's question, the answer to our question is the exact same as our question, we just need to move the question mark. Because when we are saying, 'God how can this be, because I am?' He is going, 'How? Because I am!'

'Because I am the one who when I say I will part the seas, I am going to part the seas!' 'Because I am the one who when I say I will provide a Promised Land, I will provide a Promised Land.' 'Because I am the one when I say that I will slay a giant, I slay a giant!' 'Because I am the one when I say I am going to come again, I am come again!' 'Because I am the one who when I say I will defeat death, I will defeat death!' 'Because I am the one who when I say I am giving you an eternal paradise in heaven, I will give you an eternal paradise in heaven!' How will this be? Because I am the faithful one. I am the righteous one. I am the trustworthy one. I am the one you can rely on, because I am a God who does what I say I will do!

So, here is why we needed to start here. Here is why Luke starts here. In Luke 1, why he interweaves these two stories. The story of Jesus' birth and John the Baptist birth are so similar, and their point is so much the same. The point of those stories is God saying, 'I am going to do what I promised.' In the story of John the Baptist, John the Baptist's birth fulfils a prophecy. In Malachi 4 God has said, 'I will send Elijah. Someone who will go ahead and tell of Jesus.' John the Baptist's birth fulfils a prophecy.

But Jesus' birth and Jesus' life fulfils more. I don't know if you know this. There are over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament that come through during Jesus' time on earth. In fact, these are things that Jesus couldn't just manufacture on His own. These are things that happened outside

of His control. Because in the moment He was born, He was born of a virgin, born in Bethlehem, and He was born in the line of David. All of those things fulfilled prophecies years and years and years before. Because here is what you need to know about Christmas, the point of Christmas is God telling you, 'I am going to do what I said I will do.' Christmas means that your God can be trusted!

So, in summary point #1, God makes promises to His people. Point #2, God's people will often question God's promises. But point #3, God fulfills His promise – He keeps His promise to His people! I opened this sermon by talking about my wedding and how I was really disappointed that this guy didn't show up – one of my friends didn't show up. I was bummed out. I was disappointed. But do you know what made everything okay? Do you know what made the wedding a success? The wedding was fine, in fact it was more than fine. Adalee, it was great! It was amazing! (Crowd Laughs) The reason why the wedding was okay, was because on that day three or four years ago – whatever it was – why the wedding was a success, I was on the stage, the groomsmen were to the left and the bridesmaids to the right, and we are all looking one way. There were these huge, beautiful, brown doors in the back and the reason why the wedding was okay was because the moment those doors opened, my wife was there. She showed up that day.

The only reason I was there that day wasn't to dance around with my friends, it wasn't to take pictures with my family, it wasn't to eat a bunch of good food. The only reason I was there was to marry my wife. Since she was there, everything else was fine! That is all I needed!

Here is what you need to know about the story of Zechariah. We have a lot more in common with him than what we might think. Because he was waiting on God. The people of God had been waiting for thousands of years for Him to come. The pages of the Old Testament are littered with God saying, 'I'm coming. I'm coming. I'm coming. I'm coming.' And Zechariah was waiting for that to come true. Then He came – as a baby in a manger, 2000 years ago God did what He promised. Then Jesus was born, He lived, He died, He was resurrected and ascended into heaven. But before He left, He promised 'I'm coming back'. He said, 'I'm coming back.' 'I'm coming back.' 'I'm coming back.'

And we are in the same spot as Zechariah. We are waiting for that to come true. But here is what you need to know, it will come true. When He comes back, I don't know if it is today, tomorrow, or 2000 years from now, but when He comes back this is what it will sound like. Revelation 19 - **Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.) Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God."**

So, Jesus says He is coming back and He says that when He comes back He is throwing a wedding party and He is going to be there as the groom. So the question is not will the groom be there? The question is will His bride? Will His bride be ready? Will His Church be ready? Or will we slowly just form ourselves to the patterns of this world? Will we forget to wait on God?

Will we fail to trust Him? Will we fail to believe that He is reliable? What are we going to do as we wait for that day?

Here is what you need to know about the story of Christmas. Christmas means that God can be trusted. For years and years and years He said, 'He is coming' and then He came. And now He said, 'He is coming again' what are we going to do? Will we be ready? Will His bride be ready? As Harris Creek, as the people of God here in Waco, TX, let me pray that we would.

Heavenly Father, we are just so grateful for your Word. We are grateful that your Word shows us who you are. That you are a good God, who can be trusted. That you are a God who does what He says He will do. Father, right now I just pray that you would speak to us, even in this season of Christmas. I am confident that there are many people in this room or in the lobby or watching online who aren't sure that they can trust you because of what is going on in their life right now. They are unhappy with their situation, for whatever, reason, and I pray that your Holy Spirit would be at work to just remind them and say, 'I am a good God who will do what I say I'll do.' And that no matter what our life looks like right now, we would know beyond a shadow of a doubt that there is a day coming when you will come back. There is going to be a wedding party that you have prepared for us! I just pray that we would be ready. That as the bride, we would show up. Because we know that we don't have to question you. We don't have to question your reliability. I pray that we would, today, double down on our reliability. That we would pursue you. That we would trust you. That when that day comes, we are not caught off by surprise. But that it would be the thing we have been waiting for our whole life.

So, heavenly Father thank you for coming as a baby. Thank you for doing as you promised. And God thank you in advance that we can believe that you will do what you have promised again. Father thank you for this church, for every single person here in this room. I pray that we would leave today more in love with you than when we came in. God above all else, we just want to rejoice in the fact that Jesus is alive. He is with us, and He is for us. It is in His name we pray, amen.