

# Long Expected Jesus

THE ROOT OF OUR LONGING  
GENESIS 3:8-15

Sunday, Dec 5, 2021

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## I. Introduction

Good morning! Well, I hope you have your Bibles. If you do, I'd love for you to have them open to Genesis 3, where the Hagan family just read from. The main well we're going to draw from today is Genesis 3:8-15 and it's gonna take us a minute to get there, but I'd love for you to have your eyes on it as I preach.

My name is Ethan. I'm one of the pastors here at Union Church and if we haven't met, I'm really eager to meet you. So let's make that happen after the service.

This morning, we're stepping into the season of Advent as a church. Now, the whole aim of the sermon today is to unpack how, for Christians, the season of Advent stands in stark contrast to the commercial Christmas season that gets shoved down our throats at this time of year. Advent is about awaiting the coming of Christ - the waiting, the groaning of creation, the longing of our hearts. It's a season that acknowledges the darkness while we wait for the light. And since we live in a dark world, and since I know your lives are filled with different burdens of sorrow, and particularly since the hurts of the world have been shoved into our faces this week with the shooting at Oxford High school I want to just spend some time in prayer around those things before we dive into the sermon. Would you pray with me?

*Father in heaven, I feel like the psalmist when he wrote, "LORD, many are my foes." Our enemies aren't people, they are Satan, sin, and death. And sometimes these enemies seem to be surrounding us on all sides. They are fighting for our despair. They are clawing for the chance to tarnish your glory. We are hard-pressed by the burden of a fallen world. Father, I confess that I don't have clean and tidy answers for suffering. I hate sin, Lord. I hate sickness. I hate death. I hate the enemy who seeks to devour your people. Our hearts are heavy with the griefs of people we love, the sorrows of communities nearby. Father, as I've read prayer requests coming to me, as I've watched the news, I have felt helpless and scared. I have felt like taking action and running away at the same time. How long, O Lord, until you come to make all things new? Holy Spirit, we pray for your comfort to blanket the Village of Oxford. We ask for justice. We ache for peace. We pour out our sorrows to you because you are not a God who stands far off. You are near to the brokenhearted. Thank you that you have suffered with us and that, Jesus, you yourself cried out in pain, so that we might take hold of the promise of*

*light after darkness, joy after sorrow, life after death. You are our shield, our glory, and the lifter of our heads. We look to you. Help us now Holy Spirit. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

I think prayer for the heavy things in life is probably a better introduction than any cute story I could tell you to give you a picture of where we will be sitting for the next few weeks as we celebrate Advent. Advent is just a word that means coming. And in the season of Advent, leading up to Christmas, followers of Jesus look back and celebrate. We celebrate that Christ came as a baby to enact God's plan of redemption. We also acknowledge the tension of the in-between space that we are in right now as believers that Christ has come and in this we rejoice, but that he has also promised to come again and fully, finally complete his project of redeeming the world. And as we wait, we live as people who know God's promises are sure, who hope for what is to come, yet who live in a dark, broken, sinful world in need of God's redemption. This is the season of Advent. And so what I want to argue for today (and what I hope that we would practice as people throughout this season) is that **in Advent we acknowledge our longing, name its root, and hope in the promise of the Gospel.**

## **II. Acknowledge our Longing**

I don't know if you've noticed, but we are in what we call the Christmas season. Some of you are, like, I don't know if the Lord just made you extra joyful or maybe he just made you a little extra... but at, like 12:01AM on Nov 1, Buddy the Elf just rises up out of your soul. And the radio is immovably tuned to 100.3, Christmas music non-stop, lights on the house, all the jazz. Others of us are a little more... I don't know.. Wise? Mature? Godly?... we just want Thanksgiving to get it's due. But wherever you fall in the debate, right now on Dec 5 none of us can avoid the fact that it is Christmastime. So in our house, we're listening to Christmas music, we've got our tree up, we're watching Christmas movies. We love "home alone," we love "Elf," all the old Christmas Specials, and in my family the one Christmas movie you must watch if you're an Ezikian is, "White Christmas" with Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye. We have to watch that movie at least once every Christmas, we have to repeat all the facts that we've learned about the actors and the production, we have to point out all the editing mistakes. Doesn't matter if you married into the family and have heard the same facts since the first time you watched it with us, I'm sorry we just have to repeat these things because it's Christmas! I love all of these things. This Christmas season I want you to enjoy all the trappings of Christmastime. And I also want to kind of pull a thread and unravel it a little bit so that we can enjoy it with our eyes wide open. There is a story being marketed to us in a thousand different ways during the Christmas season.

The story is one where wishes come true - that red rider bb gun is coming! It's a story of restoration because Buddy the Elf did find his dad and restore the Christmas Spirit to New York City. It's a story about love because that busy executive woman from the city did find love with that surprisingly handsome man she met in the small town that she went back to visit for the holidays. Life really is worth living because you just never know how many lives you've touched and so it really is a wonderful life. It's all goodness and peace and joy... light out of darkness, hope out of hopelessness, joy out of sorrow - all

of it with a velvety blanket of sentimentality and syrupy sweetness. That's the cultural story being fed to us over and over again during the Christmas season. But hallmark tidiness that doesn't measure up with real life.

Have you ever tried to navigate the holidays after going through something really hard? Just within my sphere of relationships right now, I know people in the hospital afraid for their lives. People grieving the death of family members. People who have difficult, pain-filled relationships with people they love. People who feel more alone than they ever have before? In big and small ways our lives are filled with an ache and a longing that makes our cultural Christmas narrative taste bitter in our mouths and heightens our awareness of the hollowness of this syrupy sentimental story that gets marketed to us. But most of the time we won't sit still long enough to diagnose the longings of our hearts. We armor up, gloss over, scramble past it. And it takes some sort of big interruption to kind of knock us down to sit with ourselves. And if we sit with ourselves for long enough, we will be met with a deep ache that the shallowness of our cultural narrative could never heal.

Like, even if you aren't going through something really difficult in this season, I challenge you to do an experiment and ask yourself where your heart goes when you're not distracting yourself with busyness or entertainment or something else. What is the posture of your heart when you are still? Are you angry? Fearful? Lonely? Anxious? Just sad? Guilty? Shameful? Weary?

I'm trying to get us to grapple with the reality this world leaves us with a deeply ingrained longing. We spend a lot of our energy trying to bypass this reality, but we long for justice, and security, and peace, and companionship, and restoration, and cleansing, and rest... and so much more. And the Christian season of Advent, in contrast with the world, invites us to acknowledge our longing. To look at our weakness, failure, disappointment, and pain full-on in the face. Following Jesus doesn't mean glossing over our pain, it means walking through and acknowledging it with hope because God has given us an answer to the deep longings of our soul.

### **III. Name The Root**

In order to get to the answer that God has given us for the longing of our soul, we have to get at the root of our longing. God is really honest with us in his Word about the source of our ache. The root of our longing lies in the sinfulness of our own hearts.

If you know the Christian story at all, you know it begins with God creating all things. And Genesis 1 tells us that he made all things good. From the constellations to the dirt to Adam and Eve everything was good. In perfect relationship with God. In particular, God made humanity in his image and likeness and he gave them a mission to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. That means that you were created to be in perfect relationship with God and to fill creation with God's image, like heralds and ambassadors of God's glory. That's what you were created for, but the great tragedy of the history of creation is that Adam and Eve sinned against God. They believed the lie

of the enemy. The serpent questioned God's word, he told them they could be like God, and they believed that the boundaries God had given for their flourishing were actually God holding them back. And so they sinned against God. And the book of Romans explains to us that sin entered the world through Adam, that death spread to all humanity because we all come from him, that all men and women sin because our very nature has been perverted against God. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." (Rom 3:23). In Psalm 51 David writes, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." which isn't a commentary on his mother, it just means that when sinful people come together, they give birth to more sinful people. We are, by nature, sinful people. You are. I am. Sin is rooted in each of our hearts. Which brings us to Genesis 3. (About time, right?!)

Our passage today comes immediately after sin enters the world for the first time through Adam and Eve. Look at verse 8, "8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'" This is the first and greatest symptom of our sinful heart: We hide from the one in whom we were made to be satisfied. Our hearts were made to be satisfied in him and instead of finding rest in him we try to satisfy our longing with things that will never quench our thirst. We long for security and we run to money or achievement, we long for happiness and we run to possessions, we long for peace and we run to distraction. And we run from the God who, even after our sin against him, calls to us. Did you see that in the text? That God in his mercy comes toward them in their sin.

Have you ever, on a really hot day, when you're incredibly thirsty opened up a warm can of pop? Do you know that feeling of dissatisfaction? Like, immediately you feel thirsty again. God says through the prophet Jeremiah, "...my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water." (Jer 2:13). We are a thirsty people and we've run to things that can't satisfy our thirst. And the root of our longing is that we've forsaken the God who is the fountain of living water.

Our sin leaves us thirsty. We trap ourselves in cycles of longing. This is the default state of being for every single person throughout the history of the world. So that means that the anger that you have, which is really a soul level longing for justice is a symptom of a deeper longing. That fear and anxiety that you deal with, which is really a longing for security and peace is a flag that marks a deeper need. Your loneliness, your longing for community and companionship is truly a longing for a particular someone. Your guilt and shame is a longing for redemption and cleansing that only one being could satisfy.

## **IV. Hope in the Promise of the Gospel**

Friends the reason Christianity exists and the reason we celebrate Christmas is because God knows our sin, God has seen our longings, God has heard the groanings of his people and he has come toward us and given his people a promise to answer our sin with mercy, to answer our longings with one who would truly satisfy.

Here in Genesis 3, immediately after the fracturing of the universe through sin God gives the first promise of one who would come and redeem what our sin has broken. Look at verse 14 and 15:

14 The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

Theologians call this the "first gospel." This is the first of many unfolding promises of God to send one who would come to crush the foes of Satan, sin, and death. The offspring of the woman who would come to crush the head of the serpent is the baby born to the Virgin Mary, laid in a manger.

We celebrate Christmas because it is the inauguration of the story of God bringing hope to the world through Jesus Christ. God The Son became man and endured the longings of the world so that we might find our satisfaction in him. He's the one who lived before God without ever sinning against him. The bible says he was sinless and yet he knew what it meant to live through the groanings of creation. He knew sorrow, he knew temptation, he knew loss, he knew disappointment, he knew grief. He was fully man and he was fully God, but he did not count his divinity as something to be used to his advantage, but made himself nothing, becoming obedient to the point of death on the cross. We are like sheep who run away and hide from our shepherd in our sin, but God has laid on him the sin and imperfection and filth of us all and by his wounds, we are healed. Jesus has taken the punishment that we deserve so that we might be reconciled with the God we were made to love and live for.

All the promises of God find their yes in Jesus Christ and all the longings of our soul find their satisfaction in him! And this is why in advent followers of Jesus hope in the promise of the gospel.

## **V. Conclusion**

The cultural story being fed to us in the commercial Christmas season is a shallow, hollow story. But it's not hollow because it makes us promises about light out of darkness, hope out of hopelessness, joy out of sorrow. It's not hollow because it celebrates love, peace, hope, and joy...it's hollow because it tries to sell those things without acknowledging the longing of our soul and without rooting that love, peace, hope, and joy in anything but sentimentality and vague human philosophy. So the promises of our cultural Christmas season are sugary lies. They lead to death and try to pacify you on the way.

But the beauty of this season of Advent is that it makes the same promises. Light out of darkness. Hope out of hopelessness. Joy out of sorrow. Peace out of strife. All of it is made possible because God has come to his people, though things are darker and more hopeless than we could ever imagine them to be and he has promised one who would conquer the darkness, who would crush the head of the serpent, and who would satisfy the longing of our soul. And his name is Jesus.