



*The
Coming King*

//Christmas 2021
By Claire Mummert



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Kingsland Baptist Church

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How to use this guide

Review the context and big picture every week – The goal of a book study is not just to learn each individual lesson, but to build understanding of the Bible, how it fits together, and how to study it.

Try not to use this guide as a script. The purpose of this material isn't to give you exactly what to say. Rather it is to give you the content you need to structure and develop your own lessons. Teach as much as you feel is important for your class. Feel free to go off topic if your own study leads you to approach the passage in a slightly different direction.

Don't feel like you have to cover everything. There is a lot of material in each lesson. Some classes like to cover a lot of ground. Other classes like to camp on one point and drill deep. Start by teaching the Main Point, then teach the Main Bullet Points. Use the extra detail and discussion questions as you see fit. The goal is to generate discussion, specifically regarding life-application. So don't worry if you don't get all the way through a lesson.

Lesson 1 | Behold, the Days are Coming

Jeremiah 13:14-16

As we come into this season of Advent and remember the birth of Christ, one of the beautiful things we get to do is to all study the same content at the same time. This means that believers all over the world are focused on the advent (or coming) of Christ, celebrating and worshipping Him together like a symphony that is being played to the Lord.

In some Christian traditions, they use a system of teaching called liturgy. Liturgy is simply the name for the form that is used to organize worship. In fact, we all have our own liturgy; we all organize our worship in some regular pattern. Yet, it can be uncomfortable when we experience a pattern with which we are unfamiliar. This form may feel different, but that does not mean it is negative. While we are not going to follow the exact liturgy associated with Advent, we are going to look at some of the Scriptures also being studied in these traditions so that we can join the chorus with our brothers and sisters in Christ this season.

As you engage with this curriculum, you may see something that's new to you in the form of a prayer that will start each week. In liturgical churches, there is a prayer called "the collect" (pronounced CALL-ect) that is said at the end of the opening of the service. This is a moment of silence to pray and to draw people to God at the beginning of the service. We are going to start each week with a similar prayer, not unlike the Abide prayers that we use, but we are asking that you say it together as a class to prepare your hearts and minds for the teaching that day if you feel comfortable.

Advent means "coming," and this is such a beautiful time for us to look forward to the coming of the King, Jesus. We hope that we will all live in a state of joy, peace, love, and expectancy as we go into this season.

Recite together: *Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and put on the armor of light now, in this time, when your Son, Jesus Christ, came to visit us in great humility; that in the last days, when He will come again in His glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to live forever through Him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

“Behold, days are coming.” Advent is a time when we look backward and forward at the same time. We spend time looking back to when Jesus was born while looking forward to the day we celebrate His birth. We take time each day (with some of us starting our celebrations in October and some waiting until December) to further our excitement and our expectation. It continues to build with each coming day until, at last, Christmas morning is here, and we are rejoicing in the truth that Jesus, God’s only Son, has come to Earth as our savior. In Jeremiah, the Lord says, “Behold, days are coming...when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch of David sprout; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth” (Jer. 33:14-15).

The Lord is getting His people ready. It is like the first day of the Advent season, and He is adding to the sense of expectation they already feel as they look forward to the Messiah. He is reminding them of prophecy and reemphasizing His commitment to fulfill that prophecy, that promise. Just as we wait and look forward to the birth of our Messiah, they do the same. Today, we will see, as we stand and wait with our brothers and sisters from the Old Testament, that God gives us three promises to answer the longing of our hearts.

Longing for a Savior (Jeremiah 33:14-16)

“In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety; and this is the name by which it will be called: the LORD is our righteousness” (v16). The Lord is telling His people that they will be saved. He just reminded them of the promise that He made for a savior and that He will “fulfill the good word which [He has] spoken...In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch of David sprout; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth” (v14-15). And this is a promise that He has made before. He told the people in Isaiah 11, as part of a chapter’s worth of prophecy about Jesus, that “a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him...” (v1-2). Furthermore, this is not the first time that they had heard the idea that this family line would bring forth someone great. If we look back to Jacob’s promise to his son Judah, we see that Judah is predicted to be the line of the king. “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet” (Gen. 49:10). Judah is a direct ancestor of Jesse, and

from Jesse comes Jesus. God is promising the salvation of His people and helping them to live expectantly for the birth of His Son.

Can you imagine the feeling of longing that the Israelites must have felt throughout the Old Testament? From the moment that Adam and Even left the garden, holding onto the promise of their seed making things right, the people of God have been looking for their Savior. They have been yearning to get back to Eden, back to relationship with God, and this yearning organizes their life. Their adherence to the law and their moving from one country to the next are all a seeking and longing for that Savior that will bring them back into right relationship with God.

Longing for Righteousness (Jeremiah 33:16; Psalm 25:4-6)

Jeremiah 33:16 tells us, "In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety; and this is the name by which it will be called: the Lord is our righteousness." While this definitely leads the people to see the coming of the Son as their savior, it also promises them more direction and guidance as they seek righteousness or right living. They will be able to see that righteousness is not found in religious legalism, but in a person, in Jesus Christ. Psalm 25:4-6 echoes this sentiment.

"Make me know Your ways, LORD;

Teach me Your paths.

Lead me in Your truth and teach me,

For You are the God of my salvation;

For You I wait all the day.

Remember, Lord, Your compassion and Your faithfulness,

For they have been from of old."

God wants to lead His people and to show them His way forward. He wants to teach them; He wants to teach us His truth and the path of salvation. But this passage still speaks of waiting. The entire Old Testament is built on this feeling of waiting and "not yet." The people of God are yearning for Him in a way that won't feel fully complete until the coming of Jesus. They were hoping for a savior, but they were also longing for this righteousness that comes from God.

In Jesus, God's ways are made known, His path is lived out perfectly, His leadership is seen, His truth is spoken, and His salvation is completed. In Jesus, compassion and faithfulness are shown to the fullest. God wants to save His people, He wants to show them the path forward to righteousness, and He wants to do that through Jesus. He wants to answer the longing of their hearts. So, they wait. And, in this season, we wait alongside them.

Longing for the Right Time (Jeremiah 33:14; Luke 21:34-36)

Let's look back at that phrase in Jeremiah 33:14, "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah." While this speaks to the initial coming of Jesus, it can also point us forward to the return of the king. This is where we see that same yearning that filled the Israelites reflected in our own hearts. We are longing for the ultimate return of Christ and the new life that comes with His return. When we think of the "good word" that had been given to Israel and Judah, we can look again to Isaiah 11 (and to other promises and prophecies). Isaiah looks forward to a world that is vastly different from the one the Israelites are experiencing and from the one we know today. He says, "And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat...They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD" (Isaiah 11:6, 9).

But Jesus' birth is not the only thing in sight in this passage. It looks forward to a day when all is made right, and the world lives at peace once more. It looks to the reversal of that dreadful day in the Garden. It is the fulfillment of all that longing we feel as we wait for Christ's return. Revelation 21:1 and 3-5 give us a glimpse into the moments after the rightful return and enthronement of Christ.

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea... And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.’ And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’” He is making all things new. God has promised to fulfill the longing we have for a savior, for righteousness, and the yearning we feel for His ultimate return at the right time. Until that time, we wait.

Conclusion

Advent is a season full of waiting. We wait to celebrate the birth of Jesus, but we are also waiting for the day that He will return to make all things right. As we wait, we can rely on the salvation that is given to us through Jesus and can look to Him for the path of righteousness. Even though we are waiting, even though we are longing for a new day, we can be living out the path God has set before us and bring others to see His truth. We hope that, in this season, you find purpose in the waiting and a path forward in Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. When you hear the phrase, “behold the days are coming,” what do you think of? How does this relate to the birth of Jesus as well as His return?
2. Why is it so important that Jesus be connected to Judah and Jesse in these Old Testament passages? What does this say to you about God’s plan for the world?
3. How can we know God’s ways through the life of Christ? How do we discover how to walk in righteousness? What does righteousness really mean?
4. How can we wait for the return of Christ while still being active in the purpose He has laid out for us? How does this waiting join us to the Israelites who were waiting for their Messiah?
5. How can waiting feel celebratory?

Lesson 2 | Prepare the Way of the Lord

Luke 3:1-6; Malachi 3:1-5

Recite Together: *Merciful God, who sent your messengers, the prophets, to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

Have you ever had to really wait for something? Maybe you were saving up for something, or maybe your best friend was coming to visit? One thing that we spend a lot of time waiting for is the birth of a child. Whether it is your child, your niece or nephew, your grandchild, or even the long-awaited child of a friend, it is a time that everyone waits with excitement.

But it's not a stagnant waiting—it's active. See, during those nine months, the people in the community of this child will prepare. When we were expecting our first child, it felt like a miracle after being told that having children would be difficult. Then, we found out we were at a greater risk of issues, so you can say that the time of waiting we experienced felt stressful and included weekly doctor's appointments. We were constantly preparing from a medical perspective. But we also prepared our home. We spent weeks painting murals on the walls of this child's room and picking out the perfect sheets for the crib. We bought blankets and a stroller. We practiced with our car seat and learned to change a diaper. We spent nine months in eager preparation for this baby.

When my sister was pregnant with my niece, we did not feel exempt from that preparation. We went through our clothes and toys that we could send for this new little one. We threw a baby shower, bought gifts, had celebrations, and made lots of supportive phone calls. Even though this baby was not ours, we waited with excitement and helped prepare as part of their community.

Whether this is your experience or not, we all know the feeling of needing to prepare for the future. When God decided it was time to send His Son into the world, He did not forget the preparation. Not only had He spent much of the Old Testament preparing His people, but He sent messengers ahead of Jesus to spread the news. He prepared the world for what was coming. In this season of Advent, we can also lean into preparation in three ways, through receiving, repenting, and relating what you know to the world.

Receptive (Luke 3:2-4; Malachi 3:1)

In order to prepare for God's work, we first have to be in touch with Him. "In the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness" (Luke 3:2, emphasis added). John had the Holy Spirit at birth, so it may feel easy to say that he would be in touch with what God is doing in the world, but the truth is that we also have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, and we still find it hard to be in touch with God's will on a daily basis. John was a person foretold in the Old Testament as the one who would come before Jesus. Malachi 3:1 says, "Behold, I am sending My messenger, and he will clear a way before Me. And the Lord, whom you are seeking, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming." Further, this passage in Luke looks back to Isaiah 40:3, "The voice of one calling out in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight!'"

But John did not just take these prophecies or the fact that He had a specific purpose in life (whether he knew his exact purpose or not) for granted. He separated himself so that he would not be attached to worldly things; he spent time knowing the word and will of God. In short, he prepared himself for whatever task God chose for him. When it was his time, he "came into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (v3) because he was prepared for God's work and will in his own life. Similarly, we cannot be ready for the work God is doing in the world if we are not in communication with Him. It would be easy to end this whole lesson here with a plea to read your Bible and pray. But it's more than just a rote thing.

Relationship with God does involve reading the Bible and prayer, but it also involves worship, thanksgiving, and even silence. A true relationship with God is an open pathway between you and Him all day, every day. It is living in surrender in every moment. The choice to give Him control is difficult, but it will ultimately prepare you to read His Word, prepare you to talk to Him in prayer, and prepare you to hear from Him as well. It will put you on His path to be a part of what He is doing.

Repentance (Luke 3:3, 5-6; Malachi 3:3-4)

“And he came into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Luke 3:3). John knew that preparing himself and the world did not just come with an acknowledgement of what God intended to do, but it also came through repentance. John knew that when we repent, “the crooked will become straight, and the rough roads smooth; And all flesh will see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:5-6). Many times, our desire to be a part of God’s will and to be in the midst of what He is doing is deterred by our own sin, selfishness, and other desires that are not from God. Over and over the Bible reminds us that to have a clear path to the Lord, we need to start with repentance. In the Old Testament, 2 Chronicles reminds us that “the Lord your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn from you if you return to him” (30:9). The New Testament echoes this theme in Acts 3:19: “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” Malachi even describes the Messiah like “a refiner’s fire, and like launderer’s soap. And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old, and as in former years” (Malachi 3:2-4).

The prophets knew that Israel needed to repent to be a part of God’s work again and to live in righteousness. They knew that the savior would come and would lead to their purification from all the wrongs of their past. This idea is mentioned throughout the Old and New Testament countless times. Whether it be Matthew 5 telling the people to make things right before a sacrifice or Proverbs giving advice on confession and mercy, repentance is at the very heart of God’s will and work. God wants us to be a part of His plan, but we must seek repentance and right relationship with Him so that we can be involved in His work.

Relating (Luke 3:3-6)

The last way that we can prepare to be a part of God's work in the world is to go. While it may feel safer to wait and hope something comes to you, God calls us to go out. We do not have to have a specific calling to a people group, a country, or spoken language. We can go in our everyday lives. John did not stay in the wilderness and wait for people to come to him—he went out. At the end of Jesus' ministry, He would give a similar entreaty: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). He has set you in your exact place in life for a purpose. He has given you your family, put you in your job, and even give you the neighbors you have all for His glory. He expects you to make relationships and to share the truth of His love as you go. Deuteronomy 6:7 has this also in mind: "And you shall repeat them diligently to your sons and speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk on the road, when you lie down, and when you get up." You do not have to travel to be a part of God's work. You do not have to learn a new language to prepare the world for God's love. You do have to be an active participant in the gospel and go. He will give you the words and the opportunities as you make relationships and show people the love of Christ.

Conclusion

Just as John prepared the way for the people of Israel to meet with the Son of God, so we can prepare ourselves and ultimately others to be a part of God's work. We can prepare our hearts by being receptive to God's word and will, repenting from sin, and revealing His word and work to the world. Advent is the perfect time for us to look at His Word and be reminded of God's plan. When we are so surrounded with Christmas decorations and celebrations, we cannot help but join in and prepare the way for the work of God.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it so important to be connected to God in what He's already doing? What gets in the way of us being a part of His plan?
2. How is repentance at the heart of this season? How can we utilize our community as we seek repentance?
3. Why is repentance difficult? How can we help our brothers and sisters (and ask for that help ourselves) when it feels too hard?
4. Where do you feel scared or ill-equipped to go and spread the news about Jesus? Why is relationship so important to this?
5. How can we see the trappings of Christmas as reminders to prepare our hearts and our spheres of influence for the gospel?

Lesson 3 | Rejoice, Salvation has Come

Luke 3:16-18; Zephaniah 3:14-20

Recite Together: Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.

When I was little, my entire family went to a pool party at a friend's house during the summer. We ate burgers and had so many kinds of chips that I remember thinking this was the best day. There was watermelon and even the eventual promise of dessert. This was summer paradise for a child like me. I might have been only five years old or so, but I understood the promise of all these great treats. On top of that, there were many people there, and I loved people; I was always ready to make a new friend from a stranger (a habit that got me in trouble on numerous occasions). To put the icing on the cake, we were also going to get to swim in the pool. I did not yet know how to swim properly, but I knew that the pool was really fun, and I could not wait to be a part of all the festivities. We packed a circular float for me that was colorful and fun to keep me safe, packed some towels, and got out my cute new bathing suit.

When we got to the party, everything was exactly as promised, and I felt extreme excitement. So, after I had some food and talked to a bunch of people, I wanted to get in the pool.

No one else was in the pool yet, so I started walking around the pool and looking at it. I wanted to get in so badly but there was no grown up available to come in with me, no other kiddos or older siblings that were ready for the pool just yet. Yet, I was determined to convince someone. I put on my bathing suit, I got on my float, and I stood near the pool to let everyone know, "Here I am! I'm ready!" At one point, I must have gotten fed up with waiting and decided to go down the slide into the pool. (Was this not the coolest house?)

I had on my float, so I felt confident that I would be safe. But the problem with those circular floats is that they are not attached to your body like a puddle jumper or the sleeve-like floaties most children wear now. Can you guess what happened?

When I hit the water at the end of the slide, the float stayed afloat, slipping up my torso and over my head so that I went straight to the bottom of, what felt like, a very deep pool. I remember being at the bottom of the pool very clearly and thinking that no one had seen me. Even in my young mind I remember thinking that this was very bad and not knowing what to do. I'm sure I was only under water a few seconds but, in my mind, it felt like eternity.

Then, with a splash of bubbles, someone was there, pulling me up to the surface, and saving me. Today, we are going to see that salvation has come. We thought we would be saved by the law only to realize that it could not truly offer us salvation. Instead, we get submerged into a world of sin or legalism or striving or maybe all of those things together. But Jesus came into our world and brought us salvation. When this happens, we cannot help but rejoice.

Today, we are going to see why we rejoice—because Jesus has come into the world and brought salvation—as well as how we rejoice.

Jesus in the World (Luke 3:16-18)

One of the most beautiful pieces of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus is that God sent Himself into our world. He knew that He needed to provide a physical, tangible way for us to relate to Him. He knew that we could never bridge the gap to Him on our own. So, He sent Himself to us. He did not sit on His throne and tell us to figure it out; He came down to us in love and in salvation. In Luke 3, John is baptizing people and lets them know that “He is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the straps of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (v16). John is showing reverence because He knows that Jesus is truly the Son of God, but He is also letting the people know that Jesus is a brand new thing. Jesus is not just another prophet, and He is not the same as John, He is not just a great teacher. He is the conduit for the Holy Spirit into the world. He is salvation. And He will light a spark that turns into a flame in the people in a way that they were not prepared for.

This was a turning point in the lives of God's people. As we have seen in previous lessons, they have spent a lifetime waiting and yearning for God's chosen one to come and to change things. They have been waiting for Him to turn the world upside down. And here He is! It is a time for rejoicing and celebration. When Jesus makes His triumphal entry in Matthew 21, we get to see the people's response to the Messiah and here they shout "Hosanna" (v9) which means "save us!" But this was not Jesus' first triumphal entry. His first entry is the one we are preparing to celebrate right now, when He comes as a baby boy. He "emptied Himself by taking the form of a bond-servant and being born in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7). Jesus has come into the world, which means salvation has come into the world, and that is cause to rejoice.

Jesus, Our Salvation (Zephaniah 3:14-20)

So, Jesus has come into the world, and that leads us to see how salvation enters the world through Him. We do not just celebrate His existence, His life, and His ministry—we also celebrate what that means for us. Take a moment to read the following, entire portion of Zephaniah and get the foretaste of what we saw above in Luke. This is God's promise to the Israelites that He would do exactly what John has said above. John is just reiterating the promise God already made to His people and reminding them of what God intends to do through His Son.

"The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will rejoice over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy...At that time I will bring you in, even at the time when I gather you together; indeed, I will make you famous and praiseworthy among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes" (Zephaniah 3:17, 20).

If we look closely, we can see some glimpses of Jesus that the people may have even missed. He would be "quiet in His love" (v17). While He will be victorious, He will also be quiet. Jesus was definitely victorious and a warrior, battling sin and death. Yet, He was also quiet in His love. Further, there is a promise here that He will gather His people together and make His name famous. He will restore their fortunes.

Now, I am sure that most of us in the situation of the Israelites would have taken this to mean that our nation would be restored and that we would be restored to our former socio-political glory. However, when we see that God is about our salvation and our restoration into relationship with Him, we can read this quite differently.

We see that He gathered His people together under the banner of Jesus through salvation and the payment for sin and death. He brought forth a new life, a new victory for His people and has saved them from their old selves and from death. He has brought freedom. He has “turned my mourning into dancing” (Psalm 30:11) and brought great joy to all the world. You see, when He decided to gather His people, He did not just mean the Israelites. Jesus began a work of gathering all those who would follow His great name. He is about restoring the world to relationship with God and showing the love, mercy, and grace that comes through Him. He is victorious over darkness so that we can go forward radiating His light and overflowing with joy at this new freedom.

Jesus, Our Joy (Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6)

How do we respond to this victory and triumph over death? How do we respond to this gift of salvation and the gathering of God’s people? With joy! We have been saying joy and rejoice over and over because it is at the center of this season. One of the words that you will see plastered all over the world from billboards to decorative pillows is “Joy!” “Shout for joy, daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, Israel! Rejoice and triumph with all of your heart, Daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away His judgments against you, He has cleared away your enemies...The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will rejoice over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy” (v14-15, 17). The prophet Zephaniah is relaying God’s words to His people and letting them know what will happen when He makes all things right again. It is a foretelling of Jesus and what He will do in the world. And it is a time of great joy and triumph.

Isaiah 12 has a similar message to the people of God: “Behold, God is my salvation...Praise the Lord in song, for He has done glorious things; let this be known throughout the earth. Rejoice and shout for joy, you inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel” (v2, 5-6). Isaiah also looks forward to the salvation that comes from Jesus and likewise responds with joy.

This joy is the beautiful cacophony that comes alongside the events of Jesus' birth. Whether it is Mary's song, the angels' message, the shepherds rejoicing, or even the heavens lighting up for this long-awaited savior, the whole world responds in joy.

And we are called to respond in the same manner! Philippians 4:4 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" But how do we do this? We can look to the birth of our savior, and we can see what He has done not only in the early Christians' lives, but also in our own lives. We can see how Jesus has gathered us to Himself and made us a part of His kingdom promise. We can see how God is at work to make His name famous through His love, mercy, and grace. We look back to remind ourselves of His goodness and provision in our own lives. When we take time to remember and recount these things, we are filling ourselves with joy. We are rejoicing. And it is contagious. When you choose to live this life of joy, it will spread to those around you, allowing you to tell others the source of your joy: Jesus and His salvation.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it a good thing that Jesus comes with a holy fire and a winnowing fork? How does this affect the way He gathers His people?
2. Why did the Israelites expect and hope for a political victory rather than a spiritual one? How did this contribute to their response to Jesus' ministry?
3. How is Jesus' love quiet? How is this still in line with the idea that His name is famous?
4. How is rejoicing in this way different than toxic positivity? How can we have joy in what God has done even when things do not feel joyful?
5. Look back at the past year. Where has God shown you His love, goodness, mercy, and grace? Take a moment to rejoice in it.

Lesson 4 | O Come, Let Us Adore Him

Luke 1:39-55

Recite Together: *Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son, Jesus Christ, at His coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for Himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

We have talked about waiting and expectancy many times in the past few weeks, but the time is now here. Jesus echoes this feeling when He speaks to the Samaritan woman: “But a time is coming, and even now has arrived, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers” (John 4:23). Jesus is letting the woman know that the waiting time for the Messiah is over and that He, Jesus, is that Messiah.

Christmas tends to be one of the most awaited days of the year for the religious and non-religious alike. There is something about this celebration that draws so many in. As decorations go up and presents are purchased, parties are thrown and plays are practiced, carols are sung and meals are planned, the whole world is preparing for this one special day. The whole world begins to hold its breath.

And that is exactly how it felt all those years ago. From Malachi to Matthew, God had been silent toward His people. Each year, they looked forward with more intention and felt the pressure build toward the need for a messiah. With each year, they yearned for the coming of the king. Just like little children who can barely get through a meal with the knowledge that presents are coming, the people of God held their breath. And then all of this silence was broken with the cry of a baby. When this moment hit the world, it was almost as if everyone could breathe again, a collective sigh of relief. The tension was broken and love, grace, mercy, and salvation entered the world anew. No wonder so many songs are written about this time. We cannot help but be filled with joy as our expectations are met in full.

Today, we are going to see how we can respond to this joy and this moment of fulfillment in the same way as they did during Jesus' time: in worship. We can stand humbly before God, feeling thankful to be a part of His kingdom work and recounting His goodness, His great works, and worshipping His great name.

Elizabeth's Worship (Luke 1:39-45)

One of the first people to get to worship Jesus and recognize what would happen at His birth was His aunt, Elizabeth. When Mary learned that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit, she went to see her cousin. Just imagine having such incredible news that you just had to share! She arrives at the house and "when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice and said, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb'" (Luke 1:41-42). Elizabeth's response shows us a heart of humility, and her blessing is a form of worship and adoration of her King. Just the contact of Elizabeth and the unborn Jesus was enough to fill her with the Spirit and bring her to a place of worship. While He was not born yet, she already knew that God was fulfilling His promise to His people. She was already responding in worship to the coming of the Messiah.

She is even noticeably overwhelmed by this (as we all most likely would be). She says, "how has it happened to me that the mother of my Lord would come to me" (Luke 1:43). She is aware of the privilege she has received in being in the presence of the Lord even in this way. She cannot help but worship Him. And we are called to a similar posture. We are blessed with a direct line of communication with God as well as a chance to experience Him daily through the Holy Spirit in us. This contact should leave us consistently humbled. It should push us to adore Him, to recount His greatness, and to worship His name in all that we do. Maybe you have assumed for too long that worship is only the act of singing or that it must be done in church. However, we can see that worship is a response to our experience with God. You can do this with your words, your actions, your thoughts, and more. You can live a life of worship.

Mary's Worship (Luke 1:46-55)

Mary is similarly enraptured with what the Lord has done and overwhelmed by her participation. She is so full of joy and expectant excitement that she breaks into worship, composing what most people call the Magnificat. Take a moment to read it, Luke 1:46-55, in its entirety at least once.

And Mary said:

“My soul exalts the Lord,

And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

For He has had regard for the humble state of His bond-servant;

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed.

For the Mighty One has done great things for me;

And holy is His name.

And His mercy is to generation after generation

Toward those who fear Him.

He has done mighty deeds with His arm;

He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones,

And has exalted those who were humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things,

And sent the rich away empty-handed.

He has given help to His servant Israel,

In remembrance of His mercy,

Just as He spoke to our fathers,

To Abraham and his descendants forever.”

How beautiful is this moment of worship? She not only recognizes who she is in light of God (“For He has had regard for the humble state of His bond-servant” v48), but she also recognizes His glory. She is creating a list of the goodness of God and reminding herself of His great mercy. She is reminding herself that He is someone who fulfills His promises and takes care of His people. She is about to see that play out even more so in the life of Jesus. In verse 47, which says, “and my Spirit rejoiced in God my Savior,” she is recognizing the salvific power of Jesus and that He is her Messiah as well as her son. The weight of that must have been immense, yet it filled her with joy and brought her to her knees before the Lord.

Mary’s Magnificat is another beautiful example of the humility that comes with contact with the Lord. Further, it is an example that she does not just sit in a place of awe but reacts! Whether this was a song or a poem, she is moved to respond. She acknowledges her humility, recounts the greatness of the Lord, and recognizes His worthiness in this moment. You can do the same. Similar to Mary and Elizabeth, you can recognize your own humility in contrast to the holiness of God. And you can be moved to response.

Our Worship (Micah 5:2-5)

You may not feel the need to burst into song (although this would be entirely appropriate), but it is vital that we also take the time to follow in the steps of Elizabeth and Mary. Micah 5:4-5a says that “He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God...The One will be our peace.” We can see that the story of Jesus did not end in this moment when Mary visited Elizabeth, nor did it end soon after when Jesus was born. Jesus grew up and lived a perfect life, a visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). Micah is prophesying here, but we can see this truth, even into the present. He acted like a shepherd in His life, but He continues to shepherd us through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Not only that, He is our peace.

Jesus was not just born, and He did not just live a perfect life. Let’s take a peek forward into the Easter story. Jesus would allow Himself to be captured, prosecuted, and killed all for the sake of restoring the relationship between God and His people, including us. Then, Jesus would do what is impossible for man but possible for God: He came

back from the dead; He defeated death once and for all. And through His sacrifice and conquering, He gives us peace. He sends His Spirit to live in us and bring peace to us. So, as we wait during this season, as we experience Christmas day, as we feel the release of that tension in the coming of Jesus and that peace, we stop to worship. We take time, like Mary and Elizabeth, to stand in humility before God because He has allowed us, no matter how unworthy, to be a part of His kingdom and work. Then, we take that moment to recount His goodness, His great works, and to worship His great name.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Mary resonate with Elizabeth's response to meeting Jesus in the womb? Why does this experience feel humbling to her?
2. What part of Mary's Magnificat stood out to you? What are the good works of the Lord that you are celebrating in this season?
3. Why is it hard to remember the working of God when times are difficult? For many of us, the Christmas season is very painful. How can you still remember His promises and His goodness even as the season brings up hurt?
4. When you hear that Jesus is our peace, how does that make you feel? How can we be at peace even when the world feels full of chaos?
5. How can you find time to respond to Jesus in worship this season? What is a new way you can try to worship Him?

Additional Notes

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