

The Promise of a Seed

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[0 : 00] All right, you probably noticed she didn't mention the baptism thing up there because we're not doing baptisms December 29th. We're going to do it in January, just so you know. So if you are interested in getting baptized, you can sign up for that on the app, all right?

So I have the privilege of starting us off in our Advent series. So if you have a Bible, go ahead and turn to Genesis chapter 3. That is the passage we're going to be working out of today. And some of us might be familiar with what the Advent season is all about. Some of us may not be. So I want to help us out that, you know, if you're not familiar with it, sorry if I'm covering familiar ground for the rest of you.

But Advent is, it's the season, and it's a season that marks the beginning of the church's liturgical calendar year. And the liturgical calendar, all it is, it's like marching through the year, and it's like emphasis on various parts of the redemption story, God's redemption story.

And it really follows closely through moments of the life of Jesus, his birth, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, and then on to the church being formed and then filled with the Holy Spirit.

[1 : 09] And so Advent is the beginning of it, which is why, you know, the church calendar year starts in December instead of January, if you're just wondering.

So Advent ends with us celebrating Jesus's birth. It doesn't begin there. And it also ends with us looking for his return. And so it begins by us, what it does, it invites us to go back to before Jesus arrived, to before his birth.

And so we are going all the way back today to the very beginning of God's redemption story. And the Bible opens up with God who existed before time and space and creation.

And it says he spoke all things into creation. And he created this good and perfect world, this perfect place where everything was in harmony and things were all good. And then he made man to go and fill the earth and subdue it, to kind of go forth and be his ambassadors, to bring his glory as his image bearers to that place.

And so far, so good. And then Genesis chapter 3 happens. So let's read there. Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

[2 : 23] He said to the woman, did God actually say, you shall not eat of any tree in the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden. But God said, you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it lest you die.

But the serpent said to the woman, you will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. And she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate.

Then the eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. 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. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, where are you? And he said, I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself.

[3 : 30] And he said, who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat? The man said, the woman who you gave to me to be with me, she gave me the fruit of the tree and I ate.

Then the Lord God said to the woman, what is this that you have done? And the woman said, the serpent deceived me and I ate. And 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. 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. This is God's word. So this story that began with a beautiful promise, we see here that it's shattered.

That's why we call it the fall. It's a fall from grace. And when you drop things, they break, right? The grace of God over mankind is image bearer, as earth ambassador, as goodness cultivator.

[4 : 38] All for the glory of God, to the glory of God, in the presence of God. All that is shattered in one moment. The promise for doing what they did, God said, surely if you eat of this tree, surely if you disobey me, what is going to happen is death and pain and separation.

The good world, the good purpose, all seemed hopelessly lost in this moment. But into that hopelessness, God speaks a better promise.

And this better promise, it came in the form of judgment spoken over the serpent, the tempter, the great deceiver, Satan himself, our greatest enemy.

God says, I'm going to put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring.

Literally, the word there is seed. And her offspring, her seed, and he shall bruise your head.

This seed shall bruise your head. And you're going to bruise his heel. And this is where the season of Advent begins. Friends, not in the arrival of a baby in a manger.

[5 : 47] Actually, it invites us to remind ourselves of our greatest need. That's where Advent begins. Friends, while sin remains, while guilt and shame can still hide God's love, while strife persists and separates family and friends, while loneliness is a dark reality that many suffer in silence, while we continue to toil for little return, while power is a dark reality that many suffer in silence.

While we continue to toil for little return, while powers and passions deceive us and betray us and destroy us, while our bodies waste a day until death, they succumb to death.

While all that remains, we are those who sit in our greatest need being unresolved. Advent doesn't try to rescue us out of those bad vibes very quickly, I'm sorry to say.

Actually, it invites us to sit in this futility. It invites us to notice it and name it. Like the song says that we sometimes sing, do you feel the world is broken?

We do. Can you feel the shadows deepen? Yeah, we do, don't we? Advent invites us to feel that deeply. But not with hopeless resignation.

[7 : 04] Advent invites us to wait in faith. And that word, that word Advent, it actually, it comes from a Latin word for arrival. And think about this, this Christmas, many of us are going to be waiting, waiting the arrival of loved ones that we want to have around and maybe others that we don't want to have around, but nevertheless, they're coming anyways.

The point is, is that the arrival that the church celebrates and remembers also implies a waiting. And nobody waits unless that arrival is a sure thing.

Think about that. So here's an example. My wife has family in South Africa. You know what? They are not waiting for us to show up this Christmas, right?

It's a far ways away and it is a huge cost. And our arrival is so unlikely that they're not going out and buying presents and getting more food and like trying to prep the house to have visitors in to host and all that, just kind of crossing their fingers like maybe they're going to come, maybe they're going to come.

Nobody over there is getting their hopes up. But all that would change if they had a strong reason to believe that we were coming. At the fall, into the darkest moment where everything seemed lost, God spoke a promise, a whisper of a future hope that people could hold on to.

[8 : 32] And this hope begins with the promise of a seed. It says, an offspring. So this promise being awaited for, we know that is going to be a person. That part is clear.

And it's going to be a person born of a woman. We know that to be clear from this. Born at a certain time and place in history. But God really doesn't give us any more details than that in Genesis 3.

All the human race had to hope in from that point, from that very beginning of our troubles, was to look for somebody born of a woman who would set things right. No doubt Adam and Eve heard that and that was ringing in their ears.

And so Cain is born and then Abel is born to them. But they weren't it. Abel, man, he was a righteous man. God favored him. Accepted his sacrifice. I'm sure they were thinking, maybe this is the guy. Could this be the seed? No. He's murdered by Cain. So it turns out Abel wasn't it.

[9 : 32] Turns out it definitely wasn't Cain. Then another son was born who they named Seth. And Eve said this, God has appointed for me another offspring, another seed instead of Abel.

What's interesting here is that Seth's name in Hebrew means appointed. And for the ancient Hebrew context and how they would understand that word to mean in so many different places is that it signified setting someone in place for a specific role or for a specific purpose.

See, Eve saying this, look, here is this seed and I am naming him Seth. She is living in faith and hope still in that promise seed that God spoke of from that very beginning in Genesis 3.15.

And in a way she was right. But it wasn't Seth. But the seed would come through as a descendant of Seth. Seth may have been an appointed seed, but he was not the appointed seed.

So we're still waiting. And then hundreds of years later, time marches on and God's promise of the seed comes up again to one of Seth's descendants.

[10 : 52] Genesis 12. Now the Lord said to Abram, go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation.

And I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you. And him who dishonors you, I will curse. And then listen to this.

In you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. God drops this little hint here. Right? This little hint that we see in verse 3 where he tells Abraham, in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

And he wasn't saying, Abraham, you're it. He's just saying, in you, in your seed, in your lineage, your offspring, that's going to happen. The apostle Paul understood this.

He's familiar with this Abraham story. And he gets the heavenly download of how understanding how this is all fulfilled in Jesus. And he says this to the church in Galatian and the believers there in chapter 3, verse 16.

[11 : 57] Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, and to offsprings, plural, referring to many, but referring to one. But he says, and to your offspring.

And Paul says, guys, that is Christ. Christ. So now, to Abraham, God speaks this little promise, this little hint a little bit further.

And you, Abraham, it's going to be reckoned. This blessing of all the families of the earth is going to be reckoned. So we see this more clarity here. We know that this coming seed is going to be a descendant of Abraham, specifically an Israelite.

And then hundreds of years later, God gets even more specific. Right? King David, he's ruling over Israel at the time. He says, oh, God, I want to build you a house. I love you so much.

You need a place to dwell in with your people, a permanent place. You know, this sanctuary that we got going on, it just ain't good enough. We got to get fancy. And then God flips the script on David a little bit, saying, no, no, no, bud.

[12 : 58] You're not building me a house. I'll build you a house. Listen to this from 2 Samuel chapter 7, the second half of verse 11.

And moreover, the Lord declares to you, David, that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men.

But my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me.

Your throne shall be established forever. So now we get more detail. The seed will be of the tribe of Judah and a direct descendant of King David.

[14 : 12] Now, that's amazing, right? More clarity, more clarity, more clarity. We have a little bit more times marching on. And you might be thinking, hey, Jesse, that's all been really cool. What's the point of knowing all of this?

Well, I think we do have to ask the question, why is God taking his sweet time here, right? The centuries have marched on. This promised seed has yet to come.

Why didn't he just come out and say just like, hey, this is when it's going to happen. This is who it's going to be. And this is where. Like, why didn't he just like fill in all those details?

Why didn't he fulfill this seed promise any earlier than he did? Why couldn't it have been Seth? Why couldn't it have been Abraham? Why couldn't it have been King David or one of King David's like immediate sons?

Those are big questions. We're going to be answering little by little through the next few weeks of our Advent series. But for our purpose today, it's sufficient to say that God had a plan from the beginning.

[15:10] He knew when he wanted this seed promise to be fulfilled. And he had a plan for revealing this seed promise through the generations leading up to it.

But what shouldn't be overlooked for us is that God makes us wait to firmly establish the principle of faith here. See, faith waits with great hope because it believes God fulfills his promises.

And in that waiting, something is meant to happen. Our longing for that promise to be fulfilled must grow. Advent invites us to grow our longing for God's promises to be fulfilled.

And I think this is part of the answer why God took his sweet time. In the waiting, longing grows. So, Philip Davis, our own Philip Davis, just ran a marathon, right?

And the consensus is that for those who run marathons, they know this and they can tell us this. So, we got to trust them on it, you know? But the real race begins about mile 20, right?

[16:23] You still got several miles to go at that point. But that mile 20 is about when the body starts to say, what is wrong with you? What are you doing to me?

Like, and so in that place, that's when the mind games start happening. And the question is, what keeps these people going? And perhaps it is just a lack of common sense.

But I think there's something else. It's the prize of finishing, isn't it? It's the prize of crossing that finish line.

And no doubt, everybody running that race, they're probably looking forward to the finish line at mile one and mile two and mile three. But I'm going to tell you, at mile 20, that longing for that finish line has ratcheted up by more than a little bit, right?

They're wanting to see that thing. They're wanting to get there desperately. Everyone's legs and lungs are crying out for that finish line at that point. And in the same way, Advent is meant to cultivate the true longing of our souls.

[17:30] Advent reminds us that our greatest need can only be met in God's promised seed. That running analogy is helpful to a degree, but it kind of falls short because it's not a life or death situation, you know?

If I'm running that marathon, I'm probably just like, you know what? I don't know if that finish line is worth it. See, our needs are more serious than sore legs. We're more like somebody that is waiting for the heart surgeon to arrive because we need a heart transplant.

And if they don't show up, we're dead. Right? That's not a luxury. That's like life and death. That's big stuff. There's a lot hanging in the balance there.

That is a need, not a nice to have. And that kind of need brings a person into a different kind of waiting, doesn't it? And see, Jesus' arrival, Abraham's seed, David's offspring, it was a breaking in of hope to rescue us by defeating our greatest enemy, Satan, sin, and death.

Like a person that needs a heart transplant, they can't fix it themselves. They are dependent on someone outside of them, someone with the ability and the authority and the power to pull that off.

[18:45] That's what we needed. When we look at Genesis 3, verse 15, we see this promised seed is going to come and he is going to crush the serpent's head. Despite the fact that the serpent would bruise his heel, meaning the serpent would get this minor victory in a moment, but the promised seed would have ultimate victory.

And the cross, the cross of Christ, as brutal as it was, was only a heel strike on Jesus because the resurrection was the crushing of the serpent's head.

It was the defeat of death for you and me. It was the crushing of sin's power over us. That was Jesus' victory. It was his triumph over sin and death.

And that changed everything for us. But up until that point, we were like those in the Christmas hymn, O Holy Night, long lay the world in sin and error pining. That's where we were at.

That's where the world was at. But then it goes on to say, until he appeared and the soul felt its worth. Man, what a beautiful promise.

[19 : 50] There was a time when the wise and the faithful waited for the coming of the promised seed because they knew their greatest need. They were looking ahead, waiting for it, desperate in their longing.

And in one sense, we are meant to be like that. But in another sense, we aren't. Because we're on the other side of Jesus' coming, his birth, right?

And Advent invites us to be thankful that the promised seed has come. And so what does that mean for us today? Well, it means you and I don't have to wait for the promise yet.

We don't have to wait for what those people before Jesus had to wait for. We just have to know it and we have to believe it and we have to live in it. Here's a great example, right? We all know the Juneteenth holiday now, right?

And that Juneteenth holiday, it harkens back to the Civil War. And in one sense, the war ended at the Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia on April 9th, 1865, when Lee surrendered to Grant.

[20 : 47] At that moment, the Union won and the institution of slavery was over. The Emancipation Proclamation was enforced in all the states. But at the same time, we do know that good news wouldn't reach Texas for a few more months.

Texas, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of miles away. So on June 19th, 1865, in a particular place, it was considered the final enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation.

That good news finally had reached that area. And we proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ as the great emancipator, as a great emancipation from slavery and sin and death.

But that has to be heard and that has to be believed and that has to be received. Those folks in Texas, they didn't see Lee surrender to Grant hundreds of miles away. They had to hear that good news.

They had to believe that good news and then they had to live by that good news. And we're no different. When it comes to believing the promised seed has already come and won our freedom. And because we believe in that and live in the promises of our Savior's first arrival, we also await and long for the promise of his next arrival.

[22 : 06] And Advent invites us to await the promised seed's return. To keep that Emancipation Proclamation example going, even though it had declared slaves free, we know it didn't solve all the problems, not by a long shot.

There would be decades upon decades following that of struggle and setbacks to follow on as the nation moves slowly into more of the fullness of what that had promised.

And as the people of Christ, as followers of Jesus, his church, we live in a moment where the emancipation has been declared, but it's not fully been realized, has it?

He has come to set us free, but yet we can look around the world and we know, man, things still aren't as they should be, right? We ain't there yet. And the longer we wait, the more it becomes clear that all the problems will only be fixed when he returns.

And if you are putting your hope in this world, if you are putting your hope in something that you think can get us to no more problems, maybe that's education, maybe that's wealth, maybe that's government, maybe that's tech, what Advent invites you and I to do is actually to set those aside and to look for real hope.

[23 : 27] This world is always going to be broken. It's always going to have its problems until, until one day, one day, the promised seed is going to return.

It's going to bring all this to an end, all the bad, all the evil, all the suffering, all the darkness. All the bad things are going to become untrue one day.

And so we wait with growing desire for his return. As the band comes up and we look to respond, we opened up in Genesis 3.

In God's good and perfect world, his good purposes, it seemed like they were being thwarted by man's disobedience and sin and everything else.

And you know what's interesting is God steps into that place. God pursues Adam and Eve. And the first question, the beginning of the Bible, is God saying, where are you?

[24 : 32] And I think for some of us today, we're sitting in a lot, but some of you that may not be followers of Jesus, God is calling out to you today. He's saying, where are you? You think you're hiding from him.

He knows exactly where you are. He knows exactly what's going on. And the reason God came is because he loved Adam and Eve and he had a plan. His love and his grace didn't stop at their mistake, at their failure, at their sin.

And he pursued them and he called them out. And he's calling you out today. And I want to invite you to put your trust in him as Lord and Savior, as the one who came a little over 2,000 years ago. A little baby, a humble baby in a manger who became a man who lived a perfect life and died a death he didn't deserve in our place for you and me on a cross. So we could be set free from sin and death.

And come to him. He's offering it to you today. There's going to be a prayer on the screen if that's you. If you're here and you're already a follower of Jesus, the first question in the New Testament was spoken by the wise men asking, where is he?

[25 : 45] Wise men, wise women, followers of Jesus, continue to look for him, continue to wait for him, continue to long for him.

Where are you at? Are you looking for your Savior? Are you longing for him? Is he your greatest hope?

Are you putting your hope in something else? As you look around in this world and see the brokenness and feel a little bit helpless and it's out of control. You're wondering what the future, where are we headed?

Where are we going to end up? You know what? We can't put our hope in those things that we talked about. We can put our hope in a Savior who's going to come again.

And I want to invite you to do that. I'm going to give us a moment just to reflect. Reflect where our hearts and our souls are at. We're going to come to the one that our souls are always aching for and longing for, whether we realize it or not.

[26 : 56] And so if you would bow your heads with me. Just go to Jesus right now in the way that you know you need to, the way that he is leading you to, and respond to him.

Maybe it is God saying to you, where are you? Respond to him. Maybe it is the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit echoing in our hearts what he cries out for and is declared in Revelation.

Or it says the Spirit and the bride, the Spirit and the church say, come Lord Jesus. Go to him now. Spend some time in prayer.

And when you're ready, you can go to the communion table and take the elements back to your seat and take it when you're ready. Lord, bless our moment right now as we come to you.

Draw near to us. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[27 : 58] Amen. Amen. Amen.