

Take Heart Because Jesus Came and Will Come Back

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[0 : 00] Hey, good morning, One Harbor, Donnie here. Man, it's a real privilege to get to share with you this morning. Thanks for gathering and watching us. Hopefully you've got some folks with you.

If you're by yourself, we're really glad you're with us this morning. If you're gathering with some friends or some family, we're really glad that you took the time aside from sure lots of other busyness to watch this.

And I trust that God's gonna encourage you and comfort you as we spend some time in his word. We've been going through Advent, which is the season where the church traditionally looks toward the second coming of Jesus.

And we've looked at how when Jesus comes back, he's gonna judge the world, the church is gonna win, and he's gonna make all things new. And then we've celebrated the birth of Jesus at Christmas.

We've spent time considering Jesus' birth and what that means for us. And now we're about to embark on a whole new year, but before we do that, I wanna try to take just a little bit of time and help us see how these two things really work together.

[1 : 02] How do we live in this tension of Jesus has come, his birth, and he is coming, his second coming. So we're gonna spend some time this morning just focusing on that.

A week ago, Mariah Carey made headlines. She rejected the title Queen of Christmas. People were bestowing on her because of her famous, albeit extremely annoying song, All I Want for Christmas Is You.

And you are welcome. It will now permanently be in your head for like a week. So she rejected this title of Queen of Christmas, and she said because she thought that Jesus' mom was more worthy. Yes, we would agree, Mariah. Song's great, but you did not give birth to Jesus. So interestingly, Jesus' mom, Mary, she wrote kind of the first Christmas song.

And so we're gonna have a look at that this morning. I think it's gonna show us a powerful demonstration of how do we both respond to the birth of Jesus and live looking forward to his return.

[2 : 08] We're gonna pick up the story first with Mary. She visits her relative, Elizabeth, and Mary's pregnant now. She visits Elizabeth, who's also pregnant. And we just see that little interaction.

In those days, it says, Mary rose and went with haste to the hill country to a town in Judah. And she entered the house of Zechariah, and she greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

And she exclaimed with a loud cry, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believes that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.

So Elizabeth's pregnant with John the Baptist. This is also a baby that shouldn't have been born. Elizabeth was barren, and both Elizabeth and Zechariah were very old.

[3 : 08] And actually, God stepped in and made this thing happen. He made it possible. And so Mary walks in, and John the Baptist leaps inside of Elizabeth, and she's filled with the Holy Spirit, and she bursts out proclaiming how amazing Mary is.

And that's a normal thought. I mean, you've got Mary who's a virgin, who's pregnant, who is gonna give birth to Jesus, the Son of God, the King of Kings, the Savior of the world.

But look at how Mary then goes on to respond to Elizabeth's blessing and proclamation over her. Mary says this. Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God, my Savior. For he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on, all generations will call me blessed. For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered the proud within the thoughts of their hearts. He's brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate and has filled the hungry with good things.

[4 : 13] And the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy. And he has, he spoke to, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.

And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home. So Mary's response to Elizabeth's blessing and proclamation of how great she is and how blessed she is, is to burst out into song.

But it's not a song about herself or how great she is. She admits that all generations are gonna call her blessed, but she quickly moves on. And this hymn is referred to as the Magnificat.

It's Latin for my soul magnifies the Lord. And so that's what she's doing here. She's not magnifying herself. She burst out into a song that magnifies the Lord.

And I think, as I said, I think the song shows us both how to rightly respond to Jesus's first coming and to rightly anticipate his second coming. Let's look at how. Firstly, in verse 46, right out the gates, my soul magnifies the Lord.

[5 : 14] My spirit rejoices in God, my savior. Mary's song, it calls us to recognize our need of Jesus's birth. Just not just that it happened, but our need of it.

To respond appropriately to his first coming, to the birth of Jesus, is to do more than get sentimental about a nativity scene. It means to admit we needed him to come.

Before John 3, 16 tells us that God so loved the world, he gave his only son, John tells us in John 1 why that had to happen in the first place. Why we needed Jesus to come. John 1, 14, the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

We have seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the father, full of grace and truth. Verse 16, for from his fullness, we have all received grace upon grace. Well, what's the point of this?

What's the point of receiving grace? Well, if we're excited about receiving grace, it means that simultaneously, we're admitting we really needed grace. We needed mercy.

[6 : 17] We needed grace because of our sin. Twice in this song, in verse 50 and 54, Mary calls upon the mercy of God. Mercy is one of those Christian words I think we say so much or sing so much that it loses its meaning.

The word means pity. And so to be someone who says happily that I received mercy is to be someone who says I needed pity. It's to be essentially pitiful.

To admit that you're pitiful. And the problem is that in our culture, we have, we've used that word as an insult. When we say someone's pitiful, it's usually condescending.

It's usually an insult. But to respond to Jesus's birth appropriately is to wholeheartedly join Mary in saying, I am pitiful. I needed mercy.

I needed grace. I need a savior. And we learn from this song that Mary sings that that's not something everyone is willing to do. In verse 51, he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

[7 : 23] 52, he has brought down the mighty from their thrones. 53, the rich, he has sent away empty-handed. Man, from this passage, we see that the proud, the mighty, and the rich, they come, but they go away empty-handed.

The proud are left to the thoughts of their hearts and only one day to be brought down from their thrones. We see that in Matthew 19 with the rich young ruler. We see this throughout the scriptures that not everyone who comes to Jesus gets the mercy and grace that this song tells us about.

And we see in this song, it's because of a disposition in their heart. They don't know how desperately they need him. And there's that story where Jesus famously cast demons into a herd of pigs and he rescues this man whose life was totally just tragic and sad and devastating.

And the town's response is to beg Jesus to leave, not to fall on their knees and beg Jesus to help them, to heal them, to save them. Mary isn't shy about her own need of pity and mercy.

She was the mother of Jesus, but she needed a savior. And I think it stands to reason if Mary, the mother of Jesus, needed a savior, we do too. She goes on, she says, his mercy is for those who fear him.

[8 : 46] And that word fear, it means to approach him with humility, to worship him, to be willing to do whatever he says. And if she goes on and says, but for those people he has exalted, he exalts those who are in a humble estate.

In 53, he fills the hungry with good things. So to rightly respond to his birth is to recognize that we happily recognize our own need of a savior, that we were pitiful, that we needed mercy, that we needed grace.

We needed more than a good example, we needed a savior. That is to rightly understand Jesus' first coming. You and I needed more than a good example, we needed a savior.

And we come humble and we come hungry and we leave filled with good things. We leave changed by him. And then Mary carries on by magnifying God by proclaiming what he will do.

She says in verse 54 and 55, he's helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy as he spoke to our fathers and to Abraham and to his offspring forever.

[9 : 53] So Mary's not just singing about something that's currently happening, right? His birth, she's looking ahead. She's got, this song has got forever ramifications. And I believe this helps point us to what Jesus will ultimately do, which is come back again.

Mary's song magnifies not just what God has done, but what God will do. She sings about a God who sees. This God, he looks down on the humble estate, but he doesn't just see, he acts.

He intervenes. He draws near to the humble. He draws near to the lowly. And she's appealing not just to her situation, but to a whole history. Thousands of years of God doing just that. God being faithful to his people.

God being merciful to his people. Verse 54, he has helped his servant Israel. That is like, that's got loads of history behind it. Thousands of stories of God intervening and helping.

But isn't just a God who was merciful, a God who was faithful, a God who did see, right? Because we learn from the scriptures that this is a God who says, I do not change. Malachi 3, 6.

[10 : 56] And he says it through the lenses of salvation. He says, for I the Lord do not change. Therefore, you old children of Jacob are not consumed. God says, actually, I don't change, but it's not just a fact by itself.

Some of us have memorized that as like a theological fact in isolation. God says, no, no, no. But it's because I don't change that there's even hope for you. It's because I don't change that you have salvation.

It's because of his never changing character that we will and we get to receive mercy and grace. He is strong to save, not just Mary, but us too.

And this is where this promise of his return really comes to a forefront. Mary's thinking about a hope that rested on more than a birth. It rested on God's ancient promise to save.

This God, he loves to save. If you're watching this, you don't know him. You know that about him first. He loves to save. He loves to intervene. He loves to get right in the middle of impossible situations and do what only God can do.

[12 : 03] And Mary's thinking about this ancient promise of a God who wouldn't just send his son to be born divinely, but to go on and live perfectly, to die sacrificially, to rise miraculously and to come again one day in glory.

He didn't just see. He keeps them seeing. He didn't just act. He will act. Now, some of you might be thinking, man, Donnie, do we really believe he's coming back again? Is that like, are we really gonna believe that?

Absolutely. Absolutely. And I would encourage you, you better not just believe in Christmas. We need more than Christmas. We don't just need him to come once.

We need him to come again. We need him to come back and he will. And if he can come, if he can come through a virgin and be born as a baby, he can come again and he will.

And we need to know this and dwell on this because as we wait between his first coming and his second coming, as we wait, it's very easy for insecurity to fill our hearts.

[13 : 08] Will he really come again? It's kind of the same insecurity that was filling Israel's heart. Will he really remember us? Does he really remember us?

These years of longing and waiting that felt unmet, you start to just question, is this God really there? If he is, does he really see what's going on?

Does he really love us? Does he really care? That sort of thing where Mary sings, Israel, he has remembered you. We need to be reminded. That kind of wondering, I think, kicked in pretty quick. I don't think it's just us here in 2021. Right away in Acts 1, we see the disciples. Jesus is just, he's just ascended into heaven and already there seems to be this kind of insecurity that's kicking in. In Acts 1, we pick up in verse 9. Jesus, when he said these things, he basically just told them, look, don't worry about when I'm going to come back. That's not up to you. That's up to the Father.

[14:10] And then he ascends into heaven and he says, as they were looking on, as he was lifted up, a cloud took him out of their sight. While they were gazing into heaven, as he went, behold, two men stood beside them in white robes and said, men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?

I mean, I can think of a lot of reasons. I mean, number one, that was awesome. Jesus just launched into heaven. But probably, more soberly, is this like, are we ever going to see him again?

You know, is he really going to come back? And this is what they say. This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come. He will come.

He'll come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. He's going to come back. And that fact, that Jesus didn't just come once, but that he will come again. As we live in between those moments, of the first coming of Jesus and the second coming of Jesus, that fact that he will come again is powerful at filling our weary hearts with hope in this painful life.

Since we look to close a really tough year, that's not been all bad for everybody, but it's been really bad for some people, for actually many people. This is the kind of hope that can really comfort us.

[15:28] In 1 Thessalonians 4, we read this, verse 13, we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, those who have died, that you may not grieve as others who have no hope.

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord.

We who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with a voice of an archangel, and with a sound of the trumpet of God.

And the dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Listen to this promise. And so we will always be with the Lord.

We will always be with him. And then he says this, therefore, encourage one another with these words. I love that. That's the response.

[16:31] Encourage each other. The idea of robing with courage. Encourage one another. There's going to come moments where all of us need that. We need someone, a brother or sister, to encourage us in this, to use this to, hey, he's coming back.

He will come back. The Lord himself. The Lord himself will descend. The dead and the living in Christ will rise. We don't grieve as those who don't have hope.

Now, that does not mean we don't grieve. I think we have made a mess of this because we have a lot of times told people who are grieving, hey, chin up, have faith, stop crying, don't you believe the scriptures?

It's not what it says. It doesn't say we don't grieve. It says we don't grieve as those who don't have hope. We do grieve. I have a dear friend who, just this week, his daughter passed away after giving birth to his grandson.

We grieve. We hate death. But he is coming back. And we have that promise, incredibly beautiful promise.

[17:45] We will always be with the Lord. There's a lot of mystery in this whole thing. And there's like, you could spend forever sort of lost in a passage like that, 1 Thessalonians 4, and miss that promise.

We will forever be with him. I think this causes us to, hopefully it's causing you to want to join Mary in a magnificat of your own, your own soul magnifying the Lord.

The soul is the real you. It's the authentic you. And so that means that, you know, like the song, like the song of your soul, it's not just what you say with your mouth, it's like how you're really feeling,

you know, what you really mean.

And so a good question for you is what is the current song of your heart? What is your soul currently magnifying? This is a chance to reorientate that and cause your soul to line up with Mary's soul.

This song, her song to be your song, man, I'm gonna actually magnify the Lord. Jesus, I needed you to save me. Jesus, I can't wait for you to return.

[18:53] I wanna close this here with this passage. We've looked a lot at the book of Revelation as we've gone through the Advent series. And this is the end of the book. This is the end of the Bible.

Revelation 22, 16. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David.

I am the bright and morning star. The one the whole Bible anticipates. The spirit and the bride say, come. The Holy Spirit and the bride, the church say, come. And let the one who hears say, come. And the one who is thirsty, come. The one who desires, take the water of life without price. Come humble. Come hungry. Come. I warn everyone who hears these words of prophecy in this book, if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.

If anyone takes away from them the words in this book of prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and the holy city which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, surely I am coming soon.

[19:55] Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen. Jesus closes the Bible by promising, surely I will come.

I am coming soon. And the church responds, Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. We don't just have a Jesus who came, but a Jesus who will come again.

And I pray that that reminder comforts you where you're at right now. As we consider how to respond, hey, if you're here, if you're watching this and you're like not yet a follower of Jesus, man, don't waste another second trying to save yourself.

Don't, like Mary's song, don't, don't come rich, proud, and mighty. Looking for a good example, a couple tips. No, come humble and come hungry and say, Jesus, save me.

Save me. If you're watching this and you are already a follower of Jesus, I want us to, I hope you've got a way to take communion together.

[21:03] Maybe even you could pause this right now if you, if you, if you don't have something and just quickly try to find some bread and some juice or some wine and let's, let's, let's honor Jesus with this meal.

In Mark 14, verse 22, it says, as they were eating, he took the bread and after he broke it, he gave it to him and he said, take, this is my body.

And then he took the cup and when he'd given thanks, he gave it to them and they all drank of it and he said to them, this is the blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many. And then look at how he ends this, this meal.

Truly I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. I love how Jesus ends this.

This is not just a meal about his death for our sins. It's a meal about his promise to be with us again in his kingdom. So my friends, eat and drink and be reminded that we will always be with the Lord.

[22:16] There's a day coming and then I'd like you to maybe take a few moments together and encourage each other. Thessalonians says, encourage one another of these things. Some of you may be really grieving and mourning and haven't felt the permission to grieve.

You're coming to the end of another really hard year and you haven't felt the permission to be honest about how you're feeling. Christianity is not a religion where you have to hide how you feel. It's a religion that invites us to bring the real us, our real feelings out into the open into a safe community of people who can look us in the eyes and weep with us and encourage us and love us. Encourage each other, remind each other. God bless you guys. Have a great Sunday. Have a great Sunday.