

**“Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus”**  
**Advent**  
**Downtown**  
**November 28, 2021**

Good morning, my name is Allen and I am one of the pastors here. Turn in your Bible to John Chapter 1.

As mentioned earlier, today is the start of Advent. Advent is typically when the historic church all across the world takes four Sundays before Christmas to anticipate and remember how Jesus came to save the world and how one day He’s going to come back. It is a season of waiting, anticipating, and reflecting back to the long awaited Messiah.

And in keeping with the spirit of Advent, we thought this year we’d take a look at some of our favorite Christmas hymns that many know and love and connect them to Scripture. Because I would argue that oftentimes we sing familiar songs without grasping the meaning of them. We forget the rich theological truths found in the words of these familiar tunes. We can easily miss the words that are good for our souls.

The Christmas carol, the advent hymn “Come thou long expected Jesus” that we sang earlier is a perfect summary of what Advent is all about. As you will read in your Advent guides, the English word Advent comes from a latin word that means “coming.” God’s people anticipating the coming of their Messiah.

Come, Thou long expected Jesus  
Born to set Thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us,  
Let us find our rest in Thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.

**For the people of Israel, “Come thou long expected Jesus” was the long awaited coming of the Messiah.** They were and had been a people of exile, waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for a coming Messiah. The stories they told, the scriptures they read, and the holidays they celebrated told of God intervening on their behalf: He freed them from Egypt, He defeated countless enemies, and He brought them back from exile. The ever present God leading, guiding and communicating with his people. This God promised to send a Messiah to rescue and redeem his people. They remembered God’s faithfulness and anticipated his continued work.

But they had to wait. And waiting isn't easy.

Young kids have no real concept of time. When my kids were little, anything that happened in the past was considered yesterday. And anything that takes longer than a few minutes feels like forever.

Starts with anticipation and excitement for what is to come. **Are we there yet?!?** Impatience builds as your wait increases. **Hey, are we there yet?** Frustration builds as the wait continues with no end in sight. **Ugh, are we there yet?** Anger rises because you are tired of waiting. **Are we there yet?!?** Bitterness takes root in your heart because it seems like we will never get there. **Are we there yet?**

The time period between the book of Malachi the last prophet in the Old Testament and the coming of prophet John the Baptist found in the New Testament is approximated to be some 400 hundred years. 400 years the people of God waited without any word from the Lord. 400 years of silence. The first Thanksgiving happened 400 years ago. Pilgrims ate with the Indians. We had some colonies, but the US was 150 years from becoming its own country.

20 something generations came and went. They passed down the stories, they passed down the celebrations, they passed down the traditions, but over time, over 100s of years people must have doubted. Began to forget about God's promise. Began to forsake the traditions, the scriptures, the God of their fathers.

Jon Gordan, an author and leadership guru says, "Where there is a void in communication negativity will fill it." If someone doesn't answer my text soon enough, my mind can jump to all kinds of crazy conclusions. God went silent for 400 years. Can you imagine the negative thoughts:

- God has given up on us.
- God isn't real, these stories are fake and unreliable.
- God doesn't care about us.
- He has forgotten us and will never show again.

They waited: Impatience, uncertainty, doubt, anger, grief.

**For us, "Come thou long expected Jesus" is the long awaited return of the Messiah.** In the same way as the Israelites, we too remember the work of God and we anticipate his coming work. We spend these four weeks in hope, anticipation, and celebration. We also acknowledge our hurts, our frustrations, our pains, our loneliness and our longing. Clinging to what God has accomplished in the person and work of Jesus and hopeful of what he is going to do when Jesus returns to make all things right.

But in the meantime, we too **wait**. In a similar way, many of us are struggling with one thing or another, asking the same questions: **God, where are you?**

Where are you in my boredom? Your life feels like groundhog day. Wake up, coffee, work, eat, sleep. Wake up coffee, work, eat, sleep. Wash and repeat. It's the same day in and day out.

The monotony of life has put you to sleep, on cruise control. Your sense of meaning, purpose and fulfillment are drowned out by life's routine. **God, where are you?**

Where are you in my pain? Your life isn't what you want it to be. You have been hurt by people you care about. Your sin has taken control of your life. There is grief or loss and you are trying to make sense of your world. **God, where are you?**

Where are you in my loneliness? Feels like you are on your own. Unmet desire for a romantic relationship or marriage. SSA and faithfully living a life of celibacy. Trapped in a loveless marriage. Covid and isolation heightened the feelings. **God, where are you?**

Bonhoeffer wrote,

*"The celebration of Advent is possible only to those who are troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect, and who look forward to something greater to come."*

**Advent is for those who are waiting and longing. Advent is an answer to the question of "is God here" and "has He forsaken me?" Advent is a reminder that He has come and he is coming back. Now let's look closely at our text.**

#### **John 1:14**

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

#### **The Word became Flesh: Jesus came to earth**

John borrows a Greek word to explain a Jewish belief.

**"The Word"** - the Greek word is "logos" coined by Hericlitus to mean the divine reason, the divine plan that gives order to the universe. John takes this Greek word "logos" and applies it to Jesus. Jesus is the word, the reason, the plan. The creator and sustainer of the universe, the second person in the Trinity. All knowing, all powerful, Holy and Supreme.

**The Word** - For the Jewish audience, when they read "the Word" they are thinking about all that the Word of God has meant to them. How the Word was an extension of God Himself. John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God. This phrasing echoes the Genesis story. Showing Jesus as eternal, existing with God the Father. Part of the creation story.

The OT is full of God speaking personally to his people to reveal himself and his plan.

- God speaks to the void and creates a universe, a planet and a people.
- God speaks to Abram and makes a covenant with his people ...
- God speaks to Moses and rescues his people...
- God speaks to the prophets and calls his people to repentance ...

The Word - the divine reason that gives order and meaning. The Word that creates and connects. The Word became flesh.

**You see what John is communicating here is that now finally, in Jesus, God is breaking His silence.**

To help explain the absurdity of the incarnation, skip down a few words. "And we have seen his glory." The word "**Glory**" means - preeminence, magnificence, excellence - all those "ences", splendor, majesty, superior rule, brightness, absolute perfection, The word glory is an attempt to label the complete otherness of God. His beauty, his majesty, his perfection. The Word, Jesus, with all of his glory, all of his otherness, all of his beauty, his majesty, his holiness, his power, he lowered himself. He was born into the most inglorious situation. He became a helpless baby born to teenage unwed parents in a feeding trough for animals.

**Philippians 2** says, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. The word became flesh. Jesus became a baby. With all of his glory, his preeminence, his magnificence and his excellence, he emptied himself to become a servant. From other to ordinary.

**II Corinthians 9** For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. He lowered himself from riches to rags. The reverse American dream. Instead of "moving on up" Jesus was "moving on down." Sacrificial, at the ultimate cost to himself. The word became flesh.

Merry Christmas, Hallelujah this is the Christmas story. God came to us.

**And dwelt among us: Jesus made a home with his people**

**"Dwelt"** - to fix one's tabernacle. To abide. To set up a tent. Go make a temporary home or residence.

And dwelt among us, tabernacled with us, set up a tent in our midst. This imagery about Jesus had a deep connection to the people of Israel. When Moses was leading the people of God through the desert, God commanded him to build a tent that God would inhabit.

**Ex 25**

<sup>8</sup> And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. <sup>9</sup> Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.

The tabernacle, or the "tent of meeting," is referred to roughly 130 times in the Old Testament. A precursor to the temple in Jerusalem, the tabernacle was a movable place of worship for the children of Israel. It was where God met with Moses and the people to reveal his will. When the Israelites camped in the desert, the tabernacle was situated in the very center of camp, with the twelve tribes encamped around it. God dwelling with his people as he leads them out of exile

and into the promised land. The Tabernacle was an earthly place for the ancient Israelites to interact with God.

**“Us” and “We”** - John and the disciples, the apostles who are now bearing witness to the Messiah. Jesus, the God of the universe, the divine reason and plan, took up home with us. We saw him, we knew him, we touched him, we ate with him, we lived with him, we walked with him.

With the Incarnation Jesus made his home on earth with his people. One way to tell the story of God is that God is making a home with his people.

- With creation and the garden. God makes a perfect home and creates man to enjoy it with him. The Fall, our sin and rebellion fractured our relationship with God. We were exiled from his presence.
- As the Israelites traveled in the wilderness God dwelt in the Tabernacle. He made a home with his people.
- When Israel made it to the promised land, God dwelt in the Temple. He made a home with his people.
- Jesus enters into the world. Word became flesh and he dwelt among them. He made a home with his people.
- After his death and resurrection Jesus sent his Spirit. The Spirit of God dwells within his people. He makes a home within his people.
- Jesus is coming back to right all the wrong. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. He will make a home with his people.

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,

This is our hope, this is what Advent is all about. God's presence with us.

Our number 1 rule for care issues. When in doubt, be there. Be present. Not about what you say or even what you do, but about showing up.

I have been through my share of heartache and loss. I have been overwhelmed by the darkness. I have been hurt and lonely and tired. When I reflect back to those moments, days, weeks and months. If I am honest I don't remember a lot about what people said to me during my darkest times. I am not sure how much those words registered at the time, much less remembering them years later.

**But... but, I will never forget who was with me, who walked with me through the darkness..**

- When my world fell apart, I knew who I wanted to call, whose voice I so desperately needed to hear.
- I remember who dropped everything to be close even when there was nothing to do nor nothing to say. They were just there.

- I know who spent countless hours in the waiting room and just to be there when I need to see a familiar face.
- I won't forget who sat with me on the hospital floor.
- I know who held me when I cried. I remember messy cried with me.
- I remember those who held me up when I didn't have enough strength of my own.
- I won't forget those that helped us pick up the pieces. Trying to put my life back together.
- I know who checked in on me regularly.
- I know who still remembers and mourns those tragic anniversaries.

We don't forget who was present with us. And this is the hope of Advent. Jesus dwelt among us. When I faced the darkest caves in my life, God set up his tent right there with me. Right beside me, in my dark God was there. God's faithful presence to be near and dear to my broken heart.

In your **boredom** remember that God is with us. The story of God is that he tabernacles with his people. The promise is that God will set up his tent there with you. Right beside you, in the dark. The Word of God, Jesus, Emmanuel, is actively present in your life. **His presence brings meaning and purpose to the routine of life.**

In your **loneliness** remember that God is with us. The story of God is that he tabernacles with his people. When you face the darkest caves of your life, this promise is that God will set up his tent there with you. Right beside you, in the dark. The Word of God, Jesus, Emmanuel, is actively present in your life. **His presence brings peace and comfort to our loneliness.**

In your **pain** remember that God is with us. The story of God is that he tabernacles with his people. When you face the darkest caves of your life, this promise is that God will set up his tent there with you. Right beside you, in the dark. The Word of God, Jesus, Emmanuel, is actively present in your life. The all powerful, all knowing, sovereign God is still reigning. He is never surprised or taken aback by our situation or circumstances. He who knows all and controls all is with us. **His presence brings hope and solace to our pain.**

This first week of Advent focuses on hope ... God came to us. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. His presence is with us and we await his return. Read together with me.

Come, Thou long expected Jesus  
 Born to set Thy people free;  
 From our fears and sins release us,  
 Let us find our rest in Thee.  
 Israel's strength and consolation,  
 Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
 Dear desire of every nation,  
 Joy of every longing heart.

This Advent season let us find hope because the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. **God has made, He is making and He will make a home with us.**

