

Christmas 2019 // Waiting

[BUMPER VIDEO: [Ade + Janetta Oni Video](#)]

The Holy Spirit is **alive** and **well** and is **moving** and **healing** in the lives brown and peach people and everybody in between, amen?!

If you haven't been around TSC, we are a church who seeks to **reach**, **disciple**, and **send** every person.

- One of the most important ways we do that is by **partnering with families to raise a generation for Christ**.
- That testimony video is such an amazing **reminder of the way** God is working in the lives of **not just adults**, not just college students...but even in the lives of our children all over the Triangle.

Merry Christmas, everybody. My name is J.D. Greear, I am one of the pastors here at TSC.

I want to welcome all of you, and commend you for being here. It is Dec 22 and I know that Christmas is upon you.

Christmas can be a **really stressful time** of year.

- **How many** already done Christmas shopping? Nothing to do but celebrate and enjoy family? Everyone hates you.
- How many **still have a lot to do**? Procrastinators

I was at the mall a few days ago and saw a guy who had to take his 3 year old son with him. SHOPPING IS HARD ENOUGH. WITH YOUNG KIDS, BRUTAL

Works Consulted:

"The History of Grace," Tim Keller

Clearly done. His son was freaking out -- walking along and just screaming, falling down, losing his mind...

Dad was saying: "It's going to be ok, Albert. Just a few more minutes, Albert. Please don't lose it, Albert."

I went up to him—*"I know you don't know me, but I am so impressed. I am a pastor, and I was much more impatient at that stage."* // My son's name is Sam. I'm Albert."

Some of you know that I started a short podcast called AMA. It's where I try to give short answers to questions I get asked from time to time. **Well, one of the questions** I get asked sometimes around Christmas is **why we celebrate Christmas** on Dec 25. Are we **sure that was the day** Jesus was born?

No, we're not. I hope this doesn't rattle you, but we don't know the exact date of his birth. The Virgin Mary didn't **leave much of a social media trail**, so it's hard to pin down.

One of the reasons the church landed on December 25 was it was the date of the Roman solstice (solstice, which means the longest day of winter--that day of the year when the daylight hours are the shortest and the nighttime hours are the longest).

And it **just made sense to celebrate** the birth of Christ then, because that's what Christmas is really about--**God's light shining into our worst darkness**. (Plus, we do know the date of the annunciation, and Dec 25 is about 9 months from that... so it's in the ballpark).

Matthew said of Jesus' birth, "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light."¹ Jesus was born into a time of darkness.

Matthew, whose book comes first in the NT, **shows us that in a very unique and artistic way** by opening up his Gospel with a genealogy.

- It can be a confusing passage of Scripture, but it has **massive implications** for how we understand God's activity in our lives--that changes how we think of things like broken families or chronic pain.

The first verses of Matthew read, The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (Matthew 1:1)

Then it goes on to say: *Abraham was the father of Isaac,
Isaac the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,
Judah the father of Perez and Zerah...* (and so forth)

Matthew lists out the generations from Abraham to Jesus, and then he concludes: ¹⁷ Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

Again, this may seem like an odd way to open up the New Testament, but when you look more closely at it, you see that it is designed to communicate a very important message.

- **Fourteen generations from Abraham to David**

- Matthew starts with Abraham because Abraham was the one to whom the salvation promise was first articulated. "
- David because David represented the King Israel had thought they needed, the King who would bring political power and prosperity

- **Fourteen from David to the exile**

- Exile because exile represents the failure, first of David, and then of the entire nation of Israel, to follow God. **Because of their persistent disobedience**, God drove them out of the Promised Land and into exile.

- **Fourteen from the exile to Jesus**

- **Jesus was God's answer** to the exile. He was the fulfillment of God's promise to rescue and bless Israel

FOURTEEN GENERATIONS between each of these major milestones. You say, "Well, that worked out pretty neat"

But here's the thing. If you go back and look at your Old Testament, you can see that there were more than 14 generations. Matthew left out some names.

- (And **Matthew knew that you could do this, btw**; it's not like he's trying to pull a fast one on you. He knows you can see that).

So, you say, why does he say "14" then--if he knows we know there are more than 14?

He's trying to communicate, in his own artistic way, that the coming of Jesus was a perfect and perfectly-timed fulfillment of God's promises.

- **Fourteen is two 7's.** And **7, of course, is the biblical number** of completion. This was not just perfect, it was perfect perfect.
- And also, in Hebrew, the **numerical value of 3 letters of David's name is 14**, so history is like a kaleidoscope where all the generations point to a King like David.

¹ Matthew 4:16, quoting Isaiah 9:2

Matthew is showing, in a Jewish, artistic way, that God is always faithful, always in control, always working to fulfill his promise in his perfectly designed way.

It had been over **550 years since the exile and 400 years since the last prophet** had spoken

- (THINK ABOUT IT: 550 YEARS: That's twice as long as our country has been in existence--that's a long time!)
- And **THE WHOLE TIME** they had sat in darkness since then, **WONDERING** if God had forsaken them, if there was a God at all, or if he was really good.

Christ was the answer.

Here's what you and I are supposed to see in that at Christmastime:

1. God sees you in your waiting

Many of you **find yourself in a posture of waiting** this Christmas. A time of darkness. Of confusion or feelings of abandonment.

Or maybe **longing**: longing for something to be set right. A longing for some yearning to be fulfilled.

- Maybe it is a longing to have your family put back together
- Or, maybe to have a **family of your own**. You were **hoping to be married** by this Christmas... ~~Last Christmas...~~ Regardless, here you are at another Christmas where you are singing Single Bells... (Not trying to make light of it, I know for some this is difficult).
- Maybe you still can't get pregnant
- Grieving the death of a child
- Maybe this season finds you engulfed with sorrow over someone you've lost
- Or heartache over a **family that has fallen apart**

- A **prodigal** who is yet to come home
- Maybe this Christmas signifies **another year that physical healing** hasn't come, **no matter how much**
- Or another year where **financially things have not worked out**

And here's the thing: you've tried everything you know how to try. You've gotten advice and prayed and believed and worked hard but still, things haven't happened.

So, you wait. And, if you are honest, you also WONDER "God, are you even up there? Do you hear me? **Are you really, and truly good?"**

I want you to know that God sees you.

- All these names are recorded to show us that God had forgotten not a single one of them.
- **Even when they FELT like God** had abandoned them, he was weaving a **perfect 14**.
- And **just like he saw these people and remembered them**, he sees and remembers you.

Right now, he sees you.

2. God always comes through in our waiting

- That's what this **genealogy demonstrates**. God, in his own perfect way, in his own perfect time, always comes through.
- He's going to **turn your chaos into his perfect 14**.
- **Recently I've been reading a lot in the prophets and Psalms**, and it's amazing how much of their lives is spent in a posture of waiting, **and what God promises to those who wait:**
 - In Lamentations, the prophet Jeremiah says: **"The Lord is good to those who wait for him."** (Lam 3:25)
 - Isaiah says, **"...blessed are all those who wait for him."** (30:18)
 - and, **"...those that wait for me shall not be put to shame."** (49:23)

- God will not disappoint those of you wait for him. He will not let you be put to shame.
- **No one who ever has waited on God** has ever been let down. He will always come through.
- You say, **“Well, why then does he have us wait?”** I don’t know all the answers to that, but I do know there are things you learn in a time of waiting that you can’t learn any other way.
- Jeremiah says: **“It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.” Lam 3:26.**
 - This is a verse **God has been using** in my life lately. It is good FOR ME to sit quietly and wait for God’s salvation. In a posture of helplessness.
 - **Unfulfilled longings** teach you to press into the goodness of God, to probe the depths of his character, to wrestle with whether you believe his promises and that he really is good and you can trust him.
 - **That wrestling yields a depth of trust in God** that produces a joy and strength of faith you couldn’t have known any other way.
- Do you feel like you **are in darkness? Waiting? 400 years?** He will come through--in his **own perfect time, in just the right way.**
- He will **not disappoint.** He’s **never let anyone down** who trusted in him, and you won’t be the first!
- Keep waiting!

3. Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of our waiting

- This **passage demonstrates that Christ is the ultimate answer** to our waiting; **the ultimate answer** to all their longing.
- You see, what **Israel MOST needed is not what they thought they needed.**
 - What they thought they needed was political deliverance. What they **REALLY needed** was restoration with God.

- **We may think that what we most need** is physical health or financial assistance or family reunion but what you most need is restoration to God.
- What we are **most missing deep in our souls** is reunion with our heavenly Father.
 - **You see, you and I were created for God.** Whether we know it or not.
 - **Blaise Pascal**--a great Christian philosopher--famously said that the human heart has a gigantic hole in it...
 - Recently, **I heard a sad and unexpected affirmation of this** from the **comedian Jim Carrey:** “I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer.”
 - **Money** is not. **Love** is not. **Family** is not. These things are great but they are **not ultimately** what you are created for.
 - **Christ is. St. Augustine:** *Our hearts are restless...*
 - **You were created for God,** you need to be restored to him, and only the Messiah can do that.
 - The **unconditional love** you learn for; the meaning, the security--it’s found in the embrace of your Heavenly Father.
 - The **arms you searched for** in romance were his arms. The **security and significance** you sought in money are found in him.
- **I want to be clear:** God is good, and we are supposed to wait on his goodness to break into our lives and our families.
 - That often looks like physical healing and restored families and fulfilled dreams.
 - **But first and foremost Jesus came to restore our relationship with God.**
 - And **that’s what is most important.** Because apart from that, any other fixes would only be superficial.

That's the whole point of Christmas. It's the whole point of the Bible. Whenever I talk to people unfamiliar with the Bible, I tell them I can **summarize the Bible in 4 phrases:**

- Bad news: Sin has severed our relationship with God. Sin is...
- Worse news
- Good news
 - Lived the life you were supposed to live/died the death
 - JIMP
 - Not just for you, instead of you
- Better news: **Just receive it!** *That's the incredible announcement at Christmas:* Hark, the Herald, glory to the NK; peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled

Hail! the heaven-born Prince of peace! Hail! the Son of Righteousness!

Light and life to all he brings, Risen with healing in his wings

Mild he lays his glory by, Born that man no more may die: Born to raise the son of earth, Born to give them second birth.

That's the announcement of Christmas.

Christ came to reconcile us to God and we can receive it as a gift. **And that's what I can offer you:**

- You see, I may not be able to wave a magic wand this morning and give you the romantic relationship you long for at Christmas, but I **CAN introduce you to God's love, which is the love you were created for.** And that is **far better.**
- I may not be **able to guarantee you** a promotion or financial windfall, **but I CAN connect you to the promises of a God** who says he will cover you with his wings and provide for your every need. **And that is better.**

- I may not be able to grant you physical healing, but I can **tell you about a God** was **broken for you** and **wounded for your transgressions** and bruised for your iniquities so that by his stripes you could be ultimately be healed, and now says, "***He that believes on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;***" and who promises now to walk by your side through every step of your pain. **And that is better.**

Do you feel like you are sitting in darkness this morning? I can't promise you **immediate resolution** to what you are waiting on, but I can offer you Jesus, he is better, and I can promise you that if you trust in him he will renew your strength and make you mount up on wings like eagles.

Do you know Jesus?

Invitation: BOW HEADS

- **Have you received Christ? Because that's what Christmas is most about.**
 - It happens through surrender/faith...

