



What Child is This
3 – Waiting for the Lord
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We are in this series. We're going through Luke 2. If you have your Bibles, open to Luke 2. We're going, verse by verse through the Christmas story. Today, we're talking about waiting for the Lord. We're going to go deeper than just the waiting.

You are probably used to talking about or just becoming a patient person. If you go to Target, which I do multiple times a week to drop Amy off at the front door... And then if you go and you drive down along the building, you'll see three spaces at the far end. That's where all the husbands back in and wait for their wives to come out. I was backed into the middle spot and two other trucks pulled up alongside me. We're waving at each other. I'm waiting for her to come out. You can just see all of us on the edge of our seat, waiting for our wife. Some women come out but it's like, "Not her..." "Not her..." But then that moment comes when you get to go and pick her up. I told my wife that when I die, I want to be buried in the Target parking lot, so I know she'll come visit me three or four times a week. That's really my desire.

We're going way beyond that this season. We wanted to carry this throughout all of Luke 2. We want every member, every guest to see this thread through the Christmas story. And that is the sovereignty of God, starting with the decree that was issued that moved Mary and Joseph into position for where they needed to be. Maybe you've seen the memes that Joseph gets there and finds out there's no rooms available and it's almost like they joke about that with "Oops, he forgot to make the reservation." That's not an accident. Nothing about this story is just circumstance or an accident. It's all part of the plan of God.

We've been looking at this big idea and we're going to start today the same that **God is in Control when life seems out of control.** When the chaos is going on all around us and we see what's happening in our world, we can begin to just wring our hands and be like, "I don't know, I don't know, I don't know." But in every one of those moments, we need to be reminded that our trust is in the Lord. Our hope is in the Lord. We've put our faith in him, and we know that he is sovereign over it all. So, we know many of you this season are waiting. And if we can be serious for just a moment...

Many of you are waiting for a child to return to the Lord. And you've been waiting, and you've been waiting a long time. Today, we're not just going to talk about the wait, but we are going to talk about how to wait. What do we do in the waiting and that we wouldn't see waiting as wasted time. Some of you have placed your hope, your trust, your faith into the behavior of your child and that's changing. But today that you would turn, and this would be a morning of recalibrating and retuning our lives on

Jesus who is the source and that we would look to him as we even think about that child who is far from God.

Many of you have been praying for friends and family to accept Jesus. You've been praying for decades. In just a moment we'll talk about that that we are in this season where you invite family and friends to church, and you're just praying that they say yes and you're praying about how that whole time at church goes. We'll look at that in a second. But you continue to pray.

Others of you are ready for wrongs to be made right. You just look around and you're like, *When is this going to be called out; when is this going to be dealt with?* Follower of Jesus, we need to be reminded that one day every wrong will be made right. Some of you looked around at the injustice in our world and you see suffering and you're like, *When will the suffering end?* I promise you it will one day end. The Lord is in control and we're waiting, we're waiting, we're waiting.

I'm ready for people to wake up. This one is really just me working out some issues this week, but I'm sorry, I look around and I'm just like... I'm a comedian in my night life. In the last couple of years, I've found myself taking bits out of my set because cancel culture said they're no longer acceptable. This week, I sat down and I said, "I'm going to reintroduce them all in 2023 and I'm going to share them in their original form, but then I'm going to share them in a politically correct way, and they are hilarious." You don't even have to write jokes today; they write themselves. Turn on the news and you'll see punch line after punchline. Go on social media and you'll see punchline after punchline. I'm not the only one doing this. You're sitting around going, "People can't really be thinking this stuff." At some point, the veil is going to come off and they're going to look and see. Let me tell you, one day – and the scripture is clear – Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

That day is coming, and we want to talk about that type of waiting today. I sometimes put my hope in people. If you put your hope in people, every single time, you're going to be upset because people are going to still do crazy things. People are still going to fall for just craziness. I'm talking on both sides. We've been talking about this so much among our friends and church staff, just the polarization that it just seems people are going further and further away. And when you say I want to stick with Jesus and I want to be with the original version and I want to be with what's true, you get anger. And you're like, "Wake up! Wake up!" Let me tell you that one day, everyone will.

So, for those of you who are losing heart... And I talk to you every single day. It's almost like you're giving up. We've taught our kids this verse since they were very small. If you do those devotional cards at our church, the A-to-Z series, you know that this is the E – the eagle in our series. It says in Isaiah 40: 31, ***But they who wait for the lord...*** It's not those who just wait. Some of you are just waiting, but you're not waiting for the Lord. That that today would be that recalibration, that recentering on Jesus that we're waiting for the Lord. ***...shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles...***

We taught this to our kids. It's the eagle. We bought a rickety canoe with a few holes in. We patched up the holes and tied it down to a tree on, I think, one of our neighbor's lots on Taney Como. I don't know whose lot it was, but we would walk through the woods and on one of the first voyages on that

canoe, an eagle flew over. Carson, from the series... The two-word lesson in that series is Unlimited Power. I remember that eagle flying over and Carson, like a Mighty Morphin power ranger, goes, "Unlimited Power!" I had to be like, "Okay, we're not putting our trust in that. Our hope is in the Lord.

We will get strength when we wait for him. We will be bold and courageous and strong. **...they shall run and not be weary...** How many weary people are you meeting today because they're waiting, but they are not waiting for the Lord. **...they shall walk and not faint.**

I was talking to a friend this week who has given up and he's walking away from his ministry. You've heard me say this a couple of times in the past and it usually gets a collective agreement. The simple statement is "You don't have to show up to every fight you are invited to." You can actually see someone arguing or complaining on line and, this is going to be crazy, but you can scroll right past it. You don't have to stop. That's your freedom. You can keep on going. You don't have to show up. Why? You don't have the energy, the capacity, or the time to deal with every fight that is introduced to you. But the problem... And here's where the weariness has come in in our culture in the last couple of years. I believe you and I have been invited to more fights in the last three years than in the previous 20 years combined. And it's exhausting. And you keep showing up.

A friend of mine texted me this week. All he said was, "Don't take the bait." I will not because we grow weary and we grow faint, but when we wait for the Lord... Listen, I don't have to make every wrong right. I don't have to end all suffering, but I know the one who will. And I am waiting on Him.

Today, as we talk about waiting, in the context of the first coming of Christ, advent, the Christmas season that we're in, and then we'll end with the Second Coming of Christ because we get these two stories today in our series; it's the longest section of Luke 2 we're looking at. Luke 2: 22-40. We're going to see the story of Simeon and Anna – two old people. An old man and an old woman who proclaim the good news of Jesus. But what jumps out of the text at us... Yeah, it can be their age, it can be that they were devout, but what I want us to look at and focus on today is that both of them were waiting on the consolation of Israel – The redemption of God's people. They were waiting and they didn't give up.

They just weren't passively sitting back doing nothing; they were actively waiting, and that's for us today. So, the waiting... **The who? Simeon and Anna.** We're going to see it today. They were waiting on Jesus. **The What?** To come to earth. That's the first coming of Christ. **The When?** We are going to see in the story today that Simeon was told by the Holy Spirit that he would be alive at the first coming of Christ. **The what?** We're going to see that that's a promise fulfilled. You and I are waiting on Jesus and the Second Coming. The return of Christ for the church. **Then when?** We don't know. We've not been given the day or the time. Maybe you've seen televangelists who have said that same thing Simeon said, but they weren't given this promise. They said that it's going to take place in their lifetime. Those televangelists are not dead. It makes for a pretty bad prophecy.

If you've seen this week... I was laughing at this 100-year-old lady. She drinks three Dr. Peppers a day. Has anybody seen this video online? The news reporter was interviewing her. He asks her, "You drink three Dr. Peppers a day? Tell me what that's about." She goes, "Every one of my doctors told me I shouldn't do this, but they are all dead." So, she's still drinking three Dr. Peppers a day at 100.

Jesus is returning. We don't know when, but here's where I think we blow it. here's where I know I blow it. I can lose heart, I can grow weary, I can become faint. You and I need to be reminded today how to wait. Simeon and Anna are going to teach us that.

Let's jump into Luke 2. **22 When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses...** So, there are three ceremonies in Luke 2. We looked at the first one last week in Verse 21. Travis covered that and that is the circumcision of Jesus, which takes place on the eighth day after birth. The second ceremony is the consecration of first-born males, so the dedication of Jesus. And then the third is the purification of Mary to make her ceremonially clean again. So, they come now to this moment at the 40 day mark required by law of Moses. **Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord)"** It's this part here that really centers the story around these three ceremonies. **24 and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."** One of the first things we learn in this text is that Mary and Joseph were devout Jews.

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem... An old man. **called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel...** Another way that you could read that is for the comfort of Israel. Jesus would be the comfort, but not just for Israel. We're going to see this in this story, and we see it all throughout scripture that Jesus did not just come for the people of Israel; he came for Jew and Gentile, for the whole world. That's why we know this verse better than any: For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. But he was waiting for the consolation of Israel. We hear more of his story. **...and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: 29 "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised..."**

Here's what we want to see as we go through the rest of this. The plan of God. He's sovereign over this whole story. We don't let any little detail just go by us to say well that's just kind of happened in this story. No, this is all the plan of God who is sovereign over it all. And he's referring back to Verse 26 where it was revealed to him.

"... you may now dismiss your servant in peace. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation..." And that salvation is Jesus. **31 "...which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:**

Go back to Luke 2: 10. There are four parts in this gospel message that the angel delivers in Luke 2: 10.

Do not be afraid. Again, a great reminder for all of us believers who live in these days. Do not live in fear and the way we don't live in fear is to keep our eyes on Jesus. He is good news. We looked at that word good news a couple of weeks ago. And that good news, the message to Jesus coming to earth to die for your sins and for mine, should bring great joy. Remember, we talked about this a little bit. If the good news was presented to you by a church, a family member, or a friend, doesn't bring about great joy,

maybe you didn't hear the original version. Because the good news, salvation that comes to us through Jesus, our rescuer, our comforter, the bread of life, the one who saves us. That brings great joy. Here's the key. Sometimes the greeting card or the meme stops with good news that causes great joy, but we need to keep going because the fourth part says to all people.

That's where we get **32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.**" Jesus has come for the whole world. **33 The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him.** This would be true for you and for me. Every time we come to the scripture and read about Jesus, learn about Jesus, we fall more in love with Jesus, that we marvel and ponder these truths in our hearts as well

34 Then Simeon blessed them..." He speaks of Jesus and now turns to the parents. ... **and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined..."** Here's this plan again. Not just something that's happening, but something that has been planned. ...**destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be spoken against** Meaning with Jesus now on the scene, and some will receive and some will reject. I think sometimes, as Christians, we forget that. Not all will receive this message. It will cause some to fall in love with Jesus and follow Jesus, and others will deny, run, and spend their days persecuting **cause the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.**

And this I think is important. Remember, he's speaking to Mary. **"And a sword will pierce your own soul too."** Boy, you could stay there for a little bit because "Mary, he is your son, but more than your son, he is your Savior. Don't forget that. Even you, Mary, must make a decision about Jesus, your son." Here's what we learned the first thing out of this that jumps out in that waiting for the Lord.

What you believe about Jesus determines where you stand before God, the decision you will make. Some of you invited a family member or friend here today, and you've been praying all week. Maybe it's a child who is far from God. Maybe it's a parent who is far from God. Maybe it's another family member or friend.

Alex Himaya was Here a couple of weeks ago. He posted this video this week. I think he shared it at his church Sunday. We're probably going to put it on our Instagram story this week for you to watch it. As I watched that video, I was reminded of what many of you will be doing and have already done today, but you'll do come Saturday to one of our three Christmas eve services, 1:00 2:30 4:00. You're like "We've got a big day, Ted. The chiefs are on at noon, so count on us at 4:00. So, we're counting on some of you to DVR the noon game and come at 1:00; we can't have everybody at 4:00.

But you've already invited your folks and there are going to be a lot of people. That's Christmas and Easter. When Alex shared this, it reminded me what some of you will be thinking. If I can just share your thoughts. You've been praying for this person for a long time to surrender their lives to Jesus. You've been praying for a long time that this person would come to church and something would click for them; the Holy Spirit would call them by name and they would bow their knee and repent of their sin and become a follower of Jesus. So, you've been praying all week and then you pull down 76 and it starts in our parking lot.

You're praying, "Lord, let it be good. Let the interaction in the parking lot be good. May the first greeter we meet not be that weird one, that one that's a little too handsy, a little too huggie, a little too... I'm bringing an introvert and they don't like all of that. Let it just be the calm one."

Maybe it's your husband. You brought your husband and you've got a baby and you're going to take the baby to Critter Street. You're praying even as you walk in with this baby. "Lord, don't let this baby cry. When I hand this baby over, let this baby be full of joy because I know what my husband will do. He'll be, 'I'll take the baby and I'll sit in the hall. You go in.' I don't want him to have any reason to now step in." And as we walk in, let the worship team be on. Let the be in tune, on pitch. And then, Lord, the real wild card. I pray you bridle the tongue of Ted that today would be the day that he sticks with his notes and that his notes would make sense and that he wouldn't deviate. I know I love when he deviates, but I'm already a believer. Let him stay the course and let there only be one name proclaimed from that stage and it be the name of Jesus. And when we leave, we have one more moment in the parking lot. May on both sides of car be Jesus followers who love you, don't use gestures..."

Why? Because you have been praying. For some of you what we've been talking about, this waiting, it has been for decades and that's going to be your prayer, or something like that. We want you to know that as you show up on this campus Christmas Eve, we've been praying as well. We want you to know that we are going to be praying for your loved one, we're going to be praying for your son, for your daughter, for you mom, for your dad. We know what's at stake.

After the first service, I told Katie, "How are you going to top that Christmas Eve." That was my way of saying, "You better." We gotta bring it Christmas Eve. You know at this church we know singles and doubles wins the game. Pray that with me for those who have been waiting for the Lord for a long time. For family and for friends. What you believe about Jesus determines where you are going to stand before God.

Let's move to this next great character.

36 There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. You only get a few verses of her, but you get even more of the how in the waiting. And her story compliments that of Simeon's. **She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. 38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God...**

Can you step into this picture for just a second and think about... I don't think it was, "Oh this is good. Thank you, Lord, and then grabs the baby. I mean this is something she been waiting on, waiting on, waiting on, and now it is here. She gives thanks to God **...and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward...** And same as the consolation of Israel. **...to the redemption of Jerusalem.** This is just an observation in the text that I think is important to make. God has always used men and women to proclaim the good news of Jesus from the very beginning until today. He will continue to use men and women to proclaim the good news. And she spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

39 When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. 40 And the child grew and became strong... I love Verse 40 to where we will pick on Christmas Eve – Verse 41 – because I think sometimes, again, in our Bible reading plans, we race through things. We need to slow down because from Verse 40 to Verse 41 is 12 years. This is the last verse we get in the story about infant baby Jesus. We pick up in Verse 42, 12 years later. It's like when you watch a movie, like if they just go from one scene and skip ahead 12 years without saying "12 years later," your lost. And it's in this Verse 40 to 41... You know Mark Lowry wrote the bestselling song, Mary did you know? It's his only bestselling song. I heard him interviewed a few weeks ago like how he wrote the song. He was intrigued by this moment right here. He said, "If I were to sit down with Mary and ask her a bunch of questions... I just wrote down every question I would ask about Jesus up until the age of 12." He said, "And here's how the son wrote itself. I wrote all these questions down and the questions that rhymed made a song. But I have a lot of question that didn't rhyme, but they're still questions for me."

...the child grew and became strong he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

As we study in this advent season, I heard a pastor share something this week that I want to share with you. He said, "Advent is the season of waiting. That's what this whole season is about. Waiting in darkness. Waiting for Jesus, the light of the world, to come. Waiting for Emanuel – God with us. In advent, we repeat an ancient practice, the practice of waiting. Waiting on God's promises. Waiting for the fulfilment of God's Word. Waiting has always been a part of our history. Four hundred years the Israelites waited for deliverance from Egypt. Seventy years exiled Israelites in Babylon waited for return to Jerusalem. Four hundred years from the last words of Malachi to the birth of Jesus. We call that the Intertestamental Period. Nine months Mary waits for Jesus to be born. Forty days she waits to present herself and the newborn Jesus in the temple. Simeon and Anna waited decades for the promised Messiah.

Pastor John Piper says this about waiting. "Waiting on the Lord is the opposite of running ahead of the Lord. And it's the opposite of bailing out on the Lord. It's staying at your appointed place while he says stay. Or it's going at his appointed pace while he says go."

We need to be reminded today that God is working while we're waiting. Some of you have waited decades for that lost family member to become a Christian, to become a follower of Jesus. Some of you have waited for decades for that child who made a decision early on but now is far from God. We need to be reminded today our hope is in the Lord. We're waiting on him. He, when we grow weary. He, when we faint. He, when we're wanting to be done with the race.

I get it; we just live in a time where it can be exhausting. But when we turn our eyes upon the Lord, that's when our strength is renewed. When we're recalibrated and tuned into him. That's why I love the hymn *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*. Some of you have your eyes in the wrong place. Your hope is in people, places, or things, and it's not in Jesus. Your growing wearying that today would be the day you turn and recenter upon him. Waiting is not wasted time. Maybe at the DMV, but not when we're waiting on the Lord. Remember, this is the time we lean in, we trust, we hope, and we know his plan.

Waiting is active; it's not passive. Remember as we looked in this story of the first coming of Christ? You and I, just like Simeon and Anna, are waiting for the Lord. They were waiting on the first coming of Christ and you and the church today are waiting on the Second Coming of Christ. Here's what we know with that who, what, when, and how. Jesus is returning to the church at any moment. The who is Jesus, the what is the return, the when is at any moment. We don't know, but I'm telling you as a church... You know I talk about death a lot. My kids say too much. But I don't think we've talked enough about the Second Coming of Christ. And you and I are called to live, to long for the Second Coming of Christ. We should be watching the news and all we should be saying all throughout the news is "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." When we're scrolling the internet, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly." We should be on edge.

I'm on edge. I'm looking at Target, waiting for Amy to come out. I'm waiting and I'm just ready to go. And it's just one little button to push to get in the car and go. This is you and I... We shouldn't be just laid back, chilling for a lifetime. You and I should have what Eugene Peterson in his paraphrase of Luke 21 is. We should have a sharp edge in our waiting for the Lord. We should always be ready. We should be ready for his return at any moment. That's why until that moment, again, we've not been promised that it's going to take place in your lifetime. I told my kids I need to talk about the return of Christ as much as I talk about death. Corynn texted me, "This is what mom wants for Christmas, so I ordered it. It was very expensive. I even told Corynn in a text back, I said, "Don't worry; when we're gone, you get it, so you should be picking us right gifts because you get it all."

It just caught me this week that I'm not talking enough with my young kids, and I get it. Remember your creator in the days of your youth. Young people, you should be living in such a way that is constantly anticipating the return of Christ to earth. We're going to see in this text – Don be caught off guard because until then, be present, productive, and prayerful.

Speaking of the Second Coming, Luke puts it this way in Luke 21, **34 "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life...** because this is what a lot of people will fill their time and their days with as they weight upon the return of the Lord. **...and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. 35 For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth.** No one will escape the Second Coming of Jesus. Jew and Gentile, all will receive it. **36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."** Jesus.

That you and I would be ready for his return. So, as we close out our time this morning, just four simple things out of this as we wait as Simeon and Anna waited for the Lord.

1. I just want to encourage you, follower of Jesus, don't lose heart. Don't stop waiting. Continue to wait; don't give up. Stay alert. This is a big one. Stay on the edge of your seat. Don't go the way...

I was talking to friends this week about how the nation is just so polarized. It just seems people are just so far over here and so far over there. And if you stick anywhere in the middle or with Jesus, it's like you haven't changed, you haven't moved, but it's like so much anger. And you get it from both side. Don't let either side drag you in either direction. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Stay focused on Jesus.

Because guess what? My friend posted yesterday... He's a comedian. I follow too many comedians, but he said, "I can almost guarantee you I have the opposite opinion of whatever you're outraged about today." I'm thinking that's so true. Everybody wants you to join them in their next fight. Instead, we should be inviting people to join us as we follow Jesus. As we walk with the Lord, stay alert, be focused, keep working. Retire from your job that's great, but as my friend, Greg Bettis loves to say, "Refire for the Lord." Retire from a job, we all long for that day, but more than that, we long for the return of the Lord, so we will stay focused and diligent. And, as Anna taught us, pray at all times.

When you don't have the answers, when you can't figure out everything that's going on, when you see the wrong, when you see the injustice, when you see the suffering, don't just wait and become passive, lethargic. Haven't we seen this in too many Christians today? It's just this kicking back and like, "I'm just going to be silent." Let me tell you that you are not alone because I do the same thing. When people start to press on me and push on me, I'm like... You and I have to stay the course, stay alert, pray at all times, and trust that God is in control when everything is out of control. What a message we've been getting from this story in Luke 2. Let's wait for the Lord.

Father, in the name of Jesus, and with the words today spoken over Jesus, and with Luke's Gospel guiding us at the beginning with the first coming and ending with the Second Coming and the way the Lord directed him in this book and the telling of this story. This is God's Word and we are grateful for it.

I pray for the one who has never placed faith in Jesus that today is the day of their salvation. For the parent, for the spouse, for the child, for the family member who has never had more hope for a child, a parent, a spouse to return to the Lord that they would never give up. That they would continue to pray and seek you, that they would wait on you and be productive and prayerful in the meantime.

Thank you for this church. We are so grateful for a family of believers who gather each week and then go out throughout the week to share this good news. May men and women alike go and proclaim it this week as we gather around tables, as we meet with family and friends during this season.

We pray all this in the authority of the name of Jesus... And everyone agreed and said... Amen.