



Reclaiming Christmas: God Gives; Luke 1:5-25

Summary

As we embark on our Advent sermon series, "Reclaiming Christmas," we delve into the profound message of waiting and preparation for the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ. This series begins with a reading from Luke 1:15-25, where we explore the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth, and the divine interruption that changed their lives forever. This sermon challenges us to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas and how we can reclaim it in our lives.

What Does Advent Mean?

Advent is a season of waiting and anticipation for the coming of Jesus Christ. It is a time to reflect on the great gift of God's Son and to prepare our hearts to receive Him anew. This period of waiting is not just about the physical preparations for Christmas but about spiritual readiness.

The Challenge of Waiting

In today's fast-paced world, waiting can be difficult. We often associate waiting with the stress of holiday preparations, family gatherings, and gift shopping. However, Advent

invites us to embrace waiting as a sacred practice, honoring the anticipation of Christ's birth.

How Has Christmas Been Hijacked?

The secular world has turned Christmas into a celebration of materialism and self-indulgence. The average American spends a significant portion of their annual retail budget on Christmas, focusing on gifts and decorations rather than the birth of Jesus.

Living and Giving Like Christ

Reclaiming Christmas means shifting our focus from materialism to the true essence of the holiday. It involves living and giving like Jesus, who came to seek and save the least, the last, and the lost. This season, we are called to embody hope, joy, love, and peace.

How Can We Reclaim Christmas?

To reclaim Christmas, we must create new traditions that honor Jesus' birth. This could involve making charitable donations, volunteering, or spending time in devotion and prayer. By doing so, we can make Christmas about Jesus and His mission in the world.

Key Verses

1. Luke 1:15-25
2. 2 Peter 3:8
3. Isaiah 9:6

Key Takeaways

1. Advent is a time of waiting and anticipation for the birth of Christ.
2. God often uses unexpected people and situations to fulfill His plans.
3. Christmas should be a celebration of Jesus' birth, not materialism.
4. We are called to embody the hope, joy, peace, and love of Christ.
5. Creating new traditions can help us focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

Questions for Reflection

1. How can I make my Advent and Christmas season more focused on Jesus Christ?
2. What new traditions can I create that reflect the true meaning of Christmas?
3. How can I embody hope, joy, love, and peace in my daily life?

A Challenge for the Week

This week, challenge yourself to spend as much time in acts of service and devotion as you do in holiday preparations. Consider volunteering, making a charitable donation, or spending time in prayer and reflection. Let this be a season where you truly reclaim Christmas and make it about the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

As we journey through Advent, let us remember the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth and the miraculous birth of John the Baptist. Let us embrace the waiting, expect divine interruptions, and reclaim the true meaning of Christmas. By living and giving like Christ, we can make this season a celebration of hope, joy, love, and peace. After all, it is His birthday.

Day 1: Embracing the Gift of Waiting

Devotional: Advent is a season of waiting, a time to prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus Christ. In Luke 1:15-25, we see Zechariah and Elizabeth, a righteous couple who waited for years to have a child. Their story reminds us that God honors waiting, even when it feels unbearable. In our fast-paced world, waiting can seem like a waste of time, but Advent invites us to see it as a sacred practice. As we wait, we are called to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas and prepare our hearts for the miraculous birth of Jesus. Let us embrace this time of waiting, trusting that God is always giving to us, filling us with His grace and preparing us for His divine interruptions.

Bible Verse: But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. - 2 Peter 3:8

Reflection Question: How can you embrace the practice of waiting during this Advent season and prepare your heart for the coming of Jesus?

Quote: In the Scriptures, God honors waiting. We just don't like it. We don't have any use for waiting.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to embrace the gift of waiting during this Advent season. Teach me to trust in Your timing and prepare my heart for the miraculous birth of Jesus. Fill me with Your grace and help me to see waiting as a sacred practice. Amen.

Day 2: Expecting Divine Interruptions

Devotional: Advent is not just about waiting; it's about expecting divine interruptions. Zechariah and Elizabeth experienced a divine interruption when an angel announced the birth of their son, John the Baptist. This Advent season, we are invited to expect God to meet us in unexpected ways. Are you present in worship because you expect a miracle to be done through you in your life? Do you expect a divine interruption in this worship service whereby God meets you and calls you to be a part of His coming more fully into this world? Let us open our hearts and minds to the possibility of divine interruptions, trusting that God is always at work in our lives.

Bible Verse: For he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. - Luke 1:15

Reflection Question: How can you open your heart and mind to the possibility of divine interruptions during this Advent season?

Quote: Do you expect a divine interruption in this worship service whereby God meets you and calls you to be a part of his coming more fully into this world?

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to expect and embrace divine interruptions during this Advent season. Open my heart and mind to Your presence and work in my life. Use me to be a part of Your coming more fully into this world. Amen.

Day 3: Reclaiming the True Meaning of Christmas

Devotional: Christmas is about the incarnation of God, God putting on human flesh and coming into the world to bring hope, joy, peace, and love. However, in our modern world, the true meaning of Christmas can often be overshadowed by materialism and commercialism. This Advent season, let us reclaim the true meaning of Christmas by focusing on Jesus' birth and embodying His teachings. What if we created traditions that actually allowed us not to think of Christmas as our birthday, but as Jesus' birthday? Let us use this season as an opportunity to live His way, giving to the least, the last, and the lost, and celebrating what Jesus would want us to celebrate.

Bible Verse: The angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.' - Luke 1:13

Reflection Question: How can you reclaim the true meaning of Christmas in your life and create traditions that honor Jesus?

Quote: What if we created traditions that actually allowed us not to think of Christmas as our birthday. But as Jesus birthday celebrated what Jesus would want us to celebrate, used it as an opportunity to live his way.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to reclaim the true meaning of Christmas this Advent season. Teach me to focus on Jesus' birth and embody His teachings. Help me to create traditions that honor Jesus and celebrate what He would want us to celebrate. Amen.

Day 4: Living and Giving Like Christ

Devotional: Advent is a time to reflect on how we can live and give like Christ. Zechariah and Elizabeth were not rich or powerful, yet God used them to unfold human salvation. This reminds us that God can use anyone, regardless of their status, to bring His salvation into the world. As we prepare for Christmas, let us focus on living and giving like Christ. This could mean making charitable donations, volunteering, or spending time in devotion and prayer. By doing so, we can make Christmas a true celebration of Jesus' miraculous birth and bring hope, joy, peace, and love to those around us.

Bible Verse: He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. - Luke 1:16

Reflection Question: How can you live and give like Christ during this Advent season and bring hope, joy, peace, and love to those around you?

Quote: How are we as the church of Jesus Christ in the world reclaiming Christmas to be about truly giving to the least, the last and the lost?

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to live and give like Christ during this Advent season. Use me to bring hope, joy, peace, and love to those around me. Teach me to focus on what truly matters and make Christmas a true celebration of Jesus' miraculous birth. Amen.

Day 5: Preparing for God's Miracle

Devotional: Advent is about waiting and preparing for us to take part in God's miracle. Zechariah and Elizabeth's story reminds us that God's ministry and miracle are coming to us if we're ready, if we're waiting, and if we're willing to receive it. This Advent season, let us prepare our hearts and minds for God's miracle. Are you waiting to receive again that great and glorious gift of God which is His Son, Jesus Christ? Let us live in anticipation and readiness, trusting that God is always giving to us and preparing us for His divine work.

Bible Verse: And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. - Luke 1:17

Reflection Question: How can you prepare your heart and mind for God's miracle during this Advent season?

Quote: God's ministry. God's miracle is coming to us if we're ready, if we're waiting, and if we're willing to receive it.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to prepare my heart and mind for Your miracle during this Advent season. Teach me to wait with anticipation and readiness, trusting that You are always giving to me and preparing me for Your divine work. Amen.