

Luke 1:67-79 | “Great Anticipation”
Preached on December 18, 2022 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to Luke 1, verse 67. *[pause]*

Today, we are a week away from Christmas, so we are *before* Christmas comes.

But next Sunday is Christmas Day, and so Christmas will have arrived. *[pause]*

I'm going to use that in these next two weeks in regards to the sermons.

This week, considering we are before Christmas comes, we will be looking at the storyline of Scripture from the Old Testament, which then leads up to Christ's birth.

But on Christmas Day, since Christmas will have arrived, then we will view things from Christ's arrival and forward. *[pause]*

So this morning will be a little different than normal.

I usually take a passage and mostly stay in that passage and really unpack it for you, but today will be unique.

I will actually be taking you through the storyline of Scripture, showing you the big picture and then we will end up in Luke 1:67-79. *[pauseeee]*

I believe that it's a good thing to zoom out and remember the storyline of Scripture here and there, as it helps you see the big picture.

It helps you see the forest and not just the trees.

And this morning, it will aid us in seeing the great anticipation before Christ came. *[pauseeeee]*

When I was a kid, I remember one night before Christmas Day with vivid clarity.

For weeks, the anticipation of Christmas Day had been building.

I knew the day was coming, and I knew what was to come: presents. *[pause]*

So the last thing that I wanted to do was sleep.

I wanted it to be morning, and I laid there, wishing that time would go faster.

After a while, I just got annoyed that I couldn't sleep, for it meant that it would just feel longer until the morning. *[pause]*

That's really what the whole Christmas season does in us: it produces great anticipation for Christmas Day.

Presents are bought for that day.

Family plans and food are arranged for that day.

Even the Christmas carols, the lights, and the church services we go to all create anticipation for Christmas Day. *[pause]*

Some people even use a countdown, or a paper chain, where you take off one each day and it gets smaller and smaller until the day of Christmas.

Everything is building up to Christmas Day, creating in us great anticipation. *[pause]*

That's the sort of situation that Israel was in before Christ came: a time of great anticipation.

They were waiting and waiting for the Deliverer to come.

God had promised One, but they were waiting. *[pause]*

But here's the thing, their anticipation wasn't one of a child simply waiting for presents to be opened, but was one of slaves, waiting to be freed.

Not all was well like a child laying in the comfort of their bed waiting for Christmas morning, but all was not well, like a prisoner laying in shackles and sludge waiting for salvation.
[pauseeee]

So let's talk through the storyline of Scripture in the Old Testament.

We obviously won't touch on everything, but we will be hitting the high points, like skipping stones.

And as you will see, things become clearer and clearer as the Old Testament progresses towards Christ. [pause]

So first, let's start at the beginning with...

I. Creation - His good design

To understand any story, you must know the beginning.

So also, you can't fully understand the significance of Christmas without Genesis. *[pause]*

In Genesis 1:1, we are told, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

So God created every single thing in the universe.

Just look around you now or take a stroll outside, and you are seeing God's handiwork. *[pause]*

Even the things that we make are ultimately a creation of God, for God created the materials needed to make that thing, and he created our minds to be able to do it. [pauseeeeeee]

This Christmas season, you will enjoy the goodness of even the simple things in life, and so often we take those things for granted.

Instead, let the goodness of this Christmas season lead you to thank the bountiful Creator of all things.

For anything good in this life reminds us of God, who created all things very good in the beginning. *[pauseeee]*

So everything was created by God, and He caps His creation off with the creation of man.

Just listen to Genesis 1:26, which says...

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

[pause]

So man is made in the image of God, so that in some ways, we reflect and mirror what God is like.

And man is given the responsibility to have dominion over the rest of creation - I'd say that's a special responsibility. *[pauseeee]*

After all of this creating, God sees everything He made and it is very good.¹ *[pause]*

What could go wrong?

All is made good, and things seem so perfect, for God has made a good design.

He has even created female for man, so that man wouldn't be alone, and so that he could have a helper as he carries out his responsibilities. *[pauseeee]*

So right from the beginning, we see that God is the ultimate Creator and Ruler, who made all things good.

And we also see that mankind was created by God, given their responsibilities by Him, and are therefore accountable to Him. *[pause]*

What could go wrong? A lot.

You see, God blessed man and woman and gave them so much, but just gave one forbidden thing that they weren't allowed to do - eat of the fruit of this one tree.

Well what do Adam and Eve do? Eat of it. *[pause]*

¹ See Genesis 1:31.

You see, the serpent, who is Satan, comes onto the scene, tempts Eve with eating of the tree, and Eve gives in, as well as Adam.

So God confronts them of their sin, and then gives the consequences of their sin.

And in this, we see the....

II. Fall - our sin cursed world

For some people, they don't understand why the world is the way that it is.

They wonder, "Why is there so much hate? Why is there so much war, lying, violence, and animosity?"

Well if you want to understand all of the problems in our world, all you have to do is turn to Genesis 3. *[pause]*

There we see that Adam and Eve sinned against God, and as a result, the world is given a curse.

There would be pain, strife in our relationships, hard work, and death.² *[pause]*

So as you can see, it's *our* fault for the problems of this world, not God's.

We rebelled against Him. *[pauseeeee]*

This is why even in the midst of what is supposed to be a joyous season, there's still heartbreak, hurt, and hostility...

What you thought would be a picture perfect family gathering is ruined by a family fight.

You imagined being with everyone and having such a good time, but you got sick and had to be at home alone.

You put so much time and effort into selecting gifts for your children, only for them to say, "Is there more?"

Even in the goodness and joy of Christmas, the effects of the Fall show their ugly heads. *[pause]*

This is because after God created everything good, we in turn, caused everything to be marred and messed up.

But there's hope amidst the heartache, hurt, and hostility!

Amidst all of this bad news, there's actually a promise of great hope in Genesis 3:15. *[pause]*

In God's pronouncement of curse upon the serpent, He says this...

² See Genesis 3:14-19.

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” *[pause]*

So here we see that there's going to be this continual conflict between Satan's offspring and Eve's offspring.

But this struggle will be ended in a climactic moment where Eve's offspring bruises his head, picturing a mortal wound, but doing this will lead to being bruised in the heel, a less serious injury. *[pauseeee]*

So even amidst humanity's sin and rebellion against God, God has provided great news of hope that there would someday be victory and blessing.

The curse wasn't the end of the story.

Even though Satan deceived Eve and won in the beginning, Eve's offspring would ultimately defeat Satan in the end. *[pauseeeeeee]*

These truths are really the foundation for what the rest of the Old Testament is about.

It will show us the conflict between Satan's offspring and Eve's offspring, and the awaiting of one of Eve's offspring who would deal with Satan.

So it shows us why there's this continual conflict, but it also shows us hope of One who was to come. *[pause]*

This is why Scripture gives so many genealogies, especially in the beginning, because it was tracing the line that this Savior would come through. *[pause]*

In Genesis 5, this is why it gives the genealogy of Adam, which then goes to Seth, and the writer traces it all the way down to Noah.

And then in Genesis 11, it traces from Noah's son, Shem, all the way down to Abraham. *[pauseeee]*

When you get to Abraham, we find that he is called by God and promised something amazing, for just listen to Genesis 12:2-3...

“And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” *[pauseeee]*

So the line from Adam to Abraham has been traced, and now we see that it's going be through the line of Abraham that the world will be blessed.

But there's a problem: Abraham and his wife are childless and old.

So what will happen? Will God's promise come to fruition?

And so the story goes on and a lot of it is Abraham and Sarah trying to believe this promise, and even trying to make it happen on their own.

But finally, God miraculously gives them a son named Isaac, and the line continues. *[pause]*

But what will happen next?

Well Jacob and Esau are born, but through a series of events, Jacob becomes the line of blessing and promise.

This then leads to Jacob having 12 sons, who become the 12 tribes of Israel.

But even amidst these 12 sons, when Jacob pronounces blessings upon each of his sons, he gets to Judah, and he says something interesting...

He says of Judah, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet."³ *[pauseeee]*

So here we see that it's going to be Judah that kings of Israel come from.

And guess who comes from the line of Judah? David. *[pause]*

In 2 Samuel 7, God promises to David that his house and kingdom will be made sure forever.

So in this, we are hearing more about the identity of this Deliverer....

He will be a king from the line of David.

And it's this promised One from David's offspring that the later prophets pick up on. *[pause]*

Jeremiah talks about how the people will serve the Lord and David their king, whom He will raise up for them.⁴

Ezekiel says, "My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd."⁵

And even Micah talks about the ruler coming out of Bethlehem, which is the same hometown as David.⁶ *[pause]*

Some great promises of God!

But how do things go in the waiting period of waiting for this Deliverer?

³ Genesis 49:10.

⁴ Jeremiah 30:9.

⁵ Ezekiel 37:24.

⁶ Micah 5:2.

Lots and lots of failure, and that's what we see next...

III. Failure - our inability

There's that saying that goes, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

Well when you look at the storyline of the Old Testament, Israel is trying and trying again, but failing and failing again. *[pauseeee]*

We see that the Lord is with His people, Israel, as He raises up Moses, who delivers them from Egypt.

You would think that they would just follow the Lord who saved them, trusting Him all along the way.

But not long after the Exodus, Israel is grumbling, and saying that it would be better to be back in Egypt.⁷ *[pause]*

God then gives them the Law, and they are supposed to follow the Lord and bless the nations around them.

But what happens time and time again? Failure. *[pause]*

Even as Moses is on the mountain, they are making a golden calf to worship, instead of the Lord God.⁸

He provides time and time again, and they grumble and complain time and time again. *[pause]*

After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, God leads them into the Promised Land.

And you would think all would go well, except it doesn't, for Israel does what is right in their own eyes.⁹

He even raises up Samuel, but the people want to be like the other nations and they choose Saul as their king. *[pause]*

Even after their sin, God graciously raises up David, and things go pretty well with him and even with his son, Solomon.

But division ensues, as the kingdom divides and everything goes downhill from there.

God sends prophet after prophet to call Israel to covenant faithfulness, but what happens?

They fail, fail, and fail. *[pause]*

⁷ See Exodus 16:1-3.

⁸ See Exodus 32.

⁹ See the whole book of Judges!

Israel, the kingdom in the north, is the worst and they are taken over and exiled by Assyria.

Judah in the south follows later with Babylon coming in and exiling them. *[pause]*

Israel just couldn't get their act together, as they continually forsook God, and pursued their own ways.

The Old Testament storyline is a big billboard that flashes, saying, "You can't do it on your own."

No matter what, Israel on their own couldn't obey the Law and live.

Instead, around every corner you see disobedience, rebellion, and unfaithfulness.

They couldn't be their own savior, but they needed saving. *[pauseeee]*

Even during Christmas time, we are reminded of our failures.

We hurt others with our words, we aren't content, we are envious of others, and we don't always have joy.

And so the Christmas season doesn't take away our failures, but it often highlights them.

So let your failures this Christmas season remind you of your need for a Savior. *[pauseeeee]*

In Jeremiah 31, God promises a way forward, out of failure.

He says that He will make a new covenant with them, where the law would be put within them, and it would be written on their hearts.

He would forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.¹⁰ *[pause]*

God was teaching them that their enemies weren't just outside of themselves, but their enemy was within, for it was their own sin, which led to death, that was the main problem.

It was because they broke God's Law that they died.

It was because they didn't trust God that they lost battles.

And it was because they rebelled that they were exiled. *[pause]*

What could save them from sin and death?

They couldn't do it on their own, but God had to intervene and act on their behalf. *[pauseeeee]*

After Malachi gives his prophecy about a messenger preparing the way before him, God is silent for 400 years.

¹⁰ See Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Would the people's failure ever be reversed?

Would God bring this once-for-all forgiveness?

Would the seed of the woman, the Deliverer, ever show up?

The anticipation was building, and there was waiting and waiting for 400 years of silence from God.

But then all of a sudden the silence was broken, and promise turns into fulfillment.

And that's what we will find in Luke 1:67-79...

IV. Fulfillment - His tender mercy

In Luke 1, we have the birth of John the Baptist foretold as well as the birth of Jesus.

An angel appears to John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, and promises that he will have a son named John. *[pause]*

The angel explains that his son would be the promised messenger to prepare the way before the Lord.

But Zechariah doesn't immediately believe this and so the angel causes him to go mute. *[pause]*

Finally, the baby arrives and Zechariah's mouth is opened, and he prophesies, being filled with the Spirit.

And I just want you to try to remember the things that we went over in the storyline of the Old Testament, and notice how Zechariah says they are fulfilled.

Let's START READING in verse 67....

67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people."

No more silence! God has intervened to save His people!

They aren't wallowing in sin, failure, and death anymore. *[pause]*

Verse 69...

69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, 70 as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

71 that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;"

The promised Davidic king has been raised up!

God was fulfilling His promises to save! [pause]

God's promises never failed.

He never left the promised line, but it continued on, no matter what it faced.

Barrenness? No problem with God.

Enemies? No matter what they faced, even slavery in Egypt, wouldn't squelch His people.

Even amidst the threat of extinction in the book of Esther, God was protecting His people because He promised a coming Snake Crusher. [pause]

Verse 72...

"To show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, 73 the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us

74 that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days."

In faithfulness, God came through and remembered His covenant with Abraham.

Through Abraham's offspring, Jesus, the whole world would be blessed.

And in mercy, God was acting on His people's behalf to deliver them so that they could serve him forever. [pause]

Then verse 76 and following say...

"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,

78 because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high

79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

By John the Baptist being born as the messenger to prepare the way for the Messiah, then that means the Messiah was coming! Salvation had arrived!

The New Covenant promise of forgiveness had come in Jesus! [pauseeee]

Because of sin, humanity was in darkness and in the shadow of death.

We saw the sin, failure, and inability of mankind in what we learned earlier.

But with the arrival of Jesus, the sunrise has risen and light has been given to those with no hope.

Hope was born in Bethlehem! *[pause]*

Forgiveness came in Jesus, the way of peace enlightened, and salvation arrived.

All of this came because of the tender mercy of God, who intervened and visited His people to save. *[pause]*

As you can see...

The One who was the prophesied Deliverer came!

Creation, Fall, Failure, Fulfillment.

So often we view Christmas and Christ's coming as this small little sweet thing, rather than a cosmic thing of the one and only Deliverer coming to provide salvation.

And it all started back in the beginning with a promise of hope. *[pause]*

Eventually, Jesus grows up and Satan strikes his heel as he died on the cross for our sins, but when Jesus rose from the dead, Satan's head was crushed - He was defeated.

He may still be at work now, but his doom is sure and his power is broken, for now we can be forgiven and given eternal life through Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

Have you trusted in what Jesus Christ has done for you? *[pause]*

If you think about it, Christmas and the Christmas season remind us of each of the major truths of Scripture...

During Christmastime, we see beautiful things.

The lights, the stars, the decorations, the snow - all of the beauty and goodness of Creation ultimately points to our amazing Creator. *[pause]*

But amidst the beauty of the Christmas season, not all is "merry and bright".

It's not always "the most wonderful time of the year".

There's sorrow of not having someone around, there's family bickering, there's relational hurt, there's physical pain, and a host of other not-so-good things.

Even in the middle of the joy of Christmas, there's the sorrow of sin ever before our eyes.

And when we experience sin, pain, and loss during the Christmas season, we are actually confronted with the reality of sin and the Fall. *[pause]*

That's not all, either, for as we go through the Christmas season, we also are reminded of our failure.

We sin against our family members, even though everything in our house looks bright and beautiful.

People think that the happiness of the Christmas season will make them more joyous and change their hearts.

But they soon realize that their hearts are not changed by the merry music, the bright lights, the beautiful scenes, or the good food.

This is because the joyous atmosphere of Christmastime cannot change our hearts, but God must change our hearts from the inside out.

So even during Christmas, our failure is a reminder of why Christmas was necessary: we needed a Savior. *[pause]*

The only thing that makes a difference is the fulfillment of God's promise in the birth of Jesus Christ, God who took on flesh!

And if God delivered on the promise of a Deliverer, even amidst all of the sin, failure, and threats of death against Israel before Christ came...

...Then if He could do that from Genesis to Jesus, don't you think He will come through on His promises to you from birth to eternity? *[pause]*

Let this Christmas push on to hope in Jesus Christ, the promised Deliverer who came and who is coming again, and let this Christmas root your assurance on His promises...

The One who was the prophesied Deliverer came and our lives have never been the same.