

ULC Sermon Study Resource
As We Wait // Waiting for Salvation
Pastor Marcus
December 24, 2022

Prayer: Pause for a few moments to go to the Lord in prayer. Ask that He would draw near to you in this time, and open your heart and mind to hear His Word.

Icebreaker: What is your favorite Christmas tradition?

Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

Outline:

I. Be Here

- A. Don't treat worship like a short pep rally before the real events, or a family birthday you'd rather not be at. For now, just be here. Fully appreciate and be present in the joy of the Christmas story.
- B. When we gather in worship, Jesus is here. The savior who is God incarnate is here right now. We gather before the manger of the king. We look at him on the cross. We see him risen for us.

Q: How can we practice "being here" both in and outside of worship?

II. The Difficulty

- A. We all constantly have notifications drawing our attention somewhere else. Many, if not all of us, live life in a perpetual state of exhaustion. What this does is it makes us feel like we need to escape, like wholeness is somewhere else.
- B. When we constantly long for some kind of escape from life as it is, we inevitably disconnect from ourselves and those around us. And, when we get what we are longing for, does it ever deliver on its promises? No, we instead seek something else.

Q: When do you catch yourself most longing for escape?

III. The Great Gift of Christmas (v. 18-25)

- A. We don't have to go looking somewhere else for God, happiness, wholeness, or for whatever salvation we are looking for. God has come to meet us right here. Salvation is not found "out there." It is found "right here." God has come to be with us!
- B. If God is with us, that means that even the work we've been given that exhausts us is good and holy and pleasing to him. We can be confident that God doesn't just encounter us in quiet places of rest, he's with us in suffering too.

Q: How can we remind ourselves to find salvation in God, and not "out there"?

Reflection/Application Questions:

- 1) How can we regain our focus on Jesus during the holiday season?
- 2) How can we fight exhaustion and find joy in where God has put us?
- 3) How can we discern when we *should* escape or change certain parts of our lives?
- 4) How can we remind ourselves that God is with us, even in suffering?

Suggestions for further study:

- Proverbs 3:5-6 Q: How can these verses help us understand Joseph in Matthew 1?
- John 1:14 Q: How does this verse relate to resisting escapism and finding salvation in Jesus?

Closing Prayer:

Gracious God, we often try to fill a space in us that you are meant to fill. As we remember the gift of Christmas, draw our eyes back to you and the wholeness that comes only in knowing your Son Jesus. Make us people who not only encounter you in all of life, but carry you in all of life. Amen.