

Advent: Peace

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[0:00] Good morning, Christ Family Church. It is, as always, a pleasure to be able to share His Word with you.! Turn with me, if you have a copy of God's Word, to Luke chapter 1.

Luke chapter 1. We'll be starting in verse 36. And interestingly, 109 years ago, the very first words to be spoken over AM radio were some of the words that we're going to look at this morning. We're going to see some of these words. A guy named Reginald Fessenden, of all people, was the one who invented the AM radio. And at first, all it could do was transmit Morse code, which is a pretty big deal back then to transmit anything over radio waves.

He was one of Thomas Edison's chief inventors and having been let go for financial reasons. He began to do this work on his own. He began to work out all the details of being able to communicate over the airwaves.

And ships all up and down the Atlantic coast would hear the tap, tap, tap, tap of the Morse code as they were sailing their ships up and down the Atlantic. So he worked out this new way of communicating.

[1:17] But on Christmas Eve in 1906, he believed that he had his invention amped up enough to be able to transmit human voice. And so on Christmas Eve, 1906, with no press release, no email blasts, no billboards, no news media, just the silence of AM radio in the middle of the night on Christmas Eve, Reginald Fessenden opened his Bible to Luke chapter 2.

And to the very same chapter we're going to read. We are going to be in one, so if you're turning, I need to turn there just yet. But we're going to start in one. We're going to go into two.

And into the silence of the night came the Christmas story. Very first words ever spoken over radio broadcast. Can you imagine being a ship captain out on the Atlantic and you're used to just hearing the tap, tap, tap, tap of the Morse code coming through your AM radio.

And all of a sudden on Christmas Eve, you're all alone. You're up on your, what do you call it, a bridge and you're sailing your ship. And all of a sudden, you start to hear a human voice.

A human voice sharing great news of great joy. A Savior has been born to you and he is Christ the Lord. I think what I love about that story the most is that it reminds me of the way that Jesus came into the world.

[2:44] There's no news broadcast, no front page cover story, just Mary and Joseph, a humble couple with a humble child born into humble circumstances. And just a few shepherds who are fortunate enough to hear of the good news of great joy.

For unto you a child is born and he is Christ the Lord. Beautiful story. That's the way it was on that night.

There was nothing particularly special about that night. There was nothing perfect about that night. They only had a manger to lay him in. But there was one thing perfect about that night and it was the child.

He was perfect in every way. And so I think for us to fully appreciate that moment in history, the moment when Jesus was born, we have to travel back several hundred years. And we are, our focus this morning, by the way, is on the love of Christ.

It's our Advent focus for this morning. So we want to be focusing on his love by taking a look first and foremost at his birth. But to fully appreciate that, we have to look at some of the prophecies foretelling Christ.

[3:53] There are many, there are hundreds of prophecies foretelling the coming of Christ. We're only going to look at two this morning. We really only have time for two. And as I read these, I want you to consider two threads that run throughout Scripture.

One of them being promise and the other one being fulfillment. And so as I read these, I want you to consider these two things. The promise being much of the Old Testament would fall into that category of promise, while the New Testament is the recording of the fulfillment of those promises given hundreds or sometimes even thousands of years before Jesus was ever born.

And so we have these prophecies that stem back as far as even Genesis chapter 3. We talked about this even with our children in Aletheia Way, where we're talking about, we talk about the snake crusher, right?

The snake crusher that was to come. Even back in Genesis 3, we have prophecy of Jesus. And so as I read these promises, I want you to consider that not a single one of the Old Testament writers knew a single one of the New Testament writers.

There's too much of a gap between them for them to have known any of them, to have known each other. So the Old Testament writers couldn't have even known that there would be a New Testament during their time.

[5 : 08] And so it's not like someone came along in the Old Testament and saying, I'm just going to fabricate this elaborate story. We're going to get a bunch of people together. We're going to write several books, and we're going to see how far this thing can go.

We're going to trick people and see how far we can get with this thing. There's no way that this could have happened. There's no way that authors could have come together to try to tell this one story in a way that just fashions itself together.

The Bible is not actually a book. We think of it like a book sometimes, but it's really a compilation of 66 different books with over 40 different authors and all of them telling the same story, the story of God's redemption for his people.

So when people come to me, sometimes people say, well, Kyle, I don't really believe the Bible. I have a hard time understanding what exactly that they mean by that.

What exactly do you mean that you don't believe the Bible? You don't like the books of history? Because so much biblical history, in fact, all biblical history goes hand in hand with extra biblical history. We see that.

[6 : 14] We can compare different texts outside the Bible to the Bible, and everything lines up perfectly. Is it the books of poetry? You just don't happen to like poetry? I don't know. Is it the prophecies?

Many of them have been fulfilled. In fact, all of them about the person of Christ have been fulfilled through Christ. Is it the gospels? You have a hard time believing four separate accounts, all telling the same stories of the same man who died upon the cross for our sins, which, by the way, all perfectly line up together.

The reason why the whole story lines up together, and I want you guys to get this this morning before we jump into the text, before we even begin to start reading scriptures, the reason why all of it works together is because God's word is truth, and we can take it as truth this morning.

And it rings into our lives unlike anything else. So we're going to take a look at Isaiah 714. You don't have to turn there. Just keep your hand inside of Luke chapter 1 for now.

Isaiah 714 is a short prophecy, but it reveals so much about who Christ was supposed to be. So Isaiah 714, written roughly 700 years before Jesus was born.

[7 : 25] Before the birth of Christ, it says this, Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and call his name Emmanuel.

So God says the answer to this sin problem, and we all of us have a sin problem. The answer to this sin problem is Emmanuel, which literally means God with us.

God with us. God with us. And so we see from this prophecy that God is coming into human history. He's going to dwell among his people. He's going to visit the planet.

And how will we know that this Emmanuel has come? According to Isaiah, you look for the virgin mother. It says the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and call his name Emmanuel.

Micah 5.2, also written roughly 700 years before Jesus was born. But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah.

[8 : 28] From you one will go forth for me to be a ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. And so from these and other prophecies, the expectation and the anticipation was that a hero was coming, a savior, a child.

He was going to be born from a virgin mother in the town of Bethlehem. Now that's pretty specific, right? A lot of things had to happen in order for this child to come into the world. And everyone was anticipating and awaiting the miraculous appearance of God. Hundreds of years before he would ever arrive. In that 700-year period of time, there is a 400-year gap between the two Testaments, between the Old Testament and the New Testament. For thousands of years, in this gap that we see, God has essentially fallen silent. For hundreds of years before this, God had been working in and through his people in tremendous ways. God made covenants with his people. He spoke audibly at times to people. He designed an intricate sacrificial system by which they were to use to atone for their sins.

[9 : 44] He worked through kings who were faithful to him and his word. He spoke mightily through prophets. Seventeen books dedicated in the Old Testament to prophecy. Prophecies of a coming king who would be born of a virgin in the town of Bethlehem who would go forth as a ruler among the people.

And then as suddenly as all this communication from God had begun, it just stops. 400 years of silence. Imagine the questions that must have been going through the minds of the people of God. Where has God gone? Why did he stop communicating to us? Was it something that we did? Was it something that we said? And then think of the longing they must have experienced. This longing. To see the prophecy revealed. To see this coming Messiah. To see this Emmanuel. 100 years go by and you think, well, maybe God's just been busy. Maybe he's just been off doing something else. Maybe he's just been off doing something else. Handling some other galaxy or whatever happens to be. After 200 years, they're wondering if God's ever going to come. And at 300 years, you've got to know the people of God are starting to lose hope that it's ever going to happen.

[11 : 00] This, by the way, is why we celebrate Advent. We celebrate Advent because of this time of longing and hoping and waiting for the advent of Christ.

We spend four weeks in our services here at Christ's family or in other traditions. Four weeks awaiting and preparing to celebrate this time in our year. These people spent 700 years from the time that this prophecy was told until he was born. 700 years. I want you to imagine with me the whole world weary. Weary from dealing with their sin. Weary from figuring out and struggling how to get through this redemption. Longing and hoping and awaiting this long-expected Savior. And imagine with me as we read this story, the thrill of hope as one by one people begin to realize that God is not only fulfilling prophecy here, that he's fulfilling every single prophecy through the person of Jesus Christ.

[12 : 12] So Luke 1 verse 26 says this. In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel... I don't want to stop too soon, but we've got to stop and talk about Gabriel.

Because Gabriel is kind of a big deal. Gabriel is up there in terms of angels. He is a leader among angels. Scripture refers to him as an archangel. So he is kind of a big deal as far as angels go. And so when God picked Gabriel, we already know that this is a pretty important mission because God said, this mission, not just anybody will do, I'm going to send Gabriel to do it. And so Gabriel was sent from God to the city of Galilee named Nazareth to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David.

And the virgin's name was Mary. Then it says in verse 28, You'll notice that there's no gap between God telling Gabriel to go and Gabriel being there.

God says, go, and boom, Gabriel's there. Wouldn't it be nice to kind of be in the spiritual realm where God tells you to go do something, God tells you to go to Afghanistan or somewhere in the Middle East to share with a people group, and you can just be there.

[13 : 20] You don't have to pack your bags, you don't have to get on the airplane. What a wonderful thing it would be to be able to do that. Gabriel doesn't have to do that. God just says to Gabriel, Gabriel, here's the mission. Gabriel says, done, and boom. Mary?

It's that quick. And when God speaks, things immediately go into motion. And so Gabriel came to Mary and said, Greetings, O favored one. The Lord is with you.

Now some passages in Scripture are real easy to skip over and not realize the significance of the passage. And this is one of those passages. It's real easy for us to think, oh, well, he's just greeting Mary, right?

Greetings, O favored one. The Lord is with you. It's easy just to read over that and not recognize the significance. But if you know anything about angels, you know that this is highly unusual behavior for angels to say this as the first sentence that they said to a person. Angels don't normally say, greetings, O favored one. The first thing angels typically say is, do not be afraid or fear not.

[14:26] Pretty much the same statement, right? Do not be afraid or something to that effect. In fact, every other recorded time in Scripture, when an angel appears before a human, they say, do not be afraid or fear not.

This is the only recorded exception, which begs the question, why would Gabriel respond to Mary in this way? Why would he greet her differently? We don't know for sure, but we do know that Gabriel probably had some knowledge of the prophecies, right?

That's access. We have access to the prophecies, so we have to understand that most likely angels have access to the same prophecies that we do. And so we can safely assume that the angels have some knowledge of what God is planning to do through the prophecies, at the very least. Angels are not omniscient like God. They don't know everything. But I think, and maybe I'm reading between the lines here, I think that based on Gabriel's response, when he heard the message that he was supposed to deliver, and he heard what God was about to do, knowing full well the prophecy of God, I think it's possible, and this is just a figure of speech, but I think it's possible that his angelic drawl hit the floor when he heard what he was supposed to do.

And boom, he's there. And the first words out of his mouth, it's almost as if he couldn't help but to say them, is, Oh, favored one, the Lord is with you.

[15:58] Mary didn't look highly favored. She looked highly under suspicion. She didn't look highly favored. She was with a child.

She was not married yet. She didn't look highly favored. She was just an average young lady. And in verse 29, it says, but she, Mary, was greeted, sorry, was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

The angel said to her, and here it is, what angels normally say first, do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

And he will be great, and he will be called son of the most high. And the Lord God will give him the throne of his father, David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. Of his kingdom, there will be no end.

And Mary said to the angel, how will this be, since I am a virgin? So, so far, we have a virgin mother carrying a male child, and according to prophecy, so far, so good, right?

[17:10] Well, wrong. There's a problem. There's a problem right now. And the problem is that, Mary and Joseph live in Nazareth. They reside there. The child is supposed to be born in Bethlehem, meaning that they're about 100 miles away, from fulfilling prophecy.

And a day when there's no buses, no airplanes, there's no cars, there's no fast transportation, that's a long way to walk. 100 miles, when we all agree, that's kind of a long way to walk, right? And I don't know about you, but I'm kind of thinking right now that, that Mary's pregnant.

The women in this room who have, who have had babies know, they're probably already thinking about this, that this is a difficult journey. It's like you and I just, just up and decided today to go take a nice general stroll to Chattanooga, Tennessee, 100 miles away, with a pregnant wife.

I know we just had a child, which is pretty amazing. But, I don't, I can imagine traveling with my pregnant wife, 100 miles in these last several months that we've had, with her expecting.

It would be a really difficult task. It would be a challenge. And if you're reading through this for the first time, you're thinking, how in the world is God going to pull this off? How is this going to happen?

[18:34] And what we're going to see as we move from chapter one into chapter two, is that through a series of seemingly unrelated events, God works it out so that prophecy would be fulfilled for Mary and Joseph to make the 100 mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

Look at what happens in chapter two, verse one. In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem. Because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

And while they were there, a time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger.

Because there's no place for them in the end. By the way, there's a little myth out there. And I think it's mostly because of our Christmas plays. We run out of things for the kids to beat, roles for the kids to play.

[19 : 46] There's actually no innkeeper in scripture. Did y'all know that? It's one of those things, those myths that we oftentimes believe. We don't actually see an innkeeper rejecting Mary and Joseph in scripture.

Another thing is that a common myth that we have in the Christmas story is we so often think that Mary and Joseph were coming into Bethlehem while Mary's basically in labor. That's kind of the picture that we get.

She's walking into Bethlehem, you know, having the labor pains. And they just barely get there on time. We don't have any sense of that in scripture at all. In fact, it's probably not true because Joseph would probably have been the kind of person who would have brought her in and gotten her there in plenty of time in order to have this child.

But continuing on, in the same region, there are shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were filled with fear.

And the angel said to them, and here it is again. This is what angels normally say to people the first time they see them. Fear not for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people for unto you is born this day in the city of David, the Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

[21 : 02] And this will be a sign to you. You will find the baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God and saying glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those.

With whom he is pleased. This is good news to the shepherds in that evening. And it's good news for us today. It's great news for us today. For unto us, a Savior was born.

This first person that's mentioned here is Caesar Augustus. He's the grandnephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar. Most of us have heard of Julius Caesar. That's a very, all these people are really historical characters.

We can find extra biblical information about them. He was Caesar Augustus is the grandnephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar. He started off as a tyrant, but really ruled better than most, not a believer, not a Christian, but better than most.

The second person, Quirinius is essentially Caesar's enforcer in a Syrian region. And together, they're tasked to, to give a census of enforcing a census in all the land.

[22 : 12] And so today we're familiar with what a census is, right? We, some of us have participated in a census before. We've, where we gather demographic information. We primarily use it for statistical and demographic purposes today.

In that day and age, it was not a particularly godly motivation to do it. They did it primarily for wealth and for power. As far as wealth goes, they, they know if they have, they know how many citizens that they have, um, in the whole region.

And so that they can tax the people for everything that they're worth. As far as power goes, it stands to reason that they know how many adult males are in that region. And they know how many soldiers descend to that region to maintain power and control.

So this, don't see this as a great thing. This is not an innocent type of census that we think of today. This is all about wealth and power. However, Joseph and Mary, the second set of people in this passage are completely opposite from the first two.

They were poor, not rich. They were lowly, not powerful. They were humble, not proud. And they were worshipers of God, not the ones being worshiped.

[23 : 18] Joseph was just a carpenter, Mary, a simple peasant girl, but there was something extraordinary about Mary and Joseph. And it was that they found favor with God.

And so the government requests the census requiring Mary and Joseph to make their 100 mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. And it's amazing to me how everything works together in this

story.

So the prophecy will be fulfilled as it was foretold 700 years prior to his coming. And what makes this even more amazing is that all of this happens during the time called Pax Romana or Roman peace.

When there are highways that connect nations, there's a common language. People can travel widely without a lot of fear and without barriers. And so Jesus is born at a time when news of him can spread like wildfire, unlike any other time up to this point in history.

And so that is the historical truth of the birth of Jesus. Christianity is rooted in historical facts. And you're probably thinking, well, that's great, Kyle.

[24 : 26] We've all heard the Christmas story. We've heard it multiple times. What's the big deal? And here is why this is a big deal. This morning, as I've mentioned before, our Advent focus is on the love of Christ.

And I chose to begin with the Christmas story at the beginning of Jesus's life for a purpose. We so often think of the Christmas story as being just that.

We think of it as just a story. And what's more is that we so often think of God as a distant God, unrelational, unable to relate to us. And to every other religion, their concept of God is just that, unrelational, unable to understand what it means to breathe, unable to be overwhelmed with emotion, what it means to feel pain.

But the historical story of Jesus Christ demonstrates that that is not the case with our God, with the one true and holy God.

We have a God who wants to get involved with our lives. And for some of you this morning, that might be exactly what you need to hear. I don't know what you brought into this place this morning, where you're coming from, where your backgrounds are, but some of you might need to hear that God wants to be involved with your life.

[25 : 45] And what it means for us is that none of us can look at Jesus and say, you know what? You don't really understand what I'm going through. You don't understand where I've been. You don't understand what it's like to be poor or to be in need.

You don't understand what it's like to be downcast or rejected. You don't know what it's like to go through what I've been through. And I think Jesus' right response would be to say, actually, I do. I understand every intimate detail. I know what it's like to suffer. I know what it's like to be ridiculed, to be the outcast. I know what it's like to feel pain and finally die as a sacrifice for you.

You see, we have a God, unlike any other concept of a God, who understands. He gets it. He lived like you and I do. He breathed like you and I do.

He ate like you and I do. He needed rest like you and I do. But unlike you and me, He was sinless. That's the difference between Him and us.

[26 : 53] At least one of the major differences between Him and us is He was without sin. He was tempted like we were. But He didn't give in to the temptation. He said yes to the will of the Father and no to the temptation of the world.

And so my hope for you as a congregation this morning, December 20th, is that you see the Christmas story as more than just a story. And that you see the baby that was born in this story as more than just a baby.

Because He is so much more. You see, this was only the beginning of His life. Fast forward 30 years and you see this baby grown into a man and making radical statements like, greater love has no man than he who lays down his life for his friends.

Knowing full well that that was what He was going to do. And the statements like, for God so loved the world, God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.

So the first, we're going to spend the rest of this morning kind of focusing in on this love of Jesus. And focusing in on this love that ultimately drove Him to the cross.

[28 : 10] The first principle that I want us to see is that the love of Christ is undeserved. The love of Christ is undeserved. We have done nothing in our lives to earn it.

There's nothing that we can do to earn it. None of us in this room deserve it. Romans 3.23 leaves us without question in this matter. For all of us have fallen short of the glory of God.

What's the cost of our sin? Our wages of sin is death. Every person in this room deserves death, including me. There's not a single person, man, woman, boy, girl, or infant in this room that

deserves the love of Christ.

And I realize this statement sounds really harsh, but that truth demonstrates the greatness of God's love. It truly demonstrates the greatness of His love because He chose us anyway.

Despite the fact that we didn't deserve it, Christ chose us. Romans 5.8 tells us that God demonstrates His own love toward us, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[29 : 15] Isn't that incredible? A perfect and holy God sent His perfect and holy Son to die for an undeserving people.

Think about what depth of love that is. Think about what extension of grace. which leads us to our next truth. The love of Christ is surpassingly great.

The love of Christ is surpassingly great. There's so many passages that we can go to here. So many passages all over the Old Testament, all over the New Testament. But for the sake of time, we're only going to focus on a couple.

One of my favorites, and I almost feel like a child for bringing this one up, but I just love parables. And this particular parable is my favorite parable.

It's the story of the prodigal son in Luke chapter 15. If you want to go ahead and turn there, we're going to kind of camp out there for just a few minutes. And the reason why I love this story is because it so clearly demonstrates the love of God for us.

[30 : 20] Most of us know this one, or at least have heard it before. And the way that I like to teach this passage to my discipleship guys when I'm doing discipleship with people and we get to this passage, is I like to ask people if they know what the word prodigal means.

Because a lot of times, and more often than not, the answer that I get for what prodigal, what the definition of prodigal probably means is wayward or sinful, something to that effect.

That's not what the word prodigal means, however. The word prodigal actually means lavish. It means lavish. And so when we understand the proper definition of the word prodigal, we get to understand that the prodigal son isn't the only one prodigal in this story.

He's not the only lavish person in this story. So as we read through this, I want you to pay close attention and see if you can figure out the characters in the story that are prodigal. There's more than one.

I'll give you a hint there. Verse 11 of chapter 15 in Luke. There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the share of the property that is coming to me.

[31 : 30] And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, I'm thinking maybe like maybe two, not very long. The younger son gathered all that he had and took a journey into the far country.

And there he squandered his property in reckless living. Verse 14. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country.

Bad luck or something because he just had spent everything and then a famine arises and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.

And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate and no one gave him anything. He wanted to eat the slop of pigs and even the pigs were better fed than the prodigal son.

He's in a low place, to say the least. But when he came to himself, he said, How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger.

[32 : 36] I will arise and go to my father and I will say to him, and by the way, this is not him speaking to his father yet. This is him rehearsing his speech. He's just rehearsing it right now. He says, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.

I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

You'll notice something here. This isn't his whole rehearsed speech. He didn't get through all of it.

But in verse 22, it says, But the father said to his servants, Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him and put a ring on his hand and his shoes on his feet and bring the fattened calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate for this my son was dead and is alive again.

He was lost and is found. And they began to celebrate. So with the proper definition of prodigal, we see there are really three prodigals in the story.

[33 : 55] The first and most obvious is the son, right? The prodigal son. That's the one that has been named for. The story has been named for. He was lavish in the way that he squandered his wealth.

He lavishly spent his money. He squandered it all on what the scripture refers to as loose living.

This might be the worst way to be prodigal. I'm not sure. But nonetheless, it's prodigal.

He's prodigal in the way that he just had spent all of his wealth so quickly. There's a prodigal brother in the story. We're not going to focus a lot on him this morning, but he was lavishing this jealousy of his wayward brother.

If we had time to continue on the story, we'd see more about the prodigal brother. He represents all the super religious people in the story. The people who are legalistic and legalistically go through motions and always do the right thing.

And then they scoff at the people when they go off and they squander their wealth in the foreign country. And they scoff at them when they try to come back. We're not going to spend a lot of time again because that's another sermon for another time. But then there's the prodigal father.

[35 : 02] The prodigal father. And I think that this might be who the story's actually about. So if we were to rename this, and these titles that we have in scripture, they're not canonical, right?

So they were added to give us good sections of scripture. They're added at a later time. So it's not like we're changing the name, changing scripture here.

But if I were to rename this story, I would have called it the story of the prodigal father because that's what this story's really about. How is the father lavish?

He's lavish in the way that he loves his children. He's incredibly lavish in the way he accepts his son after being in a distant country, after squandering all of his inheritance on loose living and coming back home.

He's lavish in the way that he embraces him. He demonstrates his love so well by making a feast and by sacrificing the very best animal he owns and because he's so elated that his son has returned.

[36 : 06] It should be abundantly clear to us that the father in this story is representative of God, God's love for his people. Because every one of us have been in the prodigal son's shoes.

We've all been wayward at some point in our lives, completely hopeless, apart from Christ. There's a fourth prodigal here.

When I ask people to guess who the fourth prodigal is, the most common answer is the pigs or the swine. And maybe, I don't know, maybe the pigs are a prodigal.

Sometimes I believe the fourth prodigal is difficult to guess because he's not in the story, but rather he's the one telling the story. And this is Jesus here.

Jesus is speaking because the reality is that God could have given us this story however he wanted to. He could have given it to the prophets to write down and we could have it in scripture for eternity.

[37 : 14] It is in scripture for eternity, but he could have given it to the prophets. He could have written it on a stone tablet like he did the law. He could have presented it to us in a vision. Every single one of us, he could have come to us in a vision somehow or through an angel.

But this is what is so amazing about this story to me that out of all the ways that God could have presented the story of the prodigal son, he has said, forget all the other ways. I'm just going to come in the form of a human and tell it to them myself.

And if that's not prodigal, I don't know what is. In case you're not convinced yet, Isaiah 53, 4 through 6, again, another prophecy about Jesus.

It says, Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrow. Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his stripes, we are healed.

[38 : 16] What part of this was fair on God's side of the equation? None of it. He was pierced for our transgressions. This was because of us.

He was crushed for our iniquities. But upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. Peace. And with his stripes, we are healed.

Like sheep, we have gone astray. We have turned every one of us to his own way. And the Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all. What great love it must require for a perfectly sinless being to take on all of the sins of human history.

He exchanged himself for us, placing our guilt on himself and replacing it with the sinless innocent of a spotless lamb.

The third truth this morning is that the love of Christ leads us to genuine and radical worship. The love of Christ leads us to genuine and radical worship.

[39 : 25] When confronted by a love so great, what else can we do? but to respond to him in worship and proclamation of his truth.

His love should lead us to proclaim his greatness, not just in this room, right? This worship here at Christ's family is great. It's great for us to gather corporately together to worship him, to gather around his word.

But this love should compel us to worship and proclaim him everywhere that we go, not just in this room, but as we exit from here, as we go away from here, his love should compel us to proclaim him to the world, to all the nations, to all the people that we encounter everywhere that we go, whether it be at home in family worship, whether it be in your workplace, wherever you work, wherever your mission field is, wherever the sphere of influence is that God has given you, that's where we go, that's where we worship, that's where we proclaim him because of the hope, because he is the hope of the world.

And the hope of the world and the greatest love ever known in human history now resides within us as believers. And it means that we no longer have this little bitty concept of God.

We no longer have this little bitty worship of our little bitty concept of God. We understand that we have a great God and that we have a tremendous God whose love was so great and our worship should also be great in according with his greatness.

[40 : 58] It leads us to repentance and then it leads us to radical response and worship and proclamation. Not merely because of what he has done for us, but because he is worthy.

Because he is worthy. I hope you are encouraged this morning. I hope that you are in awe of Jesus this morning at his great love for the world, a love that ultimately led him to the cross to die as a sacrifice for our sins.

And I think it all began in such humble circumstances, a small baby who had nowhere to lay except for a manger, two humble parents who could not have ever guessed what their son would accomplish in his lifetime.

Jesus was the hope of the world on that day and he remains the hope of the world today. He lived the life that we should have lived. He died the death that we should have died.

We have so much to celebrate in this Advent season, brothers and sisters. So much to celebrate. So let's respond to him. Yes, as we partake of the Lord's Supper, as we worship corporately together, as we gather again on Christmas Eve, yes, all those things.

[42 : 20] But let's respond in our personal lives as we go into the world this week, as we worship at home, in our own personal worship at home. Let's respond in celebration of Advent as we go away from here.

Let's pray together.