

Small Group Guide: Waiting to Be Saved

Date: November 30, 2025

Sermon Series: Why Does Advent Matter? Because Jesus changes everything!

Speaker: Pastor Mark

Scripture Focus: Luke 1:67-80, Isaiah 61:1-3, 1 Peter 1:10-12

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together by inviting God's presence and asking Him to help you understand the hope and meaning of Advent in your lives today.

Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Question: What's the longest you've ever had to wait for something you really wanted? How did the waiting feel? What was it like when you finally received it (or didn't)?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. **Advent has dual meaning:** It celebrates both Jesus' first coming (incarnation) and anticipates His second coming (return)
 2. **Waiting in faith:** Advent invites us to name our deepest longings and give them to God, trusting Him rather than ourselves
 3. **Jesus is the reason:** Not just for Christmas, but for all seasons—He came to rescue, redeem, and save us
 4. **Hope in suffering:** Christmas is "the sufferer's holiday" because Jesus came specifically to address human pain, sin, and brokenness
 5. **Thanksgiving in betrayal:** Even in the hardest moments, Jesus gave thanks, modeling gratitude in all circumstances
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Discussion Questions

Understanding Advent (15 minutes)

1. Before this sermon, what did you understand Advent to be? How has your understanding changed or deepened?
2. Pastor Mark explained that Advent focuses not just on Jesus' birth but on His second coming. Why is it important to hold both of these truths together during the Christmas season?
3. Read Luke 1:67-80 together. What stands out to you in Zechariah's prophecy after nine months of silence? What longings does he express?

Personal Reflection (20 minutes)

4. The sermon invited us to name the "longings nearest to our hearts." What are you waiting for right now? (This could be personal, relational, professional, or spiritual)
5. Zechariah and Elizabeth waited for years to have a child. Have you experienced a season of prolonged waiting? How did that affect your faith?
6. Pastor Mark suggested practical ways to process our longings: journaling, prayer, talking with friends or therapists. Which of these practices might be helpful for you? Why?

Wrestling with Hard Truths (20 minutes)

7. The sermon acknowledged that some longings "won't happen in this lifetime." How do we hold onto hope when we face that reality?
8. Dr. Paul David Tripp says "Christmas is the sufferer's holiday." How does this perspective change the way you view the holidays, especially if you're going through a difficult season?
9. Read Isaiah 61:1-3. Jesus proclaimed this as His mission statement. Which phrase speaks most powerfully to your current situation?
 - Good news to the poor
 - Binding up the brokenhearted
 - Freedom for captives
 - Release from darkness
 - Comfort for those who mourn
 - Beauty instead of ashes
 - Joy instead of mourning
 - Praise instead of despair

Application and Hope (15 minutes)

10. Pastor Mark said, "Without Jesus' cradle, we have no cross." What does this connection between Christmas and Easter mean for how you celebrate Advent?
11. How can we "run towards Christmas" (as Dr. Tripp suggests) rather than avoid it when we're hurting?
12. Jesus gave thanks "the same night He was betrayed." What would it look like to practice thanksgiving even in painful circumstances this Advent season?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose **one** of the following practices to engage with during this Advent season:

Option 1: Longing Journal

Create a list or journal entry of your deepest longings. Pray over each one, surrendering them to God and asking for His perspective.

Option 2: Advent Reflection

Each day this week, read one verse from Isaiah 61:1-3. Ask God to show you how Jesus is fulfilling that promise in your life or in the world around you.

Option 3: Gratitude in Waiting

Identify one area where you're waiting. Each day, write down or share with someone one thing you're grateful for related to that situation, even if it's difficult.

Option 4: Reach Out

Think of someone who might be finding this holiday season particularly hard (experiencing a "first" without someone, going through loss, facing loneliness). Reach out to them with a call, visit, or note of encouragement.

Prayer Time (15 minutes)

Group Prayer Focus:

- Pray for each person's specific longings and areas of waiting
- Thank God for Jesus coming into the world to rescue and redeem us
- Ask for hope and perspective during difficult seasons
- Pray for those who are suffering or facing their first holidays after loss
- Thank God that He is faithful and will fulfill His promises

Closing Prayer:

Close by reading Isaiah 61:3 together as a blessing:

"To bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendor."

For Next Week

Prepare for the next sermon in the "Why Does Advent Matter?" series by reading 1 Peter 1:10-12 and reflecting on what it means that "even angels long to look into these things."

Additional Resources

- Consider reading through the daily Advent devotional provided by the church
- Attend or revisit the "Surviving the Holidays" resources mentioned in the sermon
- Explore the spiritual practice of lament as a way to bring honest pain before God