



## Advent (Part 2) – The Anticipation

Matt Chandler – December 9, 2018

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[Video]

Hi, Pastor Matt here. Thank you so much for either streaming or downloading this sermon. I pray that every week you're challenged by the Word of God, you're built up in his love, and the Word of God kind of gets in you and rearranges things and draws your affections up to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

I want to remind you, as always, that although I'm so glad you want to hear what I have to say this week, or *we* have to say this week, this is never meant to substitute God's good plan for you to be in a community of faith where the Word of God is preached and proclaimed. I want to encourage you to use this like a vitamin, not like a meal, so that you belong to a community of faith where you're being shaped by being known, by using your gifts, by receiving the Word, by partaking in the sacraments, and by walking faithfully in accordance with the Scriptures.

Then this is something you're listening to while you run or you're watching when you have a few minutes. I just want to make sure we frame what this is and what it should not be. With that said, one of the things The Village Church wants to do is the things that are created here by the grace of God, we want to give those away. That's podcasts and vodcasts. That's family discipleship curriculum. That's Bible study curriculum. What we've tried to do for over a decade is just whatever we create here we want to give away.

To do that, though, we rely on the donations and generosity of those who believe in what we're doing and who have benefited from the things that have been created here. So before you dive into what I'm sure is going to be a 45- to 50-minute sermon, I just wanted to encourage you. If you have grown, if you have benefited from our resources, would you consider being a part of the team that helps this engine continue to produce and create biblical, creative, and practical discipleship

curriculum for men and women of all ages and all stations? If you'd pray about that and consider that, that would be amazing. Thank you so much. Enjoy the Word of God proclaimed.

[End of video]

Good afternoon. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in 1 Peter. That's where we're headed. We're going to look at verses 3-12. Before I set it up and we dive into the text, I just want to publicly acknowledge how well JT English has preached the last two weeks. He's not here. He ran the marathon this morning.

Just to tell you what kind of freak he is, not just intellectually, he didn't train or anything. He just thought, "I think I'm going to go run the marathon." I thought he was joking. He was not joking. He just went down and ran it. So, yeah, pray for his wife, because I don't care who you are. There are going to be some residual effects from that if you didn't train for it.

Here's what I would say. To be able to do a flyover of redemptive history within the framework of exile plugged into Advent in a compelling way was just brilliant. I thought he did an incredible job. What he has been able to do with the Institute and our classes and forums... The Institute is about to roll out three core classes for our church on Christian story, or the biblical narrative arc, and belief, or what we believe as Christians on biblical theology, and then ultimately biblical living.

So you have these three big core classes that are coming for our members. He has just done an incredible job. He's not here, but I just wanted to publicly affirm that yet again God has been gracious to our church by sending us a brother like JT English who is happy in the Lord and serious about the Bible, and that should be more normal than it is. You get a lot of people who are serious about the Bible but furrow-browed, and then you get a lot of people who are silly and not serious about the Bible. God has given us a man who's happy and serious about the Bible, so praise God for that.

Now, the beginning of the Christian calendar is Advent. Not Christmas; it's Advent. The reason Advent begins the Christmas calendar is because the early church fathers wanted to root us in a hope that would not disappoint us. They wanted, at the beginning of the Christian year, which is not New Year's, to root us in a hope that would not disappoint us.

Christmas makes promises it can't keep. I am not anti-Christmas. If you came to my house, it would look like Hobby Lobby threw up in my living room. There is tinsel and lights, and then my wife is buying new stuff. Our house hasn't changed since last year. It's not any bigger. Why more wreaths? There's no place to put the wreaths. We have wreaths on wreaths. Just one is different. So I'm not anti-Christmas. There are lights on the outside of my house. There are stockings hung. We'll go look at Christmas lights.

I've already drank wassail. I have to be all in to drink six ounces with 780 grams of sugar. Right? I nearly blacked out. Can you imagine me hopped up on wassail? So I don't want in any way to disparage the season as much as I want to highlight the fact that the season is a shadow of something greater and, therefore, cannot deliver on its promises. Christmas is a shadow, not the form, and, therefore, will be unable to deliver on its promises.

What I want to do is talk to you about what you've been given that won't have to be put up in a couple of weeks. Maybe we just think differently, but I'm climbing up... I've been in my attic more the last two weeks than I was since I put all of it *in* the attic last year. I'm not far now from having to put all of that back in the boxes, realize I have to buy *more* boxes because we have more stuff, and then back up into the attic I go.

What I want to talk about is that thing that's not going anywhere, that you and I have been gifted in the coming of Jesus Christ that, as we'll read in the text, won't fade, can't be defiled, and will be ours forever. With that said, let's take a look at what we have been given in the coming of Jesus Christ, why that's better than just Christmas, and then I want us to look a bit at our privileged position in history, and then there's this great line about angels I wish I had more time for.

First Peter, chapter 1, starting in verse 3. By the way, some of the sentences in this text are really, really long, and it creates this... I had to nearly whiteboard this, for there are many more commas than there are periods. Let's look at this.

**"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**

**In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

**Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them [the prophets] was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look."**

I want to take some of these longer sentences and break them down and consider what we've been given that won't need to be put up. Here's the first one. If we start back at the beginning in verse 3, we see this: "**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!**" That's "Glory be, blessed be, praise be to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Why? Here's our first gift. We've been given *new life*, and it's new life that was not according to *our* doing but the great mercy of God.

This "Blessed be, praise be, glory be to God" is in this text because you and I have been given the gift of new life. It's new life rooted not in what *we* have done. In fact, what God is being praised for in this text is he's the great initiator of that new life. In the same way that you had no say in your *physical* birth you had no say in your *spiritual* birth. Jesus has been revealed to you by the Spirit of God, and you have been adopted as sons and daughters from God on high.

He's saying here, "Praise be, blessed be, glory be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who made us sons and daughters, who has given us new life, and that new life is marked by living hope." I love that phrase put together: *living hope*. It's the opposite of disappointment. If you think about how much of our lives have been marked by disappointment... Your level of disappointment is directly related to where it is you put your hope. Your experience of disappointment is directly connected to where exactly you have placed your hope.

We'll do some real talk since it's Christmastime. If your hope is that your spouse is going to fix all that feels off in you, well, you're going to be disappointed, and so is your spouse, God help them. If

your hope is that you'll be able to manage and control your environment with your job, with your promotions, with your parenting, you're going to be really, really disappointed. If your hope is that you can control your own health and you can eat enough spinach and do enough Pilates to live forever, well, you're going to be disappointed.

The argument happening here is the new life *you* have been given is that there is a living hope, a hope that will not disappoint because it is rightly placed. New life in Christ means our hope is life *in* Christ. Our hope is that I'm going to follow Christ, and I'm going to say yes to Christ, and I'm going to take steps of faith, and I'm going to risk things, and I'm going to put myself out there by faith, knowing that Christ will be enough regardless of life's circumstances.

This is what faith moving forward looks like: living hope. I trust that God is good, and I'm going to follow him into wherever he's leading me. Even if in the moment things are difficult or painful, I'm saying yes to a living hope, because I don't think Jesus is going to disappoint me. Now Jesus *will* disappoint you if you're trying to use him to get what you *really* want, because that means what your hope is really placed in isn't Christ but that thing you're trying to use Christ to get.

The living hope is that Christ is going to be enough. I'm pushing all my chips in. He's going to be enough. I'm betting everything on it. He will be enough. This is called a *living hope*. What's this based on? Well, I love it. He starts with this. It's based on his mercy, not your New Year's resolutions. To me, that's the best news in the text. I'm a doer and an earner. Anyone else? To just freely receive is hard for me. I always want to reciprocate.

If you try to bless me with something... "Oh, are you trying to outdo me in honor? Nuh-uh. I'll try to bless you back." This is saying, no, it's by God's mercy, not mine. Not by your New Year's resolutions. "I'm going to spend more time in the Word this year. I'm going to get up earlier this year. I'm going to grow in prayer this year." Yeah, maybe you will and maybe you won't, and that won't affect God's love for you at all.

It might affect your *experience* of that love, because that's what's at stake: your experience of that love, not that love. That love is steadfast, unmovable, rooted in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I'm not anti-sanctification; I'm anti-your ability to justify yourself, because the Bible is. So now we're rooted here.

Where do we get this crazy confidence? Well, again, the text helps us here. "**...born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...**" How can I believe this is true? Because I can look and see that Christ isn't in the grave, which means all sin has been paid for for those who believe on the name of Jesus.

I've often tried to highlight for you that all of our sins were future sins when Christ died on the cross, yet he rose from the grave as a sign of his conquering of sin and death, which means all of Matt Chandler's sins were future sins when he died and rose, which means *when* he rose all of Matt Chandler's sins were covered by his blood or he would still be in the ground. The same is true for you. This has been given to us: new life...given to me, given to you, and that's not going anywhere. I have been given new life in the coming of Jesus Christ.

We've also been given an *inheritance*. Look there in verse 4. "**...to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**" I love these three words here: *imperishable, undefiled, unfading*. That just described what God can do that nothing in the creative order can accomplish. I'll unpack that a little bit.

I don't know what you're expecting to get that morning. I literally don't know what's in your mind. You're like, "If I could just get *this*, my life would be so much better. My whole world would come together if I could just get *this*." Maybe not just for Christmas, maybe just in your life. He's saying here that the only thing that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading is what God can bring.

We know this is true. Anything you open on Christmas morning is the stuff of a future landfill. Once again, Merry Christmas. Welcome to The Village. I know you're like, "Well, this could be an antique and we could pass it down for generations." All you need is one more on later down the line to screw that thing up, and then it's landfill. It's all the stuff of future landfills. It doesn't matter what it is. All of it will fade.

If you have children, you know this. Or maybe your children are just better than mine. I gave my son a gift two Christmases ago. It made him cry. Literally, he was so excited he was jumping up and down and crying. Six days later: "I'm bored." Wait, what? It faded that...? What? I think he did well going six days. That's not just an experience *kids* have; it's an experience *we* have. We were meant for eternal things; therefore, temporal things can only satisfy us temporarily.

This is why it doesn't take long for you to no longer be affected by beauty. I don't know if you've ever realized that about yourself. Or how about this? This is probably an easier illustration. How many of you have a favorite song right now that you're listening to on repeat? Okay. Here's my bet: six weeks from now that will *not* be your favorite song, it will *not* be on repeat, and you'll be like, "Uh." You have a new song.

I know that because you have all sorts of songs on your phone that you loved and listened to over and over and over again that you forgot all about. Speaking as a nearly 45-year-old, some of us have some CDs somewhere covered in dust and nowhere to play them. This is what happens. It's the law of diminishing returns. You were created for eternal things; therefore, temporary things cannot satisfy you except temporarily. I've historically called that the *ceiling*. You're always going to hit the ceiling.

The promise in our inheritance, kept in heaven for us, by faith in salvation is unfettered access to God, new resurrected body, a brand new heaven and earth remade for us to reign and rule alongside of Jesus Christ forever. That is our inheritance, and that strengthens us for today, because if my hope is in the one thing that cannot be taken from me and my inheritance is that 10,000 years from now I'm in a resurrected body in a new heaven and a new earth, reigning and ruling alongside of King Jesus forever, then what does the world have to throw at me that can ultimately take from me hope, if my hope is rightly placed? So that's our inheritance.

One of the things I've always appreciated about the Bible is, if you'll read it honestly, it's not just unicorns and cotton candy. It's always really honest about some of the grit of being human and living life on earth. He does it here. You have this beautiful passage happening about life and not being disappointed and newness of life and hope forevermore and this inheritance that's undefiled and imperishable. You have all of these big promises, and then look at verse 6.

**"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."**

You have this beautiful passage with all of these promises, and then he knows what it's like to be us. He knows what life in a fallen world is, so he just steps in there with "And you'll face trials of various kinds." The thing about this time of the year is that if you're low, it gets really low. If you're

lonely, it gets really lonely. If you're depressed, it gets really depressing. Part of that, more often than not, is because we're looking at things that are the shadow and not the form.

If your intake on Instagram and the Hallmark Channel is everybody's Christmas is happy and white, then you feel more sorry for yourself and spiral into more darkness rather than putting your hope on Christ and his sufficiency, which is willing to acknowledge that there are grievous seasons of life, seasons in which we grieve deeply. Yet I want to try to help us today by pointing out that the Bible does not conceive of faith as a solitary, singular act but something that happens over and over and over again.

God help us. So many of us believe, "I had this faith to make this decision, and now I no longer need faith," yet the Bible is going to conceive of faith as something we do over and over and over and over again. As we navigate trials of various kinds, we choose to put our faith back into what we pledged our faith to at our salvation, that God is good, that he is at work in the mess, and that I might be perplexed, I might be crushed, I might be confused, I might feel angry, but I can look to the cross, remember the resurrection, and trust that God is good. He doesn't sugarcoat anything here. He's being really honest about our experience. Then I love how this ends.

**"Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you..."** The plural *you...y'all*, to use Texan.

**"...in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven..."** I wish I had a whole sermon to preach on this phrase eventually: **"...things into which angels long to look."** What's being described in this passage is our privileged position in redemptive history. Maybe this illustration would help.

I was in Taiwan, and while we were in Taiwan we went up to this room, and there were all of these people worshipping. It's in Taipei. You walk up, second story, and then there are people from all over the world, and they're worshipping. It's far more charismatic than I think most of us would be comfortable with. Maybe not, but probably.

They're just, like, open mic. This girl got up and grabbed the mic and spoke. I thought it was tongues, and my little sister was like, "That's Japanese." I was like, "Oh, okay. It sounded like a language, but I don't know." Then another guy got up, and I leaned over, and she was like, "That's Australian." I was like, "Oh, okay. I thought that was..." There were all of these different people from all over the world worshipping Jesus in Taiwan.

I guess it's because I've been in these Christmas narratives as we've entered into Advent season. This is a funny thought. The Christians in Taiwan know who Herod the Great is. I'll unpack that. The Taiwanese have never been ruled by a Western power. *Ever*. How in the world do we know so much about Herod the Great? Do you know why? Because of *Jesus* the Great. It is not Herod the Great who made Jesus great; it is Jesus the Great...Jesus' reign, Jesus' rule, Jesus' power...that informs the rest of the world about who Herod the Great was. Isn't that cool?

You and I have a position in that we're seeing the fulfillment of the prophets' prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah and the salvation of the nations. The prophets' prophecies concerning the coming Messiah were for *us*. We have better seats than Isaiah. Do you believe that? That's what the text is arguing. Isaiah in Isaiah 6 saw a vision of the throne room of God. His robe was like a train through the temple, and there were seraphim and angels and everything flying around the throne room, and it terrified Isaiah to where he said, "Woe is me!"

Peter is saying, "He's behind you, glancing over, trying to see more clearly what you see clearly." You and I, as children of God in 2018, are watching it happen. *They* didn't watch it happen; *we're* watching it happen. Peter is arguing your seat for the greatest show ever is incredible. In fact, Jeremiah and Isaiah and these other men are like, "Oh man! I could kind of see that a little bit now. Look at what *you* guys get to see." We're watching it. The church of Christ has exploded all over the world.

On day one, AD 0, if you had to push all of your chips in, would you have gone homeless peasant man who was just murdered or would you have gone Roman Empire? I mean, let's not over-spiritualize this. We would all bet on Rome. You would have. You would have just bet on Rome. We would have bet on Rome and we would have lost, because it is not the greatness of Rome that survived; it's the greatness of Jesus that survived.

It is the glory of God, the kingdom of God that has spread across the world. It's not Roman law, Roman peace, Roman roads. That is not what has spread across the world; it's the glory of God that

has spread across the world because of Jesus. You and I have been given front-row seats in 2018. One of the reasons we're constantly highlighting what's going on around the world is to encourage you that in the West, if you have a tendency to look around and go, "Oh, everything is lost..." For you to look out and go, "No, no. Nothing is lost."

The gates of hell will not stand up against the offensive move forward of the kingdom of God. If you're like, "Well, I read an article this week, and it's like, 'Church Attendance Declining.'" I'm just going, "Okay. Well, if there's a burning away of the dross, then that will only in the long run help the church, not hurt her."

The church will grow, and the church will reach, because Christ didn't die for those who *might* be saved; he died for those who *will* be saved. We've been invited to participate in the heralding of the good news so he might gather for himself sons and daughters from every tribe, tongue, and nation on earth. That's what you and I have been called into, and that's what we get front-row seats to watch. It's amazing.

Then there's this little line here: "**...things into which angels long to look.**" I think in our stream...Bible-believing, Bible-embracing, Bible-loving, Reformed soteriology-loving folk...we have a tendency to suppress the supernatural even as we read it in our Bible. We just blow through it. Like, "Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, what Paul said in Ephesians: dominions, powers, rulers, principalities, this present darkness...yeah, yeah, yeah, I got it," and just blow right on through to where we can kind of feel safe and comfortable and in control.

Throughout the Bible, Genesis to Revelation, we read about these other spiritual beings that are greater than humans but less than God. We can see that they have varying ranks and varying jobs. One of the weirder stories is when an angel is coming to inform Daniel of a word God had for Daniel, and the angel apologizes to Daniel and says, "I showed up late. Hey, I'm sorry I'm late. I got in a fight with the prince of Persia," who wasn't a man. He's not speaking of the prince of Persia being a man.

There's some sort of dominion, ruler, authority, something that this angel got locked up with and couldn't escape until Gabriel got there, who apparently can throw some spiritual hands. Gabriel starts messing with the prince of Persia. It frees up *this* angel, and he shows up and tells Daniel, "Okay, here's what's coming down." So you have these angels and these spirits and dominions and authorities and rulers and powers. They're all over the Bible.

When it comes to the first advent of Jesus Christ, they're everywhere. The spiritual realities in that day were going crazy. You have an angel who shows up to Zechariah and is like, "Hey, your wife is going to have a baby," and he's like, "She ain't going to have no baby. She's like 140 years old." The angel is like, "Yeah, and you're going to call him John," and then Zechariah is mute until he's born. Then he shows up to Mary, and later shows up to Joseph, and then, as we'll cover next weekend, he shows up to these shepherds. Then the whole sky explodes in rejoicing that Jesus was coming.

Peter is saying this group of supernatural, otherworldly, spiritual beings that are far more powerful than we are and so terrifyingly brilliant in their presence that we would be tempted to worship them if we saw them...we certainly would be terrified of them if we saw them...look into our salvation, and it blows their minds. They want to try to understand what God is doing in saving us.

The apostle Paul would write about it *this way* in Romans: all of creation groans as they eagerly await the salvation of the children of God. Angels long to grasp what it is God is doing in you and me. What a shame if supernatural beings that can see farther than we can, know more than we can, see things we could never see are in this great anticipation of what God is up to, and we're like, "Yeah, all right. Yeah, Jesus was born. That's great. I so appreciate that."

The text here is calling us to a kind of rejoicing that is... Well, I'll read the text. "**Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**" For many of us, our "rejoicer" is broken. Our joy that leads to inexpressible rejoicing has been dampened. Maybe that's because life is hard and we've forgotten the fact that the Bible has been really honest.

When you have trials of various kinds, remember that God is at work in the mess. Turn your eyes to Jesus. Look to him. He is accomplishing something in the mess. This is not for nothing. Maybe we've just forgotten that the promise we've been given is hope rightly placed never disappoints. That means disappointment can oftentimes be viewed as a type of spiritual MRI showing us where we've misplaced our hope.

Maybe we're struggling to rejoice because we've forgotten the expanse of what you and I have been caught up in when angels and the prophets are like, "Man, you guys are so lucky." We're like, "Yeah, I mean, it's pretty cool." Here's my intent with our time together today. First, to invite you back into the hope that is rightly yours as children of God.

I know for many of you this has been an incredibly difficult year. I want to invite you back into the hope, a hope that's marked by life, not disappointment, but that disappointment might just be revealing that you've misplaced your hope. If you're not a Christian and you're just here because it's Christmastime...you're trying to appease a spouse or you just stumbled in here...I want to lay before you that all we're saying today... As much as it is proclamation, it is invitation.

This new life can be yours. This inheritance can be yours. These things can be yours. I've done ministry long enough now to know that many of you are thinking, "You can say that because you don't know who I am. You don't know what I'm guilty of. You don't know where I've been." I just want to continually plead with you to get over yourself. I'm not trying to be aggressive with you. I'm just trying to point out what the Bible has clearly pointed out.

If there was a sin that could defeat the grace of Christ he would still be in the grave, but he's *not* in the grave; he's alive, and we're waiting upon the second advent, which means there is no sin with more power than the cross of Christ. So just as much as I'm proclaiming today, I'm inviting into this new life, into this inheritance, into the strength for the journey that is longer than most of us thought it would be and is more difficult at times than we imagined, but embracing the promise that God is good and kind and has not forgotten us, nor abandoned us.

I want to lay before you again that the prophets, guys who have books of the Bible with their names on them, are saying, "Man, we wish we were you," and the angels are trying to peer in and understand this thing more fully, because they just don't get why God in his infinite glory cares for us like he does. This is the form behind the shadow of wassail and Christmas trees and stockings and lights and Christmas mornings and the anticipation that comes Christmas Eve.

Those aren't bad things; they're things that are trying to teach us something better than themselves. It would be a shame if we missed all that, enjoyed the shadow and never actually saw what was casting it. What we're trying to do, like we did last week, like we're doing this week, like we'll do next week when we look at the shepherds, is just say, "Look. Look at what's casting the shadow. It's so much better than the shadow itself." Let's pray.

Father, thank you for these men and women, an opportunity to just gather and be together. You are gracious and kind, and we bless your name. I pray for my brothers and sisters across the auditorium today. For those for whom this has been a really difficult season and *continues* to be a

difficult season, I ask that you would meet them with your grace today. Father, where hope has grown thin, I pray it would be repaired and strengthened and that souls might be reminded.

I thank you that you've given your church this season to be rooted in a kind of joy that will not disappoint, a hope that cannot fail. I pray that even in our disappointments today you would meet us, remind us where we have misplaced hope, that we might put it where it is rightly meant to be and, therefore, live life without disappointment. Help us. We need you. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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