

HIGHLANDS CHURCH

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# The Birth of John the Baptist

Full Transcript

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## Finding Focus in a Busy Season

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- 0:00 Like Todd said, I am appreciating the extra space that we're having this Sunday morning to just sit and relax and kind of focus in and center ourselves on the real meaning of the season. I know we all believe it. We all say it, right? Remember the real meaning of the season? It's the birth of Christ. And absolutely, but sometimes I think we just tend to lose focus just a little. I think it's pretty easy to take our eyes off of Christ and put them into our calendar in fear that we might miss something that we RSVP'd yes for. I was looking at our calendar just this last week. Eight additional events over the last seven days.
- 0:41 Great events, by the way. My sister -in -law, Christina, the only big sister I'll ever have. 40th birthday. Congratulations. I love you. Happy birthday. Wonderful event. Wonderful event. But it seems like there's so many extra wonderful events this time of year. It can get a little taxing and get a little hard and can sometimes shift your focus off of where we maybe want it to be. And that's really what we're trying to maybe steer away from these next three weeks as a church as we gather on Sunday mornings. Just some time to sit, slow down, reflect, listen, and just be together and be with the Lord. And give us an opportunity at least. Once a week where we can stop and look forward to the true meaning of the season that Christ has come, that Emmanuel is born, something we can really look forward to.

## The Forerunner: Understanding John the Baptist's Role

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- 1:37 Advent means arrival or coming or expectation. And as we celebrate Advent, as we anticipate the coming of our Lord Jesus, we're going to do that this year for the next three weeks by doing a little character study on John the Baptist, which I'm excited about. You can think of it as Advent through the eyes of John the Baptist. Why John the Baptist? Well, Jesus oftentimes withdrew to a desolate place to pray. That's where he found rest. That's where he found consolation. That's where he just found to be with the presence of the Lord was in the desolate place. I think the most desolate individual in all of the New Testament is John the Baptist. He just lived desolate.
- 2:20 I mean, camel hair, bugs, and honey, that's the type of life that he lived. He's some of your people. I mean, you'd love it if I could just go live alone, if I could just go live in quiet. That's John the Baptist. So in an attempt for us to find some stillness, in an attempt for us to find a desolate place, for the next three weeks, we're going to join the story of the most desolate character in the New Testament and see what it looked like for him to make way for the Lord. Let me pray for us, and then I'll bring us into where we're going to go this morning. God, thank you for an opportunity.

## God's People in Crisis: The Context of Malachi

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- 2:56 Thank you for an opportunity to calm down. Thank you for an opportunity to embrace quiet and stillness, to seek your presence, to seek your spirit. God, thank you that

3:05 We'll find you and we seek you with our whole heart. God, this season is full of so many good things, so many gifts, so many parties, so many opportunities, so much good food, so much laughter, so much celebration. God, I pray that you would help us remember. That you'd help us not lose focus and not lose sight of what we're celebrating, what

3:37 We're anticipating. God, the arrival of God in the flesh, the arrival of your son, Jesus, who came and lived for us, who died for us and rose again, that we might find life abundant here and life eternal later on. God, we give this time over to you. Holy Spirit, we ask you'd use it however you will. We ask you'd open our eyes to see Jesus clearly, our ears to hear your still, small voice. Our minds that we might know and understand, our hearts that we might respond in devotion, in love, and that you'd open our mouths that we go out into the world and just share the good news of who Christ is and what he's done.

## The Promise of a Forerunner

4:15 God, we love you. This time is yours. Christ be glorified. In Christ's name we pray. Amen. Three weeks, the life of John the Baptist. This morning, we're going to look at the prophesied birth of John the Baptist and then the actual birth of John the Baptist. Next week, we'll look at the beginning of his ministry. And the baptism of Jesus. And the third week, we'll look at John chapter 1, where we see that famous line. John the Baptist speaking of Jesus. Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. His final realization and testimony of who the Son of God, Jesus Christ, really was. So, this morning, I'm actually going to take us to Luke chapter 1.

4:54 But before that, we're going to go even further back from there. We're going to go to the book of Malachi, the prophet Malachi. Some of you know it as Malachi. We're going to go to Malachi. We're going to start in chapter 1 and just see, man, what's going on with God's people in that moment. Towards the end of the Old Testament, God's people are pretty darn divided. They can't agree on a whole lot of things. God's people have this terrible habit of being conquered by anyone who decides to come try and conquer them. Many of them stop believing in God. And some believe to worship God is just an exercise of vanity. They think it's a simple waste.

5:32

### Malachi 1:1-2

*The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. "I have loved you," says the LORD. But you say, "How have you loved us?"*

5:57 My messenger. Now, Brendan mentioned earlier that our Christmas message is going to be, I think his words will, Thomas will have a perfect clean and tidy message for us at Christmas. So, no pressure. Thanks, B. I normally like to have things clean and tidy. I like to have things that have good alliteration. It helps me remember things. I think it helps people remember things. I like having an outline that builds on itself with application that comes from each main outline point. And the more I tried to get to that this week, I just couldn't do it.

## Zechariah and Elizabeth: Faithful in Corruption

- 6:34 I couldn't get to clean and tidy. I just kept finding myself completely enamored by the story. The story of John the Baptist's birth is incredible. The story of God sending a forerunner before Christ is incredible. And as I was talking to our guys on Tuesday morning in our preaching meeting, telling them, I'm just struggling trying to piece it all together. My friend, Pastor Todd, told me, just tell the story.
- 7:04 If it's a great story, it'll stand on its own. That's what we're going to do this morning. We're just going to tell the story. And I think it begins here in Malachi chapter 1. The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi, which means my messenger.
- 7:21 God says, I have loved you, says the Lord. This is to his people. I have loved you, says the Lord. But you say, how have you loved us?
- 7:32 Man, you sense the doubt. If you read the Old Testament, I think it's pretty clear how God loves his people. I mean, setting them up in the garden was pretty sweet. Delivering them out of Egypt, that was pretty sweet. That seemed loving to me. When they were out in the wilderness and had nothing to eat and nothing to drink, God provided food and God provided water. That seemed like a loving thing for me. Tons of other people tried to conquer them, and God came to their defense and protected them. That seemed like a loving thing to me. So they weren't alone. God helped them build this tabernacle that traveled with them so the presence of God could be with them always.
- 8:11 That seemed like a pretty loving thing to me. God's got a pretty good track record of loving his people. But you can see the disposition of their heart. I have loved you, says the Lord. But God's people say, how have you loved us? Man, these people have wandered far. Far from where Israel initially was. That's the way Malachi 1 begins. Malachi chapter 4, the last book, the last chapter of Malachi ends with this, with this promise from the Lord. That is the first thing we see in this story, is the promise that God makes to his people.

## The Once-in-a-Lifetime Moment

8:49

### Malachi 4:5-6

*"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."*

- 9:23 I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. A forerunner to the ministry of Emmanuel. A forerunner to the ministry of Jesus Christ. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers lest I come and strike the land with the decree of utter destruction. The Old Testament ends with the promise. The Lord is coming. But prior to the Lord, there will be a forerunner who comes in the spirit of Elijah. But the Old Testament ends with this expectancy of the day of the Lord is coming. What follows the book of Malachi is what we know is

this 400 years of silence.

10:02 There's no new prophecy for many prophets. There's no new books of the Bible written. Israel keeps changing hands. Different people just keep on conquering them. It seems like every other year someone gets to rule Israel. It continues to remain incredibly divided. But by the time you get to Luke chapter 1, the Israelites are under Roman rule, experiencing Roman oppression, Jewish leadership, and even the Jewish priesthood is incredibly corrupt. People have stopped giving to the temple. People have stopped caring for the poor. They've stopped living and obeying the way that God would have them. And this oppression of God's people is seen both from Roman rule but then also from the Jewish leadership itself.

10:49

**Luke 1:5-7**

*In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.*

## The Angel's Announcement and Zechariah's Doubt

11:11 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah. Man, I went down a rabbit hole this week just looking at the meaning and names of stuff, and I'm not sure why the Lord had me do that, but it's fascinating. Even the names of the people in this story tell the story itself. Malachi means my messenger. Zechariah means God remembers.

11:34 Isn't that cool? God chooses to reveal himself to a person whose very name means God remembers. God remembers what? The promise he made, the oath he made 400 years prior. In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah of the division of Abijah, and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth, which means God is my oath.

12:01

**Matthew 23:1-4**

*Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger."*

12:45 They're not walking in obedience. They'll preach obedience, but they won't actually do it themselves. They tie up heavy burdens hard to bear and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. God's people are oppressed by the Jewish leaders and God's people are even oppressed by Rome. But it seems even amidst this evil backdrop, there's some people walking blamelessly, living upright, righteous lives, and it's two of them here that God chooses to use, Zechariah and Elizabeth. Elsewhere in Luke chapter nine, Jesus speaking to the crowds, he tells them, you're a wicked, twisted and faithless generation.

13:27 That's the way of the world at the time, even amongst God's people, but even within God's people, there's these two people living blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. It says this, but they had no child because Elizabeth was barren and both were advanced in years. Man, anytime you hear that line in the Bible, it means this, something miraculous is about to happen.

## Elizabeth's Response and the Birth of John

13:53 Because all throughout the Old Testament, we see this storyline. Barren women, couples who cannot get pregnant, even though they're trying and even though they're seeking the Lord, it's the perfect opportunity for God's strength to show up in our own human weakness. That's when his strength shines best, isn't it? This is their situation. They're barren and can have no children. It's important to note, this isn't because they've done something wrong. This isn't because there's this deep, twisted, dark, hidden sin in their life. No, they're living upright, righteous, blameless lives, but this is the story God has written and he's not quite done with them yet.

14:34

### Luke 1:8-10

*Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense.*

15:11 So it's Zechariah's week to serve. His team, his team of priests is on duty.

15:18 While he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. Chosen by lot. We would think of it as like a roll of the dice.

15:33 Recall Jesus on the cross that says the soldiers casted lots for his clothing. 1 Chronicles 24 talks about how the priests would cast lots. They would roll the dice to figure out who got what job for that day. They didn't want things to be like preferential. They didn't want to say like, you know, you're a senior priest so you get to do what you want. No, they would roll the dice and they would determine what job priests had by casting lots. And the lot this day just so happens to fall on Zechariah. He's chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. Incense would have been burned twice a day, once in the morning and then once again in the evening.

16:19 We've all heard that phrase once in a lifetime opportunity. Sometimes we say that, but we don't actually mean it, right? You go on a great vacation and man that vacation, it was a once in a lifetime opportunity. We're totally going back in a couple of years. It's like, well that, I don't think you understand what you're even saying. That's not what that means actually. But to burn incense, it was a once in a lifetime opportunity. It would take like once in 27 years. That's how long it would take to draw the tag to enter the temple and burn the incense was 27 years. It's truly a once in a lifetime opportunity.

17:04

**Luke 1:11-12**

*And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him.*

17:38 This is the normal reaction. Think of the shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flocks by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared and the glory of the Lord shone around them. And what did the angel say? Do not be afraid.

17:52

**Luke 1:13-17**

*But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."*

## Obedience in Naming Against Cultural Pressure

18:07 It's a tremendous impact and a tremendous effect on him. There's a tremendous effect on Zachariah as well. Zachariah was troubled when he saw him and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, do not be afraid, Zachariah, for your prayer has been heard. What prayer? Because he doesn't tell us what the prayer is. Well, likely because he's a priest, this is twofold. Due to his priestly duties, there's prayers for the people of Israel going up to the Lord that they would walk in a way that's also blameless and righteous, upright before the Lord, that God would deliver his people Israel. Likely he would be praying things from Malachi chapter four that God would help his people fix their eyes to this coming day of the Messiah.

18:49 But then also there seems to be a little bit of a personal prayer request mixed in. Prayers for his own child. Of course, prayers for the children of God, the people of Israel, but prayers for his own child. They've been praying for years. God, would you give us our own child? Your prayers have been heard and your wife, Elizabeth, who's barren, will bear you a son and you shall call his name John. John means God is gracious.

19:21 So we have Malachi, my messenger, writing and prophesying that a messenger will come and a messenger angel shows up, reveals himself to Zachariah whose name is God remembers that his wife, God is my oath, is pregnant and will ultimately have a son whose name must be God is gracious. Even the names themselves tell the story of what's going on in the birth of Zachariah.

19:51 And you will have joy and gladness and many will rejoice at his birth for he will be great before the Lord and he must not drink wine or strong drink and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother womb all throughout the Old Testament. God's spirit would come and then God's spirit would leave. Anytime God's spirit showed up, it was for a specific season to accomplish a specific task. Think

of Samson. Samson also took an oath or he was consecrated. He was sanctified. He was set apart and he was not one to ever cut his hair, but also no strong wine, no strong drink and also for some reason, don't touch a dead body.

20:28 Like that was a part of his deal too. But it said the Holy Spirit would come and help him accomplish all the work that he was supposed to do. So like one time, the Holy Spirit shows up on Samson and he kills thousands of guys with the jawbone of a donkey or his very last act, the Holy Spirit shows up and allows him to conquer all of these people who were defeating God's people.

20:51 And the same way as the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit showed up, your son will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his birth. God fulfills his promises. The very next thing we see with John the Baptist is God's gonna reveal to Zachariah, what's his job? Okay, you're giving me this special kid. What's the job of my child? What's the job of John? Verse 16 says this, he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

21:32 Now keep in mind, Zachariah is a priest. Zachariah knows the Old Testament. Zachariah would have been praying for God to make good on the promises he makes in the Old Testament, specifically what we see in Malachi chapter four. Let me go back to Malachi chapter four real quick because the angel Gabriel, what he's revealing to Zachariah is word for word, right out of the way Malachi chapter four ends. He says he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He says to make ready for the Lord a people prepared. This is what he says, I will send you Elijah the prophet. Gabriel says the spirit and the power of Elijah.

22:15 Malachi four says he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers. This is what Gabriel tells Zachariah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children. It's in this moment Zachariah starts to realize my kid is the kid from Malachi chapter four.

22:35 God has remembered his promises. God has remembered his oath. And God has been gracious to us and my son John.

22:47

**Luke 1:18**

*And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."*

## The Fulfillment of Promise and Four Reflections

23:13 Forerunner for the day of the Lord? Did you forget my wife's barren? Here's his response. It's a response of doubt in verse 18. And Zachariah said to the angel, how shall I know this? For I'm an old man. He doesn't just blame his wife. For I'm an old man. And my wife is advanced in years. How should he know this? Because he should know the Old Testament. And he knows that God likes to use impossible circumstances and situations to do incredible things.

23:45

**Luke 1:19-20**

*And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time."*

24:03 I learned this week, Gabriel means God is great. God is great. How should I know this? My circumstance is impossible. I'm an old man and my wife can't get pregnant. How is this even possible? Well, God is great. God is great. I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God and I was sent to speak to you. And bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their time.

24:43

**Luke 1:21-25**

*And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."*

25:13 So they're waiting around like, where's the blessing? Is he gonna come out? Is he gonna do the thing or is he not? He's been in there for quite a while. The people were waiting for Zechariah and they were wondering, it is delay in the temple. And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them. They realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them, but he remained mute. And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. After these days, his wife Elizabeth conceived and for five months she kept her health self hidden, saying this, here's her response, thus the Lord has done for me.

25:52

**Luke 1:57-58**

*Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.*

## Looking Back, Inward, and Forward in Communion

26:33 People will rejoice at his birth. There's already prophecy being fulfilled in what Gabriel had promised them. And on the eighth day, they came to circumcise the child. Some of the details in the Bible, you read them and you're kind of like, didn't need to know that, right? You wonder like, why is that in there? It seems like maybe footnote that, I'm not sure why that needs to be there. In the actual word of God, but I think what's being highlighted here is just their obedience. We saw their entire generation around them is twisted, they're wicked, they're faithless, but we saw that they're seen as faithful. They're upright, they're blameless, they're obedient to the Lord, even though the world around them was not and Jewish custom held on the eighth day, that's when you were supposed to circumcise your Jewish son.

27:22

**Luke 1:59-63**

*And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John." And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name." And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all wondered.*

28:03 Everyone's got an opinion about it. These people have their opinion too. It says they would have called him Zachariah after his father because that's the trend. Culturally, that's what you do. You name your first son after the father. It's not just the last name that lives on. It's actually the father's first name that gets to live on through their firstborn. He would have called him Zachariah after his father, but his mother answered, no, he shall be called John.

28:33 And they said to her, none of your relatives is called by this name. Like why would you do that? That's not how we do things. You should just do things the way the rest of the world does things.

28:46 I know you're so keen on trying to be blameless and trying to live your life according to what comes to you. What God's word would call you to do and you're trying to do everything by the book, but people don't really do that anymore. Don't you think you should just go along with the ways of the world?

29:03 They're upright, blameless, obedient to what God has called them. Circumcised on the eighth day and we're even gonna name this kid what God told us to name them. And they made signs to his father inquiring what he wanted him to be called. Surely Elizabeth is wrong. She's got it wrong. Well, what do you think, Zachariah? What do you wanna call your son?

29:24 He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, his name is John. And they all wondered. That's their response. Huh, that's weird.

29:36 Now we see Zachariah get a do-over on he responds. Verse 64, and immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed and he spoke, blessing God. Last time he spoke, an angel of the Lord showed up named Gabriel, whose name is God is great. And even though their situation's impossible, old man, barren woman can't have a child, the angel said, you'll have a child. His name is John because God is gracious. This is what's gonna happen. And his response was doubt.

## The Call to Faithful Waiting and Glory to Christ

30:07

**Luke 1:64-66**

*And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him.*

30:36 It's a beautiful story. God makes a promise. Shows up to a man named Zechariah. God remembers. And Elizabeth, God is my oath. Through Gabriel, God is great and a promise is made. Your son, John, God is gracious, will make way for the Lord. Friends, that's what we find ourselves celebrating this time of year.

31:03 Reflecting on this story that God made a way. God made a promise. God made a way. For God so loved the world that he sent his only son. That whoever believes in him would not perish but have everlasting life. That's the gift we receive. That's the gift we cherish. That's the ultimate gift we look to this time of year. And what a wonderful story it is. And there's four reflections I can offer you this morning based on the text that we've studied. Just things that I've been reflecting on this week. The first is this. God fulfills his promises in his time, in his way.

31:45

**2 Peter 3:8-9**

*But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

32:11 I think the way I would choose is often just the easy way. It might be a way that ultimately leads to destruction, but God's way is better. 2 Peter 3, verses 8 and 9 says this. Do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promises, as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. Sometimes I feel like one of my little kids in the back seat crying out to God and saying like, are we there yet? Are we there yet?

32:52 Are we there yet? And God says, no. But don't count this. Remember the way you see slowness as I see slowness. God has a perfect plan and he's fulfilling his plan, his way and his time. Let me ask you, this season of Christmas, are we trusting in the Lord?

33:13 Are we trusting his plan? Are we trusting his promises? Are we once again just stuck in trusting self? God fulfills his promises, his time and his way, but in the meantime, we ought to be faithful, much like Zachariah, much like Elizabeth, faithful, that we would be found faithful.

33:35 Even amongst the generation that's sick and twisted and faithless, would Christ find us faithful? There's a promise made to each one of the characters in this story. It says Zachariah was filled with the Holy Spirit. It says John was filled with the Holy Spirit. It even says Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, helping them be faithful. If you look at Galatians 5, the fruits, the fruit of the Spirit, for those who are in Christ, one of the things the Spirit produces in our life is faithfulness.

34:07 Friends, would we rest in that? Would we trust in that? Would we be found faithful this Christmas? God fulfills his promises and his time and his way. In the meantime, we ought to be faithful, and when he does show up, let's remember it's Christ who gets the glory.

34:27 Zachariah may have been walking in a way that was upright, but never had an opportunity to pat himself on the back. All glory to Christ and Christ alone. Let me ask you, this season, would we be found glorifying God? Glorifying God for showing up in a way that only he could, and then fourth and finally, much like the Israelites, waiting for Christ to come. Friends, we find ourselves this Christmas and yet another season of Advent

34:59 Anticipation awaiting for the arrival of our Lord. Revelation chapter 22, Jesus promises, surely I am coming soon.

- 35:11 Man, when Christ returns, would he find us with our eyes fixed on heaven? Not the trees, not the gifts, not the incoming dinner reservation, not the tasks, not the chores, not the wrapping. Would Christ find us this Christmas with our eyes fixed on heaven, with the words on our mouth, come Lord Jesus, come.
- 35:36 We're gonna take communion this morning as a church as we await that day. If you did not receive a communion cup, I'd invite you to slip your hand up, and my hand is also up. I forgot to get one, so if I could, someone could do me a solid.
- 35:53 My bad, thank you. Oh, GF too, wonderful. First Corinthians chapter 11, the apostle Paul was instructing the church in Corinth on how they ought to take communion, and he instructs them to look three directions. One, look back. We look back at what Christ did, that Christ came. He left his place on high and came to earth. The word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and full of truth, that he lived a perfect life, that he is our great high priest made the ultimate sacrifice, that he is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, laid down his life so that you and I could truly live.
- 36:36 We look back at the work Christ did. Paul also instructs the church in Corinth to look in, to search their hearts and find, man, am I living in a way that's faithful? Am I trusting in Christ? Are my eyes fixed on Jesus or are they fixed on all the different shiny things around us? We look in.
- 37:03 And then thirdly, in communion, he calls the church in Corinth to look forward. In 1 Corinthians 11, verse 26, he tells them to do this until the day he returns. Friends, in communion, we look forward to a day where Christ comes back, but not as a baby, as a king with a crown in a robe that's been dipped in blood, riding a horse with a tattoo on his thigh that says King of Kings and Lord of Lords and a sword protruding from his mouth. Friends, that's the day that we look forward to.
- 37:37 On the night Christ was betrayed, he was enjoying a meal with his disciples in the upper room. And during that meal, he took a piece of bread and he broke it. And he said, this is my body broken for you. We do this in remembrance of Christ.
- 37:58 In the same way, he took a cup and he said, this cup represents my blood poured out for you. Friends, we do this in remembrance of him. Lord Jesus, we remember you this morning. We remember the life you came to live.
- 38:22 We remember the death you died for us. We remember that you rose again, defeating death. God, help us remember daily that we can live from our new identity in you. God, that we are now dead to sin and alive in Christ if we've placed our faith in you.
- 38:44 So Jesus, as we take communion this morning, we cry out and we express, we believe you. We trust you. We love you.

## **Finding Focus in a Busy Season**

- 38:55 God, you say in your word, you have loved us. And Father, we respond with, yes, you have. Would you help us do the same?

- 39:06 And Jesus, we look forward to a day. We long for a day when you will return to bring us to live with you forever. With that in mind, God, we cry out, Maranatha, come Lord Jesus, come. Until then, will we be found patiently waiting, faithfully, with eyes fixed on you and you alone. God, we love you. We thank you. It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. Father God, we come before you again and we just behold your son.
- 39:35 God, we cry out, holy, holy, holy. Worthy, worthy, worthy. God, would that be the cry of our hearts this Christmas season.
- 39:48 God, thank you for just one more moment to stand in your presence. With your people. God, would we remember that you're good? Would we remember that you love us? Would we remember that you do things in your perfect timing your way?
- 40:07 God, as we go out into our week this week, would we behold you? Would we find moments to stop and pause? To just sit in your presence and be with you and cry out, holy, holy, holy. Worthy, worthy, worthy.
- 40:24 Father, we love you. Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for your Holy Spirit in our life. Would we live this week faithfully for your glory and your glory alone. We love you. It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. Friends, our prayer team is down front. They would love to behold Jesus with you. Maybe you need something prayed for. They'd love to minister to you in that way. For the rest of us, don't forget, service isn't over until you love somebody. So love somebody well and then go out into the world just like Jesus came into the world. Would we go out into it and live on mission for the glory of Christ and Christ alone.
- 41:00 We love you. God bless you. We'll see you next week. Bye -bye.