

Christ is Coming:
Tonight
Luke 2:1-20

For the past four weeks we have been preparing to celebrate the coming of Christ. Tonight is the night to celebrate. Christ has come, and Christ is coming.

Christmas is the fulfillment of a promise, and the promise of a fulfillment.

There is nothing like the joy of having a promise fulfilled. As a small child, I remember the delicious impatience of waiting for Christmas morning. My brothers and I were promised that something wonderful would be waiting for us under the Christmas tree on Christmas morning. We spent weeks waiting and wondering. We would hunt through the house to see if we could find Christmas presents. We would beg our parents to let us open the presents that were already under the tree. But my parents were firm believers that Christmas presents were not to be opened until Christmas morning. And I'm glad they made us wait. The longer we waited, the greater the excitement. Finally, on Christmas morning, the great day came. Whichever of us woke up first would wake up the other three. We would run into the living room. And there under the tree would be the promised presents. We would run into our parents' bedroom and wake them up and beg them to get up. We wouldn't dream of opening the presents without them.

They would slowly walk down to the living room and sit down on the couch together. Then they would say, "Okay, you can open your presents now." We would attack the pile of presents, looking at each one to see whose name was on it. When we would find one with our name, we would rip off the wrapping paper to see what wonder was in it.

The gifts were always wonderful. But the best part of it all was the fulfillment of the promise. If my parents had called me in totally out of the blue on a spring day and handed me a gift and said, "Here, we just wanted to give you this," I would have been grateful for it, and I would have enjoyed it, but it wouldn't have been nearly as exciting or satisfying as getting the same gift on Christmas morning.

It was the anticipation which made it so good. And it was the joy of believing and trusting that something wonderful would happen—and it did.

Christmas says to us that promises can be trusted. All of those wonderful, mysterious people who make Christmas happen have come through again. All is right with the world, because what we have hoped for and believed in and looked forward to has come true.

And it still does. Even those of us who have outgrown the anticipation of getting toys still look forward to Christmas. We look forward to seeing family and friends. We look forward to this Christmas Eve service, when we can celebrate the fulfillment of God's wonderful promises to us.

God promised to send a savior, and on Christmas the savior was born. God promised to come to us, and on Christmas God came to us. On Christmas we are reminded that God's promises are always fulfilled.

On Christmas Day we celebrate the fulfillment of a promise. And we also celebrate the promise of a fulfillment.

Christ came with a lot of promises. He promised that someday:

- The poor will live like kings.
- The hungry will be filled.
- The sad will be made glad.
- Those who are ridiculed and made fun of will be praised.

Christ promised us that someday people will live the way God intended. People will loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, gentle, faithful and self-controlled.

Do we dare have hope that these things will happen? Isn't it too much to hope for? Aren't we just setting ourselves up for disappointment? The message of Christmas is that sooner or later the "someday" we hope for becomes "today."

For four long weeks we have said someday Christmas will come. Tomorrow someday becomes today. Tomorrow you will wake up and say, "Today is Christmas! Christ has come, just as we were promised."

And someday we will say, "Today is the day that all the promises of Christ will be fulfilled."

So, let us celebrate the fulfillment of promises on Christmas Day and the promises that will be fulfilled someday.

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