Waiting Here for You SERMON ONE

SEEING CHRIST IN THE STORMS OF LIFE

I love the advent season. I love having the opportunity to stop and remember Jesus before we get on this rollercoaster ride called Christmas. And all of a sudden, at the end of the day, we’re stressed out and half broke, and worn down, and looking back. and thinking, *How did that all happen?* *How did that all happen?* And God is giving us the chance today. He’s giving us the choice today to stop, to take a deep breath, and to remember what this season is all about.

And it’s not about the pace. It’s not about being frenzied. It’s not about the presents. It’s not about all the busyness. It’s not about all the parties. **It’s really about remembering that God will come through.**

You know, **400 years had passed between the last verse of the Old Testament promise of God and the arrival of Jesus in Bethlehem**. Four hundred years. Four centuries of nothing.There was no prophet, there was no voice, there was no promise, there was no act of God that’s recorded for the church. When the Old Testament ended, there was just silence for 400 years. **And then into the silence, angels appeared to shepherds in a field** and they said, “This is the night. It’s all coming down tonight. Glory to God in the highest. Tonight in Bethlehem, a child has been born, and he is Christ the Lord.”

And what that says to me and you today **is that in our waiting, there’s hope**. Because while we’re waiting, God is working. While we are waiting, God is working. While we’re still and waiting, God is active and working. And it may be a season where we don’t think anything’s happening, but there will be a moment where God shows up and where God appears and where we say, “Glory to God in the highest. We didn’t think anything was happening for 400 years, but you were moving history so that the Son of God could enter into humanity to become the Savior of the world.”

And you’re like, “Well, **why didn’t God just do it on the day after the Garden of Eden**? Why didn’t Jesus, after Adam and Eve’s sin, just come the next day and fix everything and set it all in motion?” Because **God always works in the very best way for our good and for his glory**. And I just want to remind us today that he’s doing that in your life today. And he’s doing that in my life today. And he’s going to keep doing that in our lives until we see Jesus face to face. And that’s the message today.

I want to remind us today that **Jesus is coming, and he’s putting an end to all this foolishness**. He’s putting an end to all the heartache. He’s putting an end to all the death in the pain on this planet. He is coming, and Jesus says he is going to set everything right when he arrives. He came one time in Bethlehem, **but he’s coming another time**. And it is going to be the greatest day in the history of the ages for everybody who’s put their hope and their faith in him.

I grew up old school. I grew up a Southern Baptist in an amazing Southern Baptist church. Anybody? Hello? A few people here. Okay, you know what I’m talking about. And I grew up in an amazing church. I love the church that I grew up in. I’m so grateful for it. And we used to always talk about the second coming of Jesus. Anybody grow up talking about the second coming of Jesus? And then, all of a sudden, that just became not cool. In a hipster world that’s not really one of our vocabulary things we’re talking about. You know, getting a latte. **And we’re not really preaching a lot about the second coming of the Lord.** But when I was growing up, it could be any day, any hour, any moment.

And we went home from most of the services I grew up going to thinking it was going to be that day and that hour, because the pastor said he might come before the end of the invitation. There’s still time for you. And a few more people would come. And all of a sudden that sort of slipped out of the vocabulary.

And I’m all about what we’re about right now. I’m about justice for every person on the planet. I’m about taking the Scriptures to every person who doesn’t have access to the Word of God. I’m all about sending people to the distant coastlands who’ve never heard the name of Jesus. I’m about strengthening community for those of us in the faith, and I’m about building the church.

But come on, there’s going to be a moment in the twinkling of an eye when Christ appears and he is going to put this broken world right again. And that’s our story. That’s our story. While we wait, God is working. And there will be a moment when Jesus comes through. And when he comes through, he is going to put the whole world back together again.

I don’t know who’s waiting on something today. We’ve talked about a lot of different ways when we come around the advent season, **but it’s probably likely that everybody in the building today is waiting on something.** You’re waiting on a baby. You’re waiting on a husband. You’re waiting on a doctor to give a prognosis. You’re waiting on a result. You’re waiting on someone in your business to give you an answer. You’re waiting on a deal to come through, a house to sell. You’re waiting on something to happen in your life. You’re waiting on God to move in a miraculous way. You’re waiting on a problem to be resolved or re relationship to be restored. Everybody’s sort of in that moment where we’re thinking, “God, I really need you to come through here.”

**But none of us are waiting for anything bigger than the second coming of Jesus.** And so, when we say, “What are you waiting for?” I hope my answer is . . . And I met someone this week, and they just raised it so much up to the surface for me, because we just started talking and they just looked me dead in the eye. I mean, it wasn’t like church talk. This was like real human interaction. They looked me dead in the eye and said, “I just want Jesus to come today. “And I was like, “Yes, that’s what we’re waiting for.”

So while we’re waiting for the check in the mail, while we’re waiting for the injunction to be resolved, while we’re waiting for the court case to be adjudicated, while we’re waiting on an answer that is going to impact the decisions we make in our lives, **what we are really waiting for is for Jesus to come**. And that’s advent. We are in a season right now on earth where we have had the coming of the Messiah as Savior, but we are going to get the coming of Jesus as reigning Lord and King of all.

And we’re waiting here for you. Waiting here for you. You know, I promised you in the midst of this season that I was not going to talk about Auburn again, after this moment right here and right now. I’m going to let that go for a while. And I’ve tried to be quiet and peaceful about it. I haven’t been the loudest person. I think you understand that. And I’ve just tried to just go with the flow and lay low. But do you know about the Auburn-Alabama game? Does anybody know that that game happened?

Does anybody? I know there are Georgia people here, and I just got to tell you, I love Georgia, I love everybody. I grew up being a Georgia Tech fan when I was a little kid. I love everything. I love college football. And I’m not trying to rub this in anybody’s face. That’s not my point today. I’m just asking if you remember the Auburn-Alabama game. It might be the greatest ending of a football game in the history of sports, possibly. A lot of people think that. And if you go on YouTube—and I was going to show you a clip of the YouTube reactions, but some of them we had to bleep out a bunch of stuff—and there was a lot of yelling and screaming. I mean, like it hurst your ears screaming. But I encourage you to go home and go on YouTube and just Google reactions to the Auburn Alabama game.

There’s the one guy in his pajamas, did anybody see him? And he’s in the little den and his little daughter is at the computer and his son is playing a video game, not even looking at the TV. And he’s got his pajama bottoms on and a T-shirt, and he’s at some house in Alabama, and he sees it all going down. And, you know, he just freaks out. You got to watch that guy.

But then there’s some Alabama ones that you watch and it’s amazing. And they say—I don’t know if this is true or not—but I was told that’s happened four times in a football game that a field goal try has been returned for a touchdown. Only one time to end a game ever. And a lot of the sports columns and people I listen to say it’s going to go down in history, at least for now, as the greatest ending of a football game in college football, maybe pro football history.

And so when that all went down, we were at a wedding reception here in town. No, it was great. Two amazing people got married. I married them. It was pretty phenomenal. And they’re amazing people. They’re both photographers. They’re in the arts community. They don’t even know there’s a thing called college football either. Neither one of them. And it was beautiful. It was amazing wedding. It was powerful. And the wedding had ended, and there was a bunch of people at the reception. There were some Auburn people there, and everybody’s just trying to get information any way they can.

You know, you got a lot of phones in this building, and some people are watching online and some people are listening, and some people are texting friends. And then that goes down in the middle of the reception. And so the reception happens, it’s beautiful, it’s a beautiful night, beautiful wedding, beautiful couple, amazing moment. And then afterward, we went to some friend’s house nearby to watch the end of the game over again. And we weren’t going to watch the whole game at that point because, you know, that would be a long ask. But we got in there and we kind of zipped through the highlights and we got down and said, “Okay, let’s just watch the whole fourth quarter.”

So we just started watching the fourth quarter, and we watched a little bit and we watched a little bit and we watched a little bit. And then we got down to the last couple of minutes, and then we got down to that clip. And I’m sitting on the edge of my chair with my hands on my head, and I’m watching the guy line up to kick the field goal. And I’m thinking, “He’s not going to make it. I know he is not going to make it. He’s not going to make it.” And then I’m like, “Oh, we’ve already seen the ending at the reception.”

I already know how this is going to end. But while he’s running, I thought, “Don’t step out of bounds. Don’t step out of bounds. Don’t step out. Don’t.” He didn’t step out of bounds. He didn’t step out of bounds. Oh, we already know, they already won. You know, even watching it now you’re thinking, “No, no, no, no, no, no. Lean, lean, lean, lean, lean. Go, go, go.” And then you’re like the guy in the pajamas. Oh, “Sheila, Sheila, Sheila, Sheila, Sheila, Sheila, Sheila, Sheila, Sheila, Sheila, Sheila.” And every time you see it, you feel that all over again. And we’ve all experienced that somewhere in our lives.

And that’s advent. That’s advent. I think advent is knowing that Jesus is coming and not freaking out. Because he is not going to step out of bounds for you. He’s going to come through for you.

**I love how the Scripture ends, and I want to start there and back up.** And I just want to say a couple of things today about those of us in the waiting, especially those of you who are in the storms of waiting today. I just want to start at the end, and we’ll back up a little bit. **Revelation 21**, almost to the very end of Scripture, this is what it says beginning in verse 1. This is the revelation of the throne of God. This is a revelation of how it all comes down at the end. And this is what it says. “And then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.” Can you say that with me? “I saw a new heaven and a new earth.” Did you know we’re getting both of those things? A lot of people just think we’re going to heaven.

No, we’re getting a new heaven and a new earth. So if you like earth a lot, guess what? We’re getting a better earth. We’re getting a brand-new earth. Some of you are like, “I’m going to think about that for a minute. I just thought it was going to be harps and angels and a big choir the whole time. This might shift my thinking a little bit.” “For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, now the dwelling of God is with men. And he will live with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God.”

So not just Christ in a body on earth for 33 years, not just the spirit of God living in the people of God while we journey in the waiting, but now **God himself, the triune God in his very presence**, will be with us. The new city has come down out of heaven. And this is what he will do, verse 4. “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, I am making everything new.”

That’s the way your story is going to end. If you have put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ and put your hope in God, that is the ending of your story. That’s God who’s coming into our midst, and he’s not coming as a big theologian into our midst. He’s guiding us by truth until that moment.

And then when that moment happens, he looks at us and he says, “**I know the waiting has been hard.** I know your time on this broken planet has brought you pain and suffering. I know living in the war zone of earth has cost you greatly as a follower of Jesus. But now is the time that I wipe all the tears away. Now is the time that I say there’s no more pain. There’s no more death. There’s going to be no more mourning. There’s going to be no more suffering. I’m going to make everything brand new.”

Think about all the loss on this earth, and think about in a moment God making everything brand new. And that’s what we’re waiting for. And that could come today, that could happen today, but it might come tomorrow or it could come next year. But it’s going to happen. This is the future that we are all headed for. Everything is going to get set right.

But right now we are in a journey, in a process of everything being set right. **And if I could just be honest today, some things are set wrong**. And if we don’t say that out loud, we’re not being honest with each other. If we’re not saying that out loud, then Christianity isn’t relevant to the people of Atlanta, that right now there’s some things that aren’t set right yet. And God does set things right, right now. And we believe that. And we have seen that and we have lived that. But God will set everything right in the end. And you can hope in both of those things in this room today.

Shall we mention this little advent guide? We just took the emails that we’ve done the last couple of advent seasons and put them in a little book form. And as we did, it took a little massaging and a little moving around of things. And that all was happening in August this year, when all the deadlines were happening. So it didn’t feel very Christmas-y. It didn’t feel very adventive, but it was the time that everything had to be finished and had to be done.

And so, toward the middle to the end of August, and even in our Sabbath season, leading right up into that, I was pretty much full stop working on getting all this finished and working with our editors and designers and our team and just trying to make everything fit right. And the whole time as I was working on it, I couldn’t get this thought out of my mind the whole time. Every time I would come to my computer, and every time I would sit down with Scripture, and every time I would sit down just to say to God, “How do you want to organize all this?” I had one prevailing thought on my heart.

And the thought on my heart was, “Make sure you don’t leave anyone behind who’s going through a difficult season this Christmas.” Because you can get in a moment like this and just start thinking about all the phrases we say and the words we use, and the little terminology around advent. And God just kept saying, “Don’t forget, don’t forget.” And so he just put a family, not specific family, but just think about a family. He said, “**Who’s going through cancer at Christmas**? Just think about them. Let that be the lens that you use as you work on this so that it doesn’t become glib but it really does carry the hope of Jesus.” And so, for many days I just kept thinking about a family going through cancer.

I don’t know if you’ve ever been there before. Anybody ever celebrated Christmas in an ICU ward before? Hospital room before? Anybody taken all your Christmas presents up to the hospital before and opened them in a hospital room? We’ve done that in our family in the past.

And when you do that on Christmas day, you’re walking down the hallway and you’re going, “Wow, there’s another family, and another family, and another family, and another family, and another family, and another family, and another family, and another family, and another family.” And you realize Christmas isn’t everybody warm and toasty around the tree. But Christmas sometimes can be really gritty and real. And it just was in my heart, “Don’t forget that family. Don’t forget that family.”

And so the advent journey began on the 26th of November. It’s when our guide began. That was a Tuesday morning when we kicked off things, with the very first one, “Just the Right Time,” is the title of it. And on the night before that morning, we arrived in Texas for our Thanksgiving with Shelly’s family. And on that night before the very first reading, we got the confirmation that Shelly’s dad had cancer. And on the first morning, and I picked up the advent guide, it was like, we’re the family. We’re waiting, we got some more tests this week. We are gathering as a family to think about where we are today.

We’re praying. And in that moment, we either fix our eyes on the challenge that is in the waiting that we all face, all of us in this room are facing, or we fix our eyes on Jesus who has come through and who is going to come through for us again. And this is the hope of our journey today. And so I want to encourage us today, to any family today that’s coming into Christmas, and all the external stuff is going on as normal—we’re going to get the turkey done, we’re going to get the ham, we’re going to get the food out, we’re going to get the presence wrapped, we’re going to get everybody in a town and out of town. We’re going to get it all done.” But yet inside, you’re going through a storm in your own heart.

You’re going through a trial in your own life. **I want to encourage you today that God is giving us the option to choose the object of our fixation today. And I want to pray today that we will have a fixation with Jesus.** I don’t know if fixation is a word I’ve used in a message a lot, but I want to pray that we will have a fixation today with the Lord Jesus Christ. And that while we are waiting, and while we are journeying, and while we are hoping for the now miraculous work of God and for the final miraculous work of God, that we will be fixated on the person of Jesus Christ. Because when the trial comes, and when the news comes, and when the circumstance comes, it’s easy for us to sometimes get fixated on the news, to get fixated on the circumstance. And we’ve got to keep our eyes and our focus on Jesus, because he is where our hope is born, and he is where our life comes from.

If you have your Scripture, I want you to turn with me over to **Psalm 16**. This is such an encouraging passage of Scripture. It has been, I know for many of you, all of your lives. But it gives us that option, and it gives us the ability to choose where we’re going to put our focus in our lives. And I want you to look at it, if you will, beginning in verse 5. It says, “Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup. You have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. And surely, I have a delightful inheritance. I’ll praise the Lord who counsels me even at night. My heart instructs me for I have set the Lord always before me because he is at my right hand. I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad my tongue rejoices and my body also will rest secure because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your holy one see decay. You have made known to me the path of life. You fill me with joy in your presence with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”

So I love what the psalmist confesses. Look at it again in verse 8. He said, “I have set the Lord always.” One translation says, “I’ve set the Lord continually before me, because he is at my right hand. I will not be shaken. And the result is my heart is glad, my tongue rejoices, and my body also will rest secure.”

So what happens to us in the storms of life is that we have to choose the object of our fixation. We have to decide something called spiritual replacement where we say, “I know circumstances have put this right in my view, but I’m going to put Jesus back in my view. I know that the conversation has shifted to . . .” And you can just say whatever it is you’re waiting on. It has in every conversation. That’s everything we’re talking about. That’s everything we’re thinking about.

And it just becomes the dominant thought in life. It could be the word cancer, and now it’s cancer. It’s cancer, it’s cancer, it’s cancer, it’s cancer, it’s this cancer. It’s this deal, it’s this diagnosis, it’s this thing, it’s this treatment. It’s cancer, it’s cancer, it’s cancer. **And I’m telling you there is cancer, but there’s also Jesus.** And so what we have to do is say, “I choose to take Jesus and put Jesus back in central view. I choose to take Jesus and put him back at center stage. I choose to take the risen son of God and put him as the object of my fixation in this moment.”

And you know, the little Christian bumper sticker says, and I’m not knocking it at all, I probably said it in my lifetime, it says—I don’t even remember how it goes right now—“Don’t let somebody tell you how big is the mountain. You tell the mountain how big is your God.” And I’m like, you know, “I like that and I get that and I believe that.” **But I think that we have to say that there’s reality in our lives and that reality doesn’t go away just because we have a little phrase.**

**And so what we’re not saying today is ignore the reality.** What we’re saying is replace the reality with your central fixation, with the person of Jesus. So we’re not saying there’s not a mountain there, we’re just remembering that there is a God there. We’re not saying, “I don’t have a mountain,” we’re just saying, “I do have a God.” And that’s the beauty and the power of that. The Hebrews writer said it this way, and you know the text, you don’t have to turn to it. But Hebrews 12 says this: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

Now, the context here, if you read back into chapter 11, is that there’s still a work to be done on earth. And we are a part of that work with God. And in the process of that, he’s giving us a clear understanding that the race that we are going to run is a race that has to be contended for. And so he says, “Throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus.”

Now, that’s when you know that God, southerners, when he wrote this verse right here, because we get that. You know, there’s people in other parts of the country that are like, “What does it mean fixing? You know what that’s about?” Because we’re fixing to do this, and we’re fixing to do that, and we’re fixing to do something else. And people are like, “What are you talking about? You mean you’re about to?” Yeah, we’re fixing to. And we understand sort of that attention of that.

And this word is just saying to us, as we’re running with perseverance, here’s how we run. We fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. And then we remember Jesus. This is what he did for the joy set before him. **He was looking for what was coming to him. He was also in advent season, and he was also waiting for God to fulfill everything he had promised about the work of Christ.**

He says, “For the joy set before him, he endured the cross scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” And he said, “Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

And so today we have a choice. And the choice is to do what the psalmist said. And what the psalmist said is, “I’ve set the Lord continually before me. So I’m not going to deny my mountain. I’m not going to act like I don’t have a challenge. I’m not going to say if I don’t say it out loud, it really won’t happen. It’s already here. And so I’m going to say it’s here, but I’m not going to let it become the fixation of my thinking, the fixation of my vocabulary, the fixation of my hope. I am going to set Jesus in center view, and I’m going to remember that he has come and he’s going to come, that he has already come through for me and he is going to come through for me and I’m going to keep my eyes on him the whole time.”

I love the way that Luke wrote this account in **Luke 8,** talking about Jesus and the disciples. And we’ve all known this story for a long time in our lives. But listen to what he said in verse 22. It says, Luke’s writing, “One day Jesus said to his disciples, let us go over to the other side of the lake. So they got in the boat and they set out. And as they sailed, he fell asleep.” Okay, there’s your 400 years of silence right there.

“A squall came down on the lake so that the boat was being swamped and they were in great danger.” So this is a beautiful picture, you know, Jesus says, “Let’s go across the lake.” Jesus knows everything. So he probably knows there’s a big storm coming. And he says, “I think I’m going to go to sleep before the storm gets here.” And he just kind of sacks out a little bit, and all of a sudden, you know, the tempest comes and everything is going crazy around them.

And so verse 24, the disciples went and they woke him, saying, “Master, master, we’re going to drown. You need wake up because we’re all about to drown. You don’t want to be asleep when that happens. Wake up.” So it says he got up and he rebuked the wind in the raging waters. The storm subsided and all was calm. And then Jesus looked at them and said, “Where is your faith?” And in fear and amazement, they asked one another, “Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water and they obey him.”

I don’t know how you want to slice this up theologically, but just a general reading of the text says to me, **Jesus went out into a storm with his people, and he went out in the storm with his people, so that he could show his people that he is greater than the storm**. So you say, “Well, does that mean we just say to the wind and the waves, you know, be still and they’ll all be still?” Well, there’s a few people sitting here today that remember a moment in our journey of Passion. We were in Sherman, Texas, during one day, 2003 in May. And we were praying and gathered around with all of our leadership, like our community group leaders, some of the speakers that were there.

And we were praying the night before the gathering was going to begin on the next day fully. And we were in this tent in the middle of a big field. I mean hundreds of acres of land. There were 20,000-plus students coming there, were camping out. Ten thousand of them were already there. And we were in this tent, we’re praying, and all of a sudden—if you’ve lived in Texas, you understand this—it was a beautiful night, but all of a sudden, the flaps on the tent just started going like this. And we’re like, “Wow, this is kind of crazy.” And then the wind just started coming through, you know, like it does in Texas. And then it started raining, and then it started raining sideways, and then it started thundering, and then it started lightning. And you know, all of us were strong spiritual leaders in this tent.

No kidding. And so everybody just immediately started saying, “We rebuke the wind, and we rebuke the waves in Jesus’ name. We say stop to the wind in Jesus’ name. We resist this. This is not coming against us today.” And I’ll never forget the rain got so loud that we couldn’t hear ourselves praying. This is true. And then the thunder got so loud that everybody wanted to take cover and get out of the flapping tent at that moment. And the lightning started striking. And I mean it was craziness. And for the next eight hours, a little purple dot sat on top of the property we were on. Not orange, not red, purple.

It rained for eight hours. And when the morning came, the ground was so muddy that you couldn’t walk without your shoes coming off, even if you had wellies on. And we were like, “We spoke to the wind and we spoke to the waves, and the louder we spoke, the louder they came.” And that morning our board met together, I’ll never forget it, in a little trailer that we all sloshed our way into at eight o’clock in the morning. You couldn’t walk on this property, much less drive on it.

Lightning had struck all around the property the night before. One of our stages had had a lot of damage done on it because of the wind and the rain. And we were all standing in a circle going—this is before Twitter, this is before Instagram—we’re deciding how can we communicate to the broader world whether we’re going to start something here tonight or night. And after a few minutes, one of the guys on our team spoke up and said, “We’re going to go forward.”

And we’re like, “Yeah, we’re going to trust God.” The rain started letting off about nine or ten in the morning. If you’ve lived in Texas, this makes sense to you. If you lived in Georgia, we still wouldn’t have had the event. If we’re living in Georgia from 2003 to now, it would still be a clay quagmire even right now. But Texas is different, a little sandy soil. And you can understand this if you live there, but you can really understand it if you know God. The rain stopped, the sky started breaking open, the wind kept blowing. And by five o’clock that night, right outside that trailer, cars were driving into one day 2003 on ground as hard as this tabletop. And God came through.

And when the students gathered on that field, they came in awe, real awe, of God. And so the passage doesn’t say to us, you know, when the storm comes, you just speak a word and the storm’s going to go away. **The message is bigger than that.** And this is the message: that **life is full of storms, but our storms are full of Jesus**. Life’s going to be full of storms, but our storms are full of Jesus.

So when the squall came up and the waves came up, and the boat started to get overrun and it started to maybe go down, Jesus was in the boat. So yes, we were in a storm, but Jesus was in our storm. And right now, today, I don’t know what storm you’re in. I don’t know what storm your life is full of right now. I just want you to know that your storm is full of Jesus.

And so, in the storm we go to him and we say to him, “Master, we are going to drown.” And he says, “Oh no you’re not. **And it’s not because I stopped the rain, it’s because I am Jesus. And I’m in your storm with you, and you’re not going to go under** **because I am here**. Oh, can I stop the waves? Yes. And sometimes I will boom right here, right now. Can I change the situation? Absolutely. And sometimes I’m going to do it right here and right now. Can I heal instantly? Absolutely.

“And sometimes I’m going to do it right here, right now. Can I work things out that you could have never seen working out again? Absolutely. And sometimes I’m going to do it today. But here’s the thing. You are not going to drown, and you are not going under, because I am with you. And I’m coming again. And in the meantime, I am your God. Set me continually before you. Don’t let the storm, whatever it is—you know, it’s out here and it’s real and it’s powerful. But get me in between you and the storm. Get my face in between you and the storm. Get me and my hope and my love for you, my grace for you, my promise for you, my faithfulness to you. Get that in front of the storm. Get that in front of the storm. Keep me in front of the storm and you can remember.”

And what are the results of that? I’ll just give them to you really briefly. Why is that essential? And what happens when we do that? **Three things happen**. **Number one**, our heart beats because we were made for Jesus. And if you let an obstacle, a challenge, a storm, or a situation or circumstance get between you and Jesus, your heart’s going to shrivel up because your heart was made for Jesus. And that’s why it’s essential that we not let any challenge clog up our fixation with Jesus.

Because our hearts need Jesus. Not a little baby in a manger, not a little promise of heaven when we die. No. We were made by and for Jesus. That’s what **Colossians 1** says. We were created by Jesus and for Jesus. Our hearts were made for Jesus. And if we don’t have Jesus, we don’t have what we’re made for.

You say, “Well, Louie, how do people go through storms with without Jesus?” You ever thought about that? How do people go through this tragedy of their family being ripped apart without God? I’ll tell you how they go through it. God gets them through it. That’s how they go through it. Because it rains on the just and the unjust in the same way. And the grace of God carries everybody through the trials of this life because nobody would make it without it. But we have more than just the grace of God. We have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, a personal relationship with Jesus. And that’s what we’re made for. So it’s essential that we get him in view and stay fixated on him. Not so that we can get what we want in the storm, but so that we can have Jesus, because that’s who our hearts were made for.

The **second reason** it’s essential that we put Jesus in the place of our fixation is because Jesus breeds hope. He continually breeds hope. You think about his death, and you think hopeless, and then you go, “Oh, but he was raised up from the dead.” Hope. You think about the 400 years of silence, and you think “Hopeless. Maybe God’s done with us. Maybe God’s forgotten us.” But then you remember Bethlehem, and you go, “Hope.” You think about someone who came to Jesus and said, “I’ve tried everything and nothing worked, and all the disciples even didn’t believe.” And Jesus said, “I am strong enough, powerful enough, loving enough, mighty enough, graceful enough to change your situation.”

And then you go, “Oh, there’s hope.” And then even to think that, you know, “Some of the things that have happened, Louie, I mean, it’s not going to all get worked out. Because she’s already remarried to somebody else, and there’s already another thing, and that’s going to be really weird for all that to get undone and unwoven. I can’t really see that happening.” And then Jesus says, “Hey, I’m coming again, and when I come again, there’s going to be no tears and no death and no mourning and no pain. And I’m going to going to make everything new.” And you’re like, “Oh man, that is a miracle because I don’t know how you’re going to do that.” But he says, “Everything that’s been made wrong, I’m going to make right. Every time you’ve been done wrong, I’m going to make that right.”

**So you don’t have to spend your advent trying to make it all right, because Jesus is going to do that when he comes. You don’t have to spend your advent trying to get justice from somebody else, because Jesus is going to do that when he comes.** And it breeds hope. It doesn’t make it easier to be in the storm. But the thing that keeps us afloat in life is hope.

The **third reason** it’s essential that we keep Jesus in view is because when Jesus is in view, worship is uninterrupted. Worship is uninterrupted. I mean their worship was just here. Here was their worship song. It’s not one we sing a lot, but their worship song is, “Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water and they obey him.” That’s worship. That’s what that is. That’s, “I’ve seen the power of Jesus. My eyes are open to who Jesus is. And right here in the boat, right now, okay guys, we’re going to worship.” This is a new one. “Who is this? Who is this?” Come on, sing it with me. “Who is this guy? This guy is somebody special right here. This guy is alike anybody else right here.”

Come on. This is—I don’t know if it’s traditional or contemporary. I don’t know if we had an organ in the background or drums in the band, but the worship was simple. “Who is this guy? Even the wind in the waves obey his voice.” And it doesn’t matter if it’s cancer or some family issue or financial issue. It doesn’t matter what the mountain is**. If Jesus gets right here for you, you’re going to worship, because you’re going to see the most beautiful one on earth.** And when you see him, you’re going to say, “You know what? I got a gigantic situation going on here. But you are amazing. You are beautiful, you are unlike any other. And no one’s ever done in my heart what you have done in my heart.”

“And so it may be through tears, it may be through pain, it may be through not seeing how all the pieces add up right now. But I’m not going to stop worshiping you. I am not going to stop saying, who is this? Even the win in the waves obey you. You are like no other.” And worship can happen. And I’m telling you, the greatest place for worship is in a storm. It’s awesome on a Sunday, but there’s nothing like worship in a storm. It’s awesome when you’re at the heights, but there’s nothing like worship at the valley, because in the valley it’s when you and I need to be reminded of the power and the faithfulness of almighty God. And I don’t think there’s anything the devil hates more than Christians who will worship God when there is a mountain in their lives.

And he says, **“I’m going to put the biggest mountain I can in front of you, because I know when I put this mountain in front of you, it’s going to shut down your puny little faith and all those little songs you sing.”** And then he puts a mountain in front of us and we say, “I know who goes before me and I know who’s standing behind me. The God of angel armies is on my side. Yes, amen. So do I have a mountain? Yes, but I have a God and I’m going to praise him. I’m going to praise him. That’s what the psalmist said. He said, I’ve said the Lord always before me because he is at my right hand. I’ll not be shaken. And then look at the result, verse nine. Therefore my heart is glad. That’s the hope.

And my tongue rejoices because when Jesus is in front and when he is centered, when we are fixated on him, we can’t stop our heart from praising him. So he says, my heart is glad, hope and my tongue rejoices and my body also will rest secure. I tell you, the most amazing thing is this, that when we worship, especially in our storm, God gets glory.

He gets more glory when we worship in our storm. Don’t you know that you’ve seen it in your family, you’ve seen it in your neighbors and they’re like, Hey, why are you guys still believing in God? Everything’s falling apart. No, God isn’t falling apart. Everything might fall apart, but God will not fall apart. That’s why we’re hoping in God. And there’s a day coming when he’s going to put everything back together and he’s going to make everything brand new. And we’re waiting right now on the Lord. We’re waiting an advent hope on the coming Son of God who will restore redeem, who will make this broken world right again. And in the meantime, we want him to get glory. So we’re going to praise him. We’re going to praise him in the storm and in the sun. We’re going to praise him in the highs and in the lows. We’re going to praise him every single day because he is in view. And when we praise him, he gets glory. But I want you to know this. When we praise him, we get changed because worship in the presence of God changes us. It changes us. It doesn’t take the sting out of death. Death still stings.

But it changes us. It doesn’t take the loss out of whatever’s been broken, but it changes us and it starts restoring us and it starts healing us.

Worship is the pathway to being restored in the presence of Jesus. His grace comes down and our praise goes up and it completes the cycle of salvation. We breathe in the grace and the mercy of God and we breathe out the thanks and the praise of our king. And nobody can stop us from breathing in the storm as long as we just make sure we get Jesus in view. And you may need a friend to help you do that. You may need your community to help you do that. You may need people around you that say, Hey, we’re going to talk about the problem, but we’re not going to talk about the problem until Jesus comes.

We’re going to talk about Jesus and we’re going to talk about the Savior and we’re going to talk about the healer and we’re going to talk about the solution to our lives. We’re not going to spend our journey talking about the problem. We are going to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfector of our faith who for the joy set before him endured the cross, the scorn and the shame and is now set down at the right hand of God. And we are already positionally, thank you Ephesian series sitting at the right hand of God. So we’re walking in that right now, but there’s a day when we’re going to be in the holy city of God

With him all things brand new so we can get the gifts and I’m going to get some, going to buy some, I love it. We can have the holiday cheer and we are going to celebrate the fact that Jesus came. But we’re going to remember an anticipation and expectation that Jesus is coming again and God is going to come through.