***The christmas Code***

**Advent Worship Series – Week 1**

***Code Word:* Promises**

**November 27, 2022**

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| **WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINE**S  Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. Sermon manuscripts are included as a *sample* and not to be preached verbatim. |

**[*Project* “Week 1.QRCode”***(in Graphics file)* ***or below words on screen as people enter*]**

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| **Code Word: Promises**  ***All the promises of the prophets were carried on the shoulders***  ***of the One born in Bethlehem, and he fulfilled them all.*** |

**Introduction of Advent series theme:**

For centuries Christians all over the world have celebrated the Advent season leading up to Christmas. *Advent* means “arrival, appearing, coming” and anticipates the coming of Christ to Bethlehem’s stable. In the midst of all the busyness of this season, the celebrations, the shopping, the lights, the decorations, and the parties, Advent offers a time of spiritual preparation. It provides a time of reflecting on the true joy, peace, hope, and love that the coming of the Christ child makes possible for each and every one of us. Our theme for this year’s Advent season is *The Christmas Code*. Each Sunday will feature a Code Word to help unlock the blessings of Christ’s first coming…

O come, O come, Emmanuel…

(*The Christmas Code*, pp. 4-5)

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| **SB#117/CF#20 – O come, Immanuel** | TB-444 – same  CF-20 | HTD11-T8 (3 vs.) |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#104 – Come, Thou long expected Jesus** [sing 2 vs. together; no chorus] | TB-370 – Hyfrydol | HTD1-T14 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#114/HC#146/SS#137 – Light of the world (Here I am to worship)** | TB-653 – Here I am to worship  HC-146  SS-137 | No HT CD  HCD13-T16 |
| **SB#116/HC#140/SS#194/CF#6 – O come, all ye faithful** | TB-496 – Adeste Fideles  HC-140  SS-194  CF-6 | HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)  HCD12-T20 |
| **SB#133/HC#10 – Wonderful counselor (The light has come)** | TB-859 – The light has come  HC-10 | No HT CD  HCD1A-T20 |

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| **Drama – Surprise!** |

**Call to Worship:**

The birth and ministry of Jesus came as a surprise to many of the Jewish leaders. But if they had been paying attention to the prophecies, they would have known that the long-promised Messiah had arrived. Today our Christmas Code word is **Promises.** There is no more stirring encouraging promise of the birth of Jesus than this scripture from Isaiah:

**[*Scripture on screen; have congregation read*]**

**6**For to us a child is born,  
    to us a son is given,  
    and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
    Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
    Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
**7**Of the greatness of his government and peace  
    there will be no end.  
He will reign on David’s throne  
    and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it  
    with justice and righteousness  
    from that time on and forever.  
The zeal of the Lord Almighty  
    will accomplish this.

Isaiah 9:6-7 (NIV)

We hear this familiar promise every Christmas season, and yet often miss the core message of its words. With words carefully chosen, because they were carefully directed by the Holy Spirit, Isaiah is telling us that the Messiah Son is exactly what every sinner desperately needs. Long before we were born, God had appointed for us the One who would be the remedy for every symptom of the sin that would infect us all.

(*Come Let Us Adore Him*, pp. 72-73)

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| **SB#114/HC#146/SS#137 – Light of the world (Here I am to worship)** | TB-653 – Here I am to worship  HC-146  SS-137 | No HT CD  HCD13-T16 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#73/HC#141/SS#28 – All hail the power** | TB-306 – Coronation  HC-141  SS-28 | HTD5-T5 (4 vs.)  HCD13-T11 |
| **SB#104 – Come, Thou long expected Jesus** [sing 2 vs. together; no chorus] | TB-370 – Hyfrydol | HTD1-T14 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#113/SS#193/CF#2 – Joy to the world!** | TB-87 – same  SS-193  CF-2 | HTD4-T9 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#133/HC#10 – Wonderful counselor (The light has come)** | TB-859 – The light has come  HC-10 | No HT CD  HCD1A-T20 |

**Announcements and Offering**

*The Candle of Faith*

**Lighting of the first Advent Candle**

**Reader 1:**  This is a story of faithfulness rewarded, its characters lie neglected on the edges of the Nativity story, just as they were in real life. They were old. They had little money and even less influence. The movers and shakers of the Temple never even gave Anna or Simeon a second glance. Heaven however, leaned in to listen lovingly to their every prayer.

**Reader 2:** Simeon comes here several times a week. He is drawn to the Temple almost magnetically by his devotion to God. Through the decades of his life, Simeon has clung to one assurance: that his tired old eyes will look upon the Messiah before they close for the last time.

**Reader 1:** A young couple arrives. They have brought their baby boy for his dedication. Simeon rushes to the family’s side. The parents seem startled by his attention, but slowly they relax. Mary smiles and gently offers her child to Simeon. When he holds the child aloft with trembling hands, the words begin to flow…

**Reader 2:** ***29****“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,  
    you may now dismissyour servant in peace.****30****For my eyes have seen your salvation,****31****which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:****32****a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
    and the glory of your people Israel.”*

Luke 2:29-32

**Reader 1:**  Anna was a prophet who spent her days in the temple praising God. She came upon Simeon as he was talking with Mary and Joseph. At that very moment she gave thanks to God and told everyone in the room that the Messiah had come.

**Reader 2:**  It comes to them simply because they have been faithful servants. On this first Sunday of Advent, we light the Candle of Faith.

(*Why the Nativity?,* p. 121)

**[*Light the first (purple) Advent candle.*]**

**Prayer:**

Father, during this Advent season may we be reminded of your promises and your fulfillment of those promises to us. Guide our actions so that we can live by faith and have a life in You, abundantly and eternally. In the precious name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

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| **Children’s Moment – Promises and Prophecy** |

***Prophecies of Jesus’ Birth***

**Responsive Reading:**

**Leader:** Not only was Christ’s miraculous birth prophetically revealed, but God planned his lineage from the very beginning. Here are four prophecies predicting elements of Jesus’ birth.

**Reader 1:** **The prophecy:**

**All:** “When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Samuel 7:12-13).

**Leader:** **The fulfillment:**

**All:** “This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1).

**Reader 1:** **The** **prophecy:**

**All:** “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

**Leader:** **The fulfillment:**

**All:** “The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

**Reader 1:** **The** **prophecy:**

**All:** “When Israel was a child, I love him, and out of Egypt I called my son” (Hosea 11:1).

**Leader: The fulfillment:**

**All:** “So Joseph got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘Out of Egypt I called my son’” (Matthew 2:14-15).

**Reader 1:** **The prophecy:**

**All:** “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
    though you are small among the clans of Judah,  
out of you will come for me  
    one who will be ruler over Israel,  
whose origins are from of old,

From ancient times” (Micah 5:2).

**Leader:** **The fulfillment:**

**All:** When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
    are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for out of you will come a ruler  
    who will shepherd my people Israel’” (Matthew 2:4-6).

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| **SB#376/HC#219 – King of kings, majesty** | TB-722 – same  HC-219 | No HT CD  HCD20-T19 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#82/HC#82/SS#38 – Jesus, name above all names** | TB-714 – same  HC-82  SS-38 | No HT CD  HCD7-T12 |
| **SB#439/HC#139 – There is a message** | TB-879 – same  HC-139 | No HT CD  HCD12-T19 |
| **HC#45 – While We are Waiting, Come** | HC-45 | HCD3-T15 |
| **HC#123/SS#55 – Shine on Us** | HC-123  SS-55 | HCD11-T13 |
| **HC#136 – We All Bow Down** | HC-136 | HCD12-T16 |
| **HC#220 – Incarnate** | HC-220 | HCD20-T20 |

**Pastoral Prayer**

**Sermon – Code Word: Promises**

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| **HC#120 – In the Manger** | HC-120 | HCD10-T20 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#77/HC#151/SS#31 – Fairest Lord Jesus** | TB-206 – Ascalon  HC-151  SS-31 | HTD5-T1 (3 vs.)  HCD14-T11 |
| **SB#153/CF#35 – Thou didst leave Thy throne** | TB-94 – Margaret  CF-35 | HTD10-T6 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#158 – Who is He in yonder stall** | TB-287 – Who is He? | HTD10-T19 (6 vs.) |
| **SB#376/HC#219 – King of kings, majesty** | TB-722 – same  HC-219 | No HT CD  HCD20-T19 |
| **SB#439/HC#139 – There is a message** | TB-879 – same  HC-139 | No HT CD  HCD12-T19 |
| **HC#136 – We All Bow Down** | HC-136 | HCD12-T16 |
| **HC#156 – Enter In** | HC-156 | HCD14-T16 |
| **HC#230 – Joy Has Dawned** | HC-230 | HCD21-T20 |

**Advent Blessing**

Be people of faith.

May starlight guide your steps towards this place of wonder.  
May angels sing their news as you travel to the manger.  
May promise fill these days as we watch at the edge of birth.  
and may faith tell you, Emmanuel will be with us soon. Amen.

*By Roddy Hamilton. Posted on Mucky Paws.*

[*http://www.nkchurch.org.uk/index.php/mucky-paws*](http://www.nkchurch.org.uk/index.php/mucky-paws)

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| **SB#116/HC#140/SS#194/CF#6 – O come, all ye faithful** | TB-496 – Adeste Fideles  HC-140  SS-194  CF-6 | HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)  HCD12-T20 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#73/HC#141/SS#28 – All hail the power** | TB-306 – Coronation  HC-141  SS-28 | HTD5-T5 (4 vs.)  HCD13-T11 |
| **SB#77/HC#151/SS#31 – Fairest Lord Jesus** | TB-206 – Ascalon  HC-151  SS-31 | HTD5-T1 (3 vs.)  HCD14-T11 |
| **SB#106/HC#260/SS#189/CF#43 – Go, tell it on the mountain** | TB-631 – same  HC-260  SS-189  CF-43 | HTD11-T4 (2 vs., start with chorus)  HCD24-T20 |
| **SB#112/HC#180 – It was on a starry night** | TB-535 – A starry night  HC-180 | No HT CD  HCD16-T20 |

**NOTE:** Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV). © 2011 by Zondervan. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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| **Advent 2022 Week #1** | |
| **DRAMA**  **Surprise!**  **By Martyn Scott Thomas**  © Copyright 2021 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission. | |
| **Topic:** | Prophecy fulfilled |
| **Scripture:** | Numbers 24:17; Isaiah 7:14; Jeremiah 33:15; Hosea 11:1; Micah 5:2. |
| **Synopsis:** | A man plans a surprise party for himself. |
| **Characters:** | Fabiana – a party planner  Darryl – the guest of honor |
| **Props/Costumes:** | Fabiana should be dressed in bright/loud/over-the-top clothes and should have a phone or a tablet. Darryl should be dressed casually. |
| **Setting:** | A large banquet hall. |
| **Running time:** | 3 minutes |

[*Fabiana and Darryl enter looking around the room as they walk.*]

**Fabiana:** [*pointing as she enters*] And we’ll have the fountain right in the center of the room with ice sculptures in each of the corners.

**Darryl:** [*trying to visualize*] Fantastic!

**Fabiana:** Now, did you want the balloon arch as you come into the room or by the dessert table?

**Darryl:** Oh, definitely as you come into the room. This is going to be the best surprise party ever. Thank you so much, Fābiana [*pronounced with a long ‘a’*]

**Fabiana:** [*over exaggerating the ‘ah’*] That’s Fah-biana, darling. It rhymes with fah-bulous.

**Darryl:** Well, thank you, Fah-biana. Everything looks great.

**Fabiana:** You’re very welcome, darling. Now, let’s go over the menus one last time.

**Darryl:** Did you add those little sausage things? My mother really loves them.

**Fabiana:** Yes, I did. But that put you over budget, so we had to lose the fried mozzarella.

**Darryl:** Oh no, not the mozzarella! Aunt Kathy loves the mozzarella. I think I can come up with the extra money for the budget.

**Fabiana:** If you say so. [*enters info into tablet*] Is there anything else you’d like to add?

**Darryl:** No, I’m really pleased with the way this is shaping up. This is going to be the party of the year.

**Fabiana:** You certainly are going all out. I hope the guest of honor will be as pleased as you are.

**Darryl:** Oh, I am.

**Fabiana:** I know you’re pleased. I meant the guest of honor. I hope he or she is excited. [*pause*] So how is the surprise going to work?

**Darryl:** Well, the guests will get here around 7:00 for the appetizers and general chit chat. Then at 7:15, the lights will dim, everyone will hide behind the indoor obstacle course, I’ll walk in, and everyone will jump out and yell, “Surprise!”

**Fabiana:** So, you’re bringing the guest of honor in with you?

**Darryl:** Of course…Wait, what do you mean?

**Fabiana:** The guest of honor. He or she is coming in with you.

**Darryl:** Why do you keep saying he or she?

**Fabiana:** Well, I don’t know who your guest is, so I’m just generalizing.

**Darryl:** But I’m the guest of honor.

**Fabiana:** [*a bit confused*] You mean that you’re bringing the guest of honor.

**Darryl:** If you mean that I’m bringing myself, then yes.

**Fabiana:** But you’re planning this party?

**Darryl:** Yes.

**Fabiana:** A surprise party?

**Darryl:** Yes.

**Fabiana:** [*puzzled*] For yourself?

**Darryl:** Yes.

**Fabiana:** Am I missing something?

**Darryl:** I don’t think so. [*pause*] So I’ll see you Saturday?

**Fabiana:** Hang on. Let me get this straight: You’re throwing a surprise party – for yourself?

**Darryl:** Yeah. Who did you think this was for?

**Fabiana:** Well, I assumed that it was for someone else. Surprise parties are usually given for someone not expecting a party – thus the surprise!

**Darryl:** Well, I’ll act surprised.

**Fabiana:** [*in disbelief*] What?

**Darryl:** [*very excited, jumping up with hands in the air*] Is this for me?

**Fabiana:** But you’re planning this.

**Darryl:** Yes.

**Fabiana:** And all the guests know you’re planning this?

**Darryl:** Yes.

**Fabiana:** And they know it’s for you?

**Darryl:** Yes.

**Fabiana:** You know it’s not really going to be a surprise, don’t you?

**Darryl:** Well, yeah.

**Fabiana:** Then why are you having a surprise party?

**Darryl:** Because I really like surprises.

**Fabiana:** But it’s not going to be a surprise.

**Darryl:** I know. But I still like them.

**Fabiana:** Well, is it at least your birthday?

**Darryl:** No, that’s not until April, but if you’re not busy . . .

**Fabiana:** I’ll let you know. I need to see how this thing works out.

**Darryl:** Great. I’ll be in touch.

**Fabiana:** Is there anything else, darling?

**Darryl:** Nope. I think I’m good. See you Saturday?

**Fabiana:** I’ll be here with bells on.

**Darryl:** Really?

**Fabiana:** You’ll have to see. I don’t want to ruin the surprise.

[*Blackout*]

*\*Optional segue*

The birth and ministry of Jesus came as a surprise to many of the Jewish leaders. But if they had been paying attention to the prophecies, they would have known that the long-promised Messiah had arrived.

***The christmas Code***

**Children’s Moment – Week 1**

***Code Word:* Promises**

**November 27, 2022**

**By Katie Laidlaw**

**Synopsis:** *The Christmas Code* Children’s Messages are given from the perspective of Gabriel, the angel. Gabriel’s perspective is meant to help children understand the narrative of the Christmas story, while encouraging application, and remembrance of the true meaning of Christmas.

**Set-Up/Staging:** Invite children to come to the front, either having them stand or sit for the lesson. (I personally recommend having the children stand, as this helps keep them attentive, engaged, and involved in the lesson—especially with the dynamic of the congregation watching them. In this more public/formal setting, sitting provides a more relaxed/informal mindset, allowing the children to disengage and merely be present in the moment.)

**Props:** Halo, wings, white shirt

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| **Week 1 – Promises and Prophecy** |

***Script:***

Hello there, my friends! You might be wondering who I am – allow me to introduce myself! I am Gabriel, the angel. I am the angel who visited both Mary and Joseph to tell them about the best gift ever. Speaking of that, let me give you some of the inside scoop on this story. First, I need to ask you something.

Do you know what a promise is? [*Allow children to answer*]

What does it look like to keep a promise? [*Allow children to answer*]

Why do we make promises? [*Allow children to answer*]

Have you ever heard of a pinky promise? You know, where you lock pinkies with someone and make the biggest, most serious, most important promises of all time? You can never break a pinky promise! A very long time ago, if someone broke a pinky promise, it meant the person they made the promise with could break the promise breaker’s pinky. Isn’t that crazy?! Thankfully, we don’t do that anymore, but it was a very common practice for a long time. Now, in these days, when promises are broken, we get sad, disappointed, upset, and maybe even lose trust in the person who broke their promise.

A very long time ago, God made a promise that He would send the Messiah, a Savior, who was His very own son, to the world to bring peace, forgiveness and salvation to the world.

The birth of Jesus was talked about for a very long time! There is something called prophecy. Can you say ‘prophecy’? [*Allow children to repeat.*] A prophecy is God’s promise of what is to come. There were a lot of prophecies of the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, starting thousands of years before Jesus was born! We can see the many different prophecies, or promises, about Jesus coming to earth in the Old Testament (the first part of the Bible).

Do you know who Adam and Eve are? [*Allow responses*] Right! When Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit and disobey God, they brought sin into the world. What is sin? [*Allow responses*] God has given all of us the ability to make choices. We should do our best to make good choices; to be obedient to God and His Word, the Bible. Sometimes we mess up, we get selfish, or think we know best and make bad choices, which is why we needed Jesus to be born. Jesus came to save us from our sin, to clean our hearts and show us the right way. God knew we would need a Savior to help us – to save us from our sins.

Numbers 23:19 (NIRV) says:

*God isn’t a mere human. He can’t lie.*

*He isn’t a human being. He doesn’t change his mind.*

*He speaks, and then he acts.*

*He makes a promise, and then he keeps it.*

So, God promised to send His son to save the whole world. Sometimes it’s hard to trust in a promise we haven’t seen come true yet. Jesus being born shows us that God always keeps his promises. And not only do we know that God always keeps His promises, but we also know that we can trust Him with our hearts.

Isn’t this amazing? I love that God keeps His promises! I can’t wait to tell you more of the story next week!

[*End with prayer.*]

**Main Points:**

* God always keeps His promises
* Prophecy is God’s promise of what is to come
* We need a Savior
* We celebrate Christmas because Jesus was born to save us, which means we can trust in the promises of God

**Questions:**

* What is a promise?
* What does it look like to keep a promise?
* Why are promises made?
* What is sin?

***The christmas Code***

**Advent Sermon – Week 1**

***Code Word:* Promises**

**November 27, 2022**

**By Major Catherine Mount**

***All the promises of the prophets were carried on the shoulders***

***of the One born in Bethlehem, and he fulfilled them all.***

**TITLE: *Codeword:* Promises**

**SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 2:29-38**

**CHARACTER/S: Simeon and Anna**

**INTRODUCTION:**

As we enter this season of Advent, let’s make a promise. Let’s look for Jesus—more than our usual day-to-day acknowledgement of God—over these next 5 weeks. Let’s have our eyes, our minds, and our hearts OPEN and LOOKING for Jesus. As mentioned earlier, each Sunday we will be featuring a different code word to help unlock the blessings of Jesus’ coming to earth as an infant. Today we are looking at scripture with the theme of Promises.

**ILLUSTRATION:**

Let me ask you this question: Have you ever had to negotiate with a child? Now maybe you have a household that doesn’t negotiate with children, but my experience with many parents (and for me personally) is that whether *you* negotiate or not, kids will try to get their own way.

I find that kids have a few different negotiating techniques:

1. The ‘CUTE TACTIC’ – this is where they tuck their chin in, look up at you, and bat their eye lashes, usually accompanied with a sweet ‘please, mama?’. (Have any of you fallen prey to this shrewd technique? I’m looking at you, grandparents!)
2. The ‘NAGGING TACTIC’ – this is when a child **relentlessly** begs and pleads for something (which can be tiring, right?).
3. The ‘BARGAINING APPROACH’, which often ends with these two simple words: **‘I promise’**:

“If you let me slide down the staircase, **I promise** I won’t break my arm.”

“If you let me climb on the roof, **I promise** I’ll be careful.”

“If you let me play with sparklers, **I promise** I won’t catch the garage on fire.”

“If you let me have a giant piece of pumpkin pie 30 minutes before dinner, **I promise** it won’t stop me from eating all my dinner (including vegetables).”

Here’s the problem with the I PROMISE bargaining approach: kids and adults alike are pretty good at breaking their promises. Aren’t they? It’s a sad fact of the broken human nature.

**TRANSITION:**

It’s my guess that most (probably all) of us have at some point in our lives made a promise. I could also hazard to guess that we have all *broken* a promise. As we talk about today’s simple yet loaded word – **Promises** – this is what we **need** to remember about God: **He keeps His promises**. As we heard in the children’s message from Numbers 23:19 (NIRV): *“He makes a promise, and then he keeps it.”*

Let’s look at some of these promises, starting in Luke 2, with Simeon and Anna.

**READ SCRIPTURE: LUKE 2:29-32**

**CONTEXT:**

Simeon, a Holy Spirit-filled “righteous and devout man” (v. 25), was waiting to see the Lord’s Messiah. Upon seeing and holding baby Jesus, he praises God saying, “Sovereign Lord, *as you have promised…*”

Simeon had a promise, but so did Israel, God’s chosen people. It was the promise of a Savior, a Messiah, who would come into the darkness of this world with holy light, who would *redeem* the world, and change everything. Through tradition and scripture, Simeon *knew* the promises of God; and through the experience of the Holy Spirit he *saw* the Promise fulfilled with his own eyes. There are over 400 prophecies about the Messiah in the Old Testament, and Simeon did not need to wait for all of them to be fulfilled. He knew, he saw, and he trusted. How did he respond? *“You may now dismiss your servant in peace”* (v. 29). In other words: Bring me home, I don’t need to see the rest of the promises fulfilled; you said you would do it, and I knew you would. Simeon knew how to trust and believe in a promise of God.

And then you add the prophet Anna into the picture (v. 36). This sweet old lady, whom we could describe as a professional worshipper, a prayer warrior, a woman who had experienced great loss *and* great worship. What happens to her? She *sees* the Messiah, a baby, and declares the redemption of Jerusalem is coming (v. 38).

God keeps His promises. Simeon knew it. Anna knew it. And it affected how they lived, how they prayed, and how they worshiped. God’s promises are wrapped up in the past, the present, *and* the future. Simeon and Anna knew that God was faithful in the past, that He was faithful in the present, and that He would be faithful in the future.

**TRANSITION:**

Sometimes, in our personal experiences, we’ve been so wounded by the broken promises of other people or institutions or systems that we put that same kind of characteristic on God (that He’s going to be a promise breaker, too). That is a LIE from the devil. *God is who He says He is and He does not change.* And Jesus is the perfect example of God’s perfect promise exploding into our world and making a clear path of wholeness and healing and peace in our lives—not just 2,000 years ago, but right now today! Let’s look at what kind of *promise* Jesus Christ is:

**READ SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 9:1-7**

**TRANSITION:**

There are a lot of promises in these seven verses, but let’s go to the familiar in verse 6. These aren’t just names for Jesus, the Son of God; these are **attributes**, they are promises of who Jesus will be to you specifically:

* WONDERUFL COUNSELOR
* MIGHTY GOD
* EVERLASTING FATHER
* PRINCE OF PEACE

**I. PROMISE OF JESUS AS OUR WONDERFUL COUNSELOR**

The promise of Jesus as our Wonderful Counselor is all about **presence.** God is the ultimate ‘go to’ person. Just think about the word ‘wonderful’ – it means **full** of the extraordinary. Jesus is the **promise** of a constant *friend*; even more than that, a constant *authority* who advises, giving counsel and wisdom. Where do you seek solace? Counsel? Advice? Guidance? My guess is it is not always from Jesus. Who is the first person you call? When we are truly seeking wisdom, and guidance in life it is vital to train ourselves to turn, ***first***, to Jesus, to God, to the great comforter, the Holy Spirit. I believe that God sends people into our lives to help in guiding us, but too often we depend on the advice of others to dictate our decisions, disregarding the very One who knows all, and is the ultimate Counselor. Even worse, sometimes we seek counsel in the darkness, instead of the Light! Don’t depend on the world to provide sound guidance when Jesus is the fulfilled promise with the best answer for you!

2 Samuel 22:29 (NIV) says: *“You, Lord, are my lamp; the Lord turns my darkness into light.”* Jesus is the Light of the world that can—that WILL—illuminate your path, not just as a guide, but as the most extraordinary Counselor who will give clarity, comfort, and compassion to your life.

**II. PROMISE OF JESUS AS MIGHTY GOD and EVERLASTING FATHER**

I’m not sure who is overwhelmed or struggling today because of the world around us, but as simply put as possible, I know there’s someone that needs to hear this: OUR GOD is MIGHTY! He is powerful, He is strong, He is a *warrior* on your behalf. Some of us are in situations or battles where we are trying to fight off the spiritual darkness with a ‘butter knife’. We need to remember that God is here with a ‘giant Samurai sword’ protecting us, holding us up, with the authority and the ability to act and to will His perfect plan. He is powerful and He is mighty.

Where are you drawing *your* strength from, and where do you look in despair? Social media isn’t going to help you; the news isn’t going to help you; people helping isn’t going to be adequate. The promise you need to remember and claim today is that God *in His MIGHT*, is the Strong Tower for you to rely on today.

But He isn’t only strong – God is eternal. He has the ETERNAL PRESENCE to defeat darkness. Why do you think Isaiah describes Jesus as the ‘everlasting’ Father? I think it’s to remind us that He’s not going anywhere. Everlasting means just what you think it means: **forever**. God is not leaving you. He loves you. He is...with...you.

In the Nativity story from the book of Matthew (1:23), it says: *“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).*

Immanuel – God is *with* us. If you are feeling alone today – maybe this is the promise you need to claim: you have a triune God who is *eternally* **with you**. Do you recognize that? Do you need to lean in to that relationship and trust Him, to let Him protect you and care for you, today?

**III. PROMISE OF JESUS AS PRINCE OF PEACE**

Finally, the Prince of Peace. The Heir of Shalom! You might already know that definition of Shalom, but listen to this longer definition:

“Completeness, soundness, welfare, safety, soundness (in body and mind), health, prosperity, tranquility, contentment, peace, friendship, of human relationships, with God especially in covenant relationship.”

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. The Prince of Shalom.

Do you have any conflict in your life? Do you have any unsettled-ness? Do you need this peace? This calm? The **completeness** that Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, has to offer? Have you truly claimed the promises of the peace, the power, the presence, and the guidance of the One true King?

**CONCLUSION:**

Think back to our Christmas story, of how Jesus entered this world. Think of that day when Jesus was identified as “God with us,” and 8 days later when Simeon and Anna witnessed God’s **fulfilled promise** come through the temple gates. God **is** who He ***says*** He is! And He *does* what He ***says*** He will do. Do you believe that? Is He your Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace?

**CHALLENGE:**

Why did you come to church today? Someone made you? It’s a habit? You’re desperate to feel something? Curiosity?

Regardless of why you came, I want to challenge you to claim the promises of God. Now, there are thousands of promises from God in the Bible, and I don’t want you to be overwhelmed with all of the options. I want you to pick just *one* of these to claim today; to believe in; to act on; to trust in.

As we take time to pray, I want you to specifically claim God as:

* WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, (comforter)
* MIGHTY GOD, (defender/protector)
* EVERLASTING FATHER, (ever present)
* PRINCE OF PEACE (peace giver)

**NOTE:** Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV). © 2011 by Zondervan. Used by permission. All rights reserved.