**The Promise**

**CHRISTMAS EVE**

John 1:9–14

**Write-Up:** On Christmas Eve, we celebrate that Jesus came as the Messiah, the one who would save the people from their sins. Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies spoken of Him through the ages, and in Jesus, we see a beautiful picture of the fullness of God.

**Think:** God stayed true to His promises by sending Jesus at Christmas. I need to receive this good news with joy.

**Feel:** God loves me enough that He has gone to great lengths to rescue me.

**Do:** Let the light of Jesus shine into our lives and then allow it to shine out of us.

**Sermon**

(*As people enter the service, hand out candles/electric candles or finger lights. Tell them they will be used at the end of the service and to hold them until then.*)

The day has finally come! It is Christmas Eve, and what a joy it is for us all to be together to celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. For the last four weeks, the church has been celebrating the Advent season, as we have remembered the powerful promises of hope, peace, joy, and love that were given to us in the arrival of Jesus. Advent is about anticipating the coming of the Messiah to rescue the world. As Christians today, we now anticipate the day Jesus will return and make all things right. Christmas is marked by expectation in every way, shape, and form.

It always has always been about excitedly waiting, hasn’t it?

**Story:** As a child, one of my strongest Christmas memories is about the anticipation I had as I waited for my grandparents to finally make it to our house so we could begin the Christmas festivities. We lived nearly ten hours away from one set of my grandparents, and I knew each Christmas Eve morning that when they left to come visit, it would take all day for them to drive. I remember that I would sit and watch the clock count down the hours until they would finally arrive. There was no feeling like seeing their Buick pull into the driveway and running out to give them a big, warm hug. They would always pop the trunk of their car and ask me if I wanted to help carry in the presents. No question . . . YES! I’d be more than happy to.

(This story should relate to a time of Christmas anticipation or a long wait for something good)

Christmas is so wonderful for so many reasons. The time spent with family is so sweet. The food that is shared is always so tasty. The cold weather, the lights, the snow? Maybe snow? There is so much to look forward to, and it makes it so hard to wait for it to arrive.

**POINT #1: CHRISTMAS IS WORTH WAITING FOR.**

The first Christmas ever was also an event that was a long time coming. The people of God were familiar with promises that had been given to them hundreds of years before any manger, angels, wise men, or star. They trusted God’s faithfulness and believed that He would come through. Finally, in the tiny city of Bethlehem, a young couple named Joseph and Mary found themselves in a farm shed behind an inn that was too full to accommodate even a pregnant woman. It was there, in a stinky manger, that the Savior of the world was laid—from the God of the universe to a vulnerable baby wrapped in swaddling cloth. There is more than one account of this miraculous event in the Gospels. However, today I want to visit this moment in time from a different vantage point. I’d like to see what we can learn from an account that does not have the traditional characters involved or the familiar story line.

**READ John 1:9.**

The way this version of the Christmas story goes, there is a light that enters the world. This light was born into a dark world full of sin and brokenness. This is not just any light, this is the true Light, the light everyone has been waiting on.

**Illustration:** (*Consider turning the lights down in the room and have a strong flashlight of some kind.*) When Jesus arrived on the scene, it was a fulfillment of promises from long ago. In fact, the book of Isaiah speaks to a day that a light would dawn on the people who were living in deep darkness. (*Shine the flashlight around the room.*) This light brought hope to a hopeless situation. This light brought peace to people who had lived in chaos. This light brought joy to a world that was miserable. This light brought love to the human race that had forgotten about God. Jesus was known in the Scriptures as the light of the world. Like any other light, He came into the world to accomplish certain things. (*Shine the light into the corners of the room.*) He came to reveal the darkness in every corner of our lives and in every corner of the world—not to shame us, but to heal us. (*Shine the light down each aisle.*) He also came to shine a light on the right way to live. It is hard to navigate a dark and broken world; the birth of Jesus is a light that lights our path.

One of the reasons that we see lights everywhere during the Christmas season is because it is a constant reminder that while many of us may be familiar with the story of a baby born in a manger, it is also about a great Light that has come into the world to brighten up what otherwise feels dark.

John gives a warning within the passage about the dangers of missing who this true light is.

**READ John 1:10–11.**

As Jesus miraculously came into the world, a world that was actually created through Him and held together by Him, the world did not recognize Him for who He really was. It is a tragedy actually, that though many were waiting for the Messiah to appear and redeem all that God had created and bring peace to the world, when the Messiah shows up, the majority don’t recognize Him. But why? How could the signs not be clear? How could He have flown under the radar?

Unfortunately, the main reason was because Jesus did not look like the kind of savior they were hoping for. They thought they were being promised a military warrior who would come and overthrow Rome. They thought they were being promised an activist who would lead the Jews in protest of oppressive powers. Instead, what God had promised was even better. More powerful than military might and activist rallies was the humble birth of God in the flesh and a sacrificial life that would free the world from sin. That is the Light that came into the world in Bethlehem.

**POINT #2: DON’T MISS THE GIFT OF JESUS.**

Jesus came to rescue His fellow Jews and to take that hope to the ends of the earth, but they did not accept Him. His life was a gift that was never received.

**Story:** Last year during Christmas, my wife was gathering gifts to be wrapped and laid under the tree. She had gone to her normal hiding spot to collect the presents that needed to be prepared and found something she did not expect. In the hiding spot for this year’s gifts, she found two other gifts that had been wrapped for last year, but were never brought out to be received and opened. And guess who they were for? Me! The reason those gifts had been purchased and wrapped was to be shared and appreciated. My wife could not understand why I was so put out with her discovery—though very funny and totally crazy. It’s because there were gifts that were available last year, but they were never given and received.

(This story should relate to a time when a gift was lost or not given or received for some reason)

I do not want you to leave today without being offered the greatest gift that could be received this Christmas season. Not only that, but I would love for you to receive this gift. Don’t miss it. Jesus was born into the world for all people. That means you. He came to rescue you. He came to free you from your sin. He came to shine the light of hope, peace, joy, and love into your life. Don’t miss Him. Receive Him into your heart.

John goes on to tell us why the gift of God in Jesus Christ must be opened....

*To read the full sermon – download The Promise Christmas Eve Kit*