



Elizabeth

*“The Lord has done this for me.
In these days he has shown his
favor and taken away my
disgrace among the people.”*

Luke 1:25

A Season of Trust

Luke 1:5-38; Matthew 1:18-25

Sunday, November 30, 2025

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Today is the First Sunday of Advent, ushering in a season of waiting. Unfortunately, the idea of waiting just doesn't seem to connect with us in our instant-gratification society. We want it and we want it now. The Christian calendar would have us wait until December 24 to celebrate the birth of Christ, but few of us want to wait that long to sing Christmas carols. However, by December 26, we'll all be tired of those carols, and we'll want to pack them away with our ornaments and decorations until next year.

It seems clear that Advent isn't going to work for us as a season of waiting—especially since most quarters in the church have caved and begin celebrating Christmas well in advance of December 25.

So if we're not going to proclaim Advent as a season of waiting, what then? There is an element of repentance that goes along with Advent. That's seen in the first two candles of the Advent wreath which are purple because purple is the color of repentance. However, when it comes to repentance, Advent can't hold a candle to Lent which has really cornered the market on repentance.

So it is that in Advent, repentance is quickly set aside and replaced with joy. That's seen in the third candle of the Advent wreath which is pink, the color of joy and joy is something we associate with Christmas. Think of all the ornaments and carols and Christmas cards that feature the word *joy*. After all, who wants to focus on repentance in the midst of a season filled with Christmas parties and children's programs?

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So if Advent doesn't work as a season of waiting and if we can't relate to it as a season of repentance, how are we as Christians supposed to respond to Advent?

I would like to propose to you that Advent is a season of trust. After all, four of the biblical characters most often associated with Advent had to learn to trust God more completely during Advent than they ever had before.

The first is Zechariah, a priest whom we meet in Luke chapter 1. He and his wife Elizabeth were childless and because they were elderly, they were well beyond the point of having any hope of ever having children.

It was Zechariah's turn to go into the temple and burn incense; because the Levitical priesthood had grown so large, this was likely the one and only time in Zechariah's life in which he would have this honor. In the midst of his ministry, the angel Gabriel appears to Zechariah and announces to him that he and Elizabeth were soon to become parents; that Elizabeth would give birth to the forerunner of Messiah. Zechariah, however, couldn't accept it as we see in verse 20:

And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."

The key phrase is *because you did not believe my words*. We might describe Zechariah as an example of "trust fail." However, during those long silent days, Zechariah learned to trust God. Against all hope, Elizabeth indeed became pregnant and that's where we pick up the story in verse 57:

⁵⁷ When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son.⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

⁵⁹ On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah,⁶⁰ but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John."

⁶¹ They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name."

⁶² Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child.⁶³ He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John."

⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God.

Despite his earlier failure to trust God, Zechariah came around to the point that once he affirmed God's will—demonstrating his new-found trust in God—he regained his voice.

⁶⁵ All the neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things.

Have you had a time in your life when you failed to trust in God and felt as though you lost something because of your trust-fail? Look at the example of Zechariah and know that God gives us seasons of growth when we can learn to trust in him more. God gives us second chances in which to trust him—even if we've been serving God well into our senior years. Zechariah was old, but God wasn't finished with him yet.

But Zechariah wasn't the only one who had to trust in God. His wife Elizabeth was an elderly woman who had never borne a child. When an angel announced that she would bear

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the forerunner of Messiah, Elizabeth had to trust God to enable her to do something she had never done before. Would her body survive the rigors of pregnancy? Would she live long enough to raise her son and instill faith in him?

I don't know if Elizabeth raised those questions or not; but I do know that her words as recorded in Luke 1:25 reveal a deep level of trust in God and praise for his work in her life:

²⁵ "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

Is God asking you to do something you've never done before? Look at the example of Elizabeth and don't be afraid to put your trust in God. Like her husband, Elizabeth was old, but God wasn't finished with her yet.

The third individual most often associated with Advent is Mary. In Luke chapter 1 an angel appears to her and tells her that despite the fact she was a virgin, she was going to conceive and give birth to a Son.

This meant Mary would likely be ostracized by her neighbors, her friends and her family. And what would she say to her fiancé Joseph? Who would ever believe her? Although Mary knew that she would become the subject of speculation and innuendo, she responded by saying, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said."

That's trust!

Mary was young; most Bible scholars believe she was about age fourteen. But she wasn't too young to be used of God. Perhaps you're been thinking about how you can step out for God in what would be a unique way for you. But you're afraid of what friends and family might say about you; you're afraid that it might cost you some friends. Let's face it: peer pressure is a big deal when you're fourteen. Look at the example of Mary and be willing to say, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as God has promised."

Finally, there's Joseph. As you can imagine, Joseph thought the worst of Mary when he learned of her pregnancy. Then in a dream an angel explained that the child within her was the result of the miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 1:24 tells us that—

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Joseph trusted the dream and took Mary in.

Perhaps God has given you a dream. If so, look at the example of Joseph and trust the dream God has given you. No matter what may come your way: trust in God.

Louisa Stead was born in Dover, England in 1850. When she was nine years old she became a Christian and when she was in her early twenties she immigrated to the United States. Soon thereafter Louisa attended a Methodist revival meeting in Urbana, Ohio where she felt the Lord calling her into the ministry. In those days, women had very limited opportunities for full time service to the Lord, so Louisa decided she would become a missionary. She made plans to go to China, but her hopes were dashed because of health concerns.

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Louisa stayed stateside and married a man whom we only know as Mr. Stead. What we do know about him is that in about 1880, Louisa's husband drowned off the coast of Long Island. Some accounts say that he saved a boy who was drowning; other accounts say that both Mr. Stead and the boy drowned. Still other records suggest it was his own four-year-old daughter Lily that he saved. In any event, the family's beachside picnic ended in tragedy.

Shortly thereafter, Louisa went to South Africa as a missionary, accompanied by her daughter Lily. It was there in her sorrow that she composed the hymn, "'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus."¹ In that hymn Louisa turned the circumstances surrounding her husband's death into a statement of faith by penning these words:

O how sweet to trust in Jesus,
just to trust his cleansing blood;
and in simple faith to plunge me
'neath the healing, cleansing flood!

Despite her grief, Louisa Stead put her trust in Christ, answered the call to missionary service and went by faith all the way to South Africa.

Is your trust in Jesus? Are you taking him at his word? Are you resting upon his promise, simply taking life and rest and joy and peace?

Advent is a time for us to affirm with the Louisa Stead, "Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him! How I've proved him o'er and o'er! Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus! O for grace to trust him more!" (UMH No. 462).

¹ Louisa served in South Africa for 15 years and while there she married Robert Wodehouse. When Louisa's health forced her return to America, Robert pastored a local Methodist Church. By 1901, Louisa's health was restored and the couple went to Rhodesia as Methodist missionaries. Louisa retired in 1911 and passed away in 1917, but her daughter Lily married missionary D.A. Carson and continued the work for many years at the Methodist mission station in southern Rhodesia (modern Zimbabwe). Information is from *Then Sings My Soul* by Robert Morgan, Nelson, 2003, pg. 211.