

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus Luke 2:25-35

Christmas is a time when we feel *our* wishes should come true.

Children make their wish list known to Santa and hope that they get what they had wished for.

We watch movies like *Love Actually* built on the premise that on Christmas you should get what you really want.

We listen to Mariah Carey belting out 'All I want for Christmas is you...' and wonder what it would be like to be with the one who we long for...

Or we spend time with our loved ones enjoying the blessing of that relationships we've been given.

But Santa isn't real.

And God isn't Santa - there to give us things like Ferrari or a girl of our dream.

But *God* is real.

And we celebrate our wishes coming true on Christmas because on some level, our deepest longings and wishes *have* come true through the coming of Jesus Christ.

In this Advent, we've been going through the 'Songs of Christmas', finding the stories and deeper meaning in our favorite carols.

Today, we're going to go through *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus*.

We find that the song captures the biblical **message so well.**

There is a longing that Christ came to fulfill.

And Christmas is for those who long for a better self, a better world...

Christmas is for the whole world.

And Christmas is an invitation to which we must respond!

1. Christmas Is for the Longing

Charles Wesley penned the lyrics of this popular **Advent song** 'Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus' in 1744 and published it in his collection 'Hymns for the Nativity of Our Lord.'

Just a year earlier, Wesley had been ordained as a pastor in the Anglican Church and was preaching the gospel tirelessly alongside of his brother John Wesley.

Around the country he had seen the firsthand need of the poor and the marginalized, and the dire spiritual needs the people in Great Britain.

In response, he penned this hymn to prepare the hearts of the people for Jesus' coming at Christmas.

And this carol is a petition!

"Come, Thou long expected Jesus; Born to set Thy people free; From our fears and sins release us; Let us find our rest in Thee."

He longs for Christ to come!

Come!

Set your people free from our fears and sins!
Let us find our rest in you!

In many ways this longing isn't too different from the longing of Simeon, whose story we just read.

We were told that he was 'waiting for the consolation of Israel' in v.25.

That word 'consolation' comes from the same word translated as 'comfort' in [Isaiah 40](#).

"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

You see, all the judgment Isaiah had prophesied had come true.

The Kingdom of Israel and Judah were destroyed and the temple with it.

They were exiled and forcibly removed from their homes to Babylon and elsewhere.

And while some of the prophecies of the restoration had come true, but still they fell woefully short of what they expected.

They were still under the Roman occupation and were longing for their salvation!

But when this godly man saw the baby Jesus, [he cried out:](#)

“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation...” (v.29-31).

You see, he’s been waiting and waiting for the salvation of Israel for all his life.

And now that he’s seen this baby, he says he is at peace.

He can die in peace!

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God!
Your Messiah has come!

Friends, Christmas is for those who are aching,
battling... and longing...

Maybe it’s chronic illness.

Maybe it’s relationship issues...

Maybe it’s your fight with some sort of sin – anger,
lust, pornography, insecurity...

Maybe it’s sense of worthlessness that you can’t
shed.

This past week a surveyed reported that about half of
young people between 12 to 24 saw themselves as
failures.

Maybe you’re anxious about the climate change,
politics... the future in general.

Friends, Simeon says he can die in peace now!

You see, it’s not that everything is okay now.

But Simeon saw that we live in a world that has a
savior.

Christmas shows us that – God became a human being! He came to redeem us. He came to redeem the world!

In the midst of all the darkness... all the longing, we can have peace.

Things will be okay.

He is here!

He can die in peace.

Actually, this means we can live in peace too.

2. Jesus Is for the World

What might have surprised Simeon, though, is that this baby, the comfort of Israel, which he calls in verse 32 the glory of your people Israel, **was also salvation prepared** in the sight of all nations, and a light of revelation to the Gentiles!

The Jew/Gentile divide was very real, and Jesus was very Jewish!

Angels told Mary and Joseph to name this baby a very Jewish name, *Yeshua*.

Mary, Joseph and Jesus are at the center of the Jewish religious life – the temple, offering a pair of doves as was written in Leviticus 12:8 for purification.

Jesus is being dedicated and circumcised here.

But the claim is that this *Jewish* Messiah is not just a savior of Israel, but the whole world!

“A light of revelation to the nations!”

Simeon is quoting an older prophecy, for example in Isaiah 49:6b:

“...I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

And this is what we sing in ‘Come Thou Long Expected Jesus’ in the second half of the first verse: “Israel’s strength and consolation and hope of all the earth.”

Wesley goes on further: ‘The desire of every nation and joy of every longing heart.

People back then said, how can this Jewish person be for a Gentile like me?

We still do that now!

How can Christianity be for me? I’m Chinese? I’m Indonesian? I’m a Malay!

It is an outrageous claim.

But friends, this is the claim of Jesus.

He would go on to say things like... **I am the light of the world!**

I am the way, the truth, and the life!

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father – God himself!

And the restlessness you feel in the world... is restlessness for me.

Longing for the better world that you feel is directed towards me.

And countless people who have met Jesus, including myself, say that Jesus is their savior, one who meets the deepest longings of love, security, relationships, and meaning.

Those who have met this person of Jesus say that he is central to their being and purpose for their lives.

Friends, maybe you are considering Jesus for the first time.

The story of the Bible isn't just story of Israel.

It is your story. I hope you'll pick it up and start reading it. I hope you'll come back to hear more about it.

And the one who was prophesied in that story – the Old Testament – Jesus is your savior too.

I hope you'll see that in due time, even today!

3. Christmas Is an Invitation

But you need to receive him.

It's partly true that Christmas is beloved by everyone, because a baby is the least threatening form of a human being. Who doesn't love a baby?

But as Simeon held this baby in his arms, he realizes that that he will cause divisions.

He prophesied to Mary and told her, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the

thought of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

You see, this baby will grow up.

And he will make claims that are hard for people to swallow.

Israel will be divided over Jesus.

Some will dismiss him and reject him.

Some will want to kill him.

Some will succeed in doing precisely that.

That last line - “A sword will pierce your own soul too” - must be a reference to the nails that pierced Jesus’ hands and feet.

As the mother who watches her own sons suffering like this, wouldn’t it have pierced her soul?

But why would Jesus be killed in this way?

Actually, I think Charles Wesley answers this in verse 4 of our song.

Look at the reason why he was born!

“Born Thy people to deliver, born a child, and yet a King, Born to reign in us for ever, Now Thy gracious Kingdom Bring.”

He’s born to deliver his people, but many just don’t think they need delivering!

If you say to people who think they’re pretty good, “Your sins are forgiven”, they will take that as an insult! (Is that you today?)

Not only that, he’s born to be King, to bring his kingdom!

Many don’t want that!

We see that in the nativity story of King Herod.

When the *Magi* from the East visits him, he asks where the Messiah was to be born and kills all the boys in that town. Why? Well, because he's the King! He doesn't want to bow the knee to someone else!

Is that you today?

I don't mean that you're murderous, but you haven't explored Christianity much or have dismissed it out of hand, because in your gut you know if you did, then you can't live the way that *you* want to live anymore.

That you will have to answer to Jesus Christ, your king?

Friends, Jesus came to stake out claim over this world in Christmas.

He says this whole world is *his*.

He says that you and I is *his*.

But the thing is, he will not force himself upon us.

God has created us to love us, and to be in loving relationship with us, which means giving us the choice to respond to his love. To follow him or to reject him.

Charles Wesley asked Christ to come and rule over him.

That's what he's asking us to do as we sing this song:
"Born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom
Bring. By thine own eternal spirit, rule in all our hearts
alone."

Why would anyone do this voluntarily?
Well, only if we think we need a savior.

And only if we know what kind of a savior we have.
Friends, this king's love **knew no bounds**.
He came to be the atoning sacrifice for us!

And look how this song ends: "By Thine all-sufficient merit raise us to Thy glorious throne."

In the first verse, Wesley talked about how God came down to be with us. To save us.

In the last verse, he talks of us being raised up to God's glorious throne.

How is this done?
Not because of anything we have done.
But by his all-sufficient merit.

There will come a world without suffering, sin, death...

There will be perfect peace.

Perfect relationships.

Perfect beauty.

Perfect love.

And we'll get to be there, not because of what we've done.

But because of the works of this baby.

So, come, thou long expected Jesus...!
Come and rule our hearts today.