

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas  
December 3, 2017

The Forerunner

Luke 1:8-17

1:8 Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty,

1:9 according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

1:10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense.

1:11 And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

1:12 And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him.

1:13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

1:14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth,

1:15 for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

1:16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God,

1:17 and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

Most churches have the Church Calendar, which is the calendar of worship schedule throughout a year. The Church Calendar is based on

a verse of the Bible. It is 2 Timothy 2:8, and it says, “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David.” The Church Calendar is created to remind us of the life of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Church Calendar begins with Advent, and continues to Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. We worship the Trinity, which was shown by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, on Sundays after Pentecost. And the Church Calendar ends with the Christ the King Sunday.

When you look at the seasons of the Church Calendar, you’ll notice one thing. Any seasons of the Church Calendar has the same theme; “to wait in hope.” “Advent” has a meaning of “Arriving”, and we are waiting for the arrival of Jesus Christ. The people of the Old Testament had been waiting for the arrival of Jesus Christ for long, and we also follow the footsteps of them. Epiphany is waiting for the fulfillment of Christ’s atonement. Lent is waiting for Christ’s Resurrection. Easter is waiting for the Holy Spirit being sent by Christ. “Sundays after Trinity” until “Christ the King Sunday” is the season waiting for the Second Coming of Christ.

The Church Calendar tells us “to wait in hope”. We worship God, waiting for Jesus Christ, and walk in faith. It can be said that the life by faith is the life of waiting for God. However, what is “to wait in hope?” What should we do? Let’s learn together.

## **1. By the Word**

Firstly, to wait for God is that we have a firm hope based on the promise of God. “To wait for” is not a unrealistic expectation or empty dream without reasons. The first of four Advent candles is “Candle of Hope”, and it is also called “Candle of Prophecy”.

Because “hope” is rooted in “prophecy”; the word of God. 2 Peter 1:19 says, “And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” We do not wait for God without reasons. We can wait for the arrival of God’s salvation because God promised “I come and save you”.

There is no person who do not experience the disappointment or despair in their life. This world is full of things that make us disappointed. However, the believers do not feel disappointed because they know the promise of God.

The Bible consists of “the Old Testament” and “the New Testament.” “Testament” means “covenant” or “promise.” The whole Bible is God’s promise for us, and it also has a lot of individual promises. For example;

Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. (Genesis 28:15)

Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me. (Psalm 50:15)

If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, “Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:37-38)

For those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. (James 1:5)

How many God’s promises do you know? Do you accept them as

your own? Do you believe and act it? I am sure you have experienced uncomfortable feeling from unfaithful words and actions of unfaithful people. You may be ignored, alienated, insulted by cold eye-sight or heartless words. In such case you might go to your family or close friends and share your feeling. When they understand and accept your feeling, you may feel better. However, only God's Word can heal your heart and body. We can overcome the disappointment or despair by the Word of God. Because the hope based on His Word does not put us to shame.

## **2. With Patience**

Secondly, "to wait in hope" is "to practice patience." God promised the Savior who would be born as "the offspring of woman," saying, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel," (Genesis 3:15) when Adam and Eve committed sin. How many years had passed from Adam and Eve to Christ? But the believers had been trusting on the words of prophecy and practicing patience in such a long years, and finally they saw the fulfillment of God's promise.

In the Bible, "hope" and "patience" are always combined. Romans 8:25 says, "But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." And, Romans 15:4 says, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." We also can find the words, "steadfastness of hope" in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 The Bible teaches us that the true hope produces

patience, and is supported by patience, then will find the fulfillment after patience.

There are three phases in the triple jump; hop, step, and jump. The word, “hope” came from “hop.” The players of the triple jump reserve the jumping power through the phases of hop and step. Then, they can jump far. “To wait in hope” is “to store God’s power in us.” The players of the short-distance race enter the start line when they hear the voice of “Ready.” Next, they bow to the ground at the voice of “Set.” Then they start at the voice of “Go” or the sound of the starter pistol. Therefore, we can illustrate patience by the bowing posture that they storing the power of dash.

We don’t become patient willingly, but are forced to be patient, in most cases. We reluctantly endure due to the happenings and situations around us. We struggle and think, “Why things don’t go well?” “Why did this trouble happen?” when we face difficulties. We also fear that other people may see our miserable situation and look down or blame us. But the believers who wait the salvation in hope, repent, become humble, and practice patience in such situation. Being patience does not mean being despaired. Those who wait in patience will be given the power that make them stand up and walk forward. Like as Isaiah 40:31 says, “But they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

The people of Israel lost their kings, country, and temple. They have been ruled by the strong empires of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Rome. However, they never gave up, and wait for the arrival of the Savior. They saw the arrival of the Savior at last after the long

year endurance. We have been had problems for many years, and wait the time that God will show us His salvation from the problems. We also wait the day the people, will return God though they are rejecting God now; the day God will give spiritual awakens to the churches in US and in the world. Wait for God in patience. Practice the patience and see the salvation of the people, and the revival of the church.

### **3. In Preparation**

Thirdly, “to wait in hope” is “to prepare for” God’s salvation. “To wait in hope” does not mean to wait for the time to go by. What would you do if you are to welcome your important guests to your home? I think you would tidy up the room, clean the carpet, and cook meal and wait for the guests. Likewise, those who long for the salvation by Christ and wish for the problems to be solved, would remove any obstacles preventing you from receiving God’s salvation or preventing God from solving the problems, and prepare for receiving God’s salvation.

Before humans prepare for God’s salvation, God has prepared for the arrival of Savior and handed the mission to John the Baptist. John the Baptist became a pioneer for Savior and prepared for people to accept Him. Every Gospel book described the mission of John the Baptist in the wilderness before describing the public life of Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Luke describes the birth of John the Baptist, which took place thirty years before the mission in the wilderness. It also describes the prophecy for John before he was born. Luke 1:16-17 says, “And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to

the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.” According to this prophecy, John the Baptist became a pioneer for the arrival of Christ and paved the road for Him.

In fact, the same mission given to John the Baptist has been given to each Christian in present day. Jesus Christ who came to this world as the Savior and returned to Heaven will come again to this world as the King. God made John the Baptist pave the road for the first arrival, but He will make Christians prepare for Jesus for His Second Coming.

1 Thessalonians 1:8-10 says, “For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

Here it describes that early Christians not only spoke about the cross of Jesus Christ and resurrection but also spoke powerfully about His Second Coming. Furthermore, Christian testimonies were also spread by those who heard them. Their testimony was so powerful that none-Christians talked the Christian testimonies instead of Christians. Christians did not just use the words but showed their hope of the Second Coming of Christ when they shared their testimonies. We want to follow their examples.

Advent is the time when we remember the first arrival of Christ as well as long for the Second Coming of Christ. During Advent, we want to prepare ourselves to welcome the second coming of Christ in

hope, not in fear. We want to testify for the salvation of Christ and pave the road for the Second Coming of Christ.

In 2 Peter 2:12, there is a word “the day of visitation”. I would think that this is the day when Christ invite people into faith with special grace. We pray for salvation of our family, friends, and relatives and we hope that Christ will visit these people with blessings before He descent again. We want to spread the gospel and testify for Christ on a daily basis so that people can accept Christ on “the day of visitation”. We also want to fulfill our mission to be the forerunner of Christ Who’s coming again.

**(Prayer)**

Dear God the Father, you sent John the Baptist as the forerunner of our Savior and John fulfilled his mission. Please make us realize that we are also given the same mission as the forerunner of Christ’s Second Coming. Help us fulfill the mission through our faith and life waiting for you in hope. In the name of Lord Jesus, we pray, Amen.