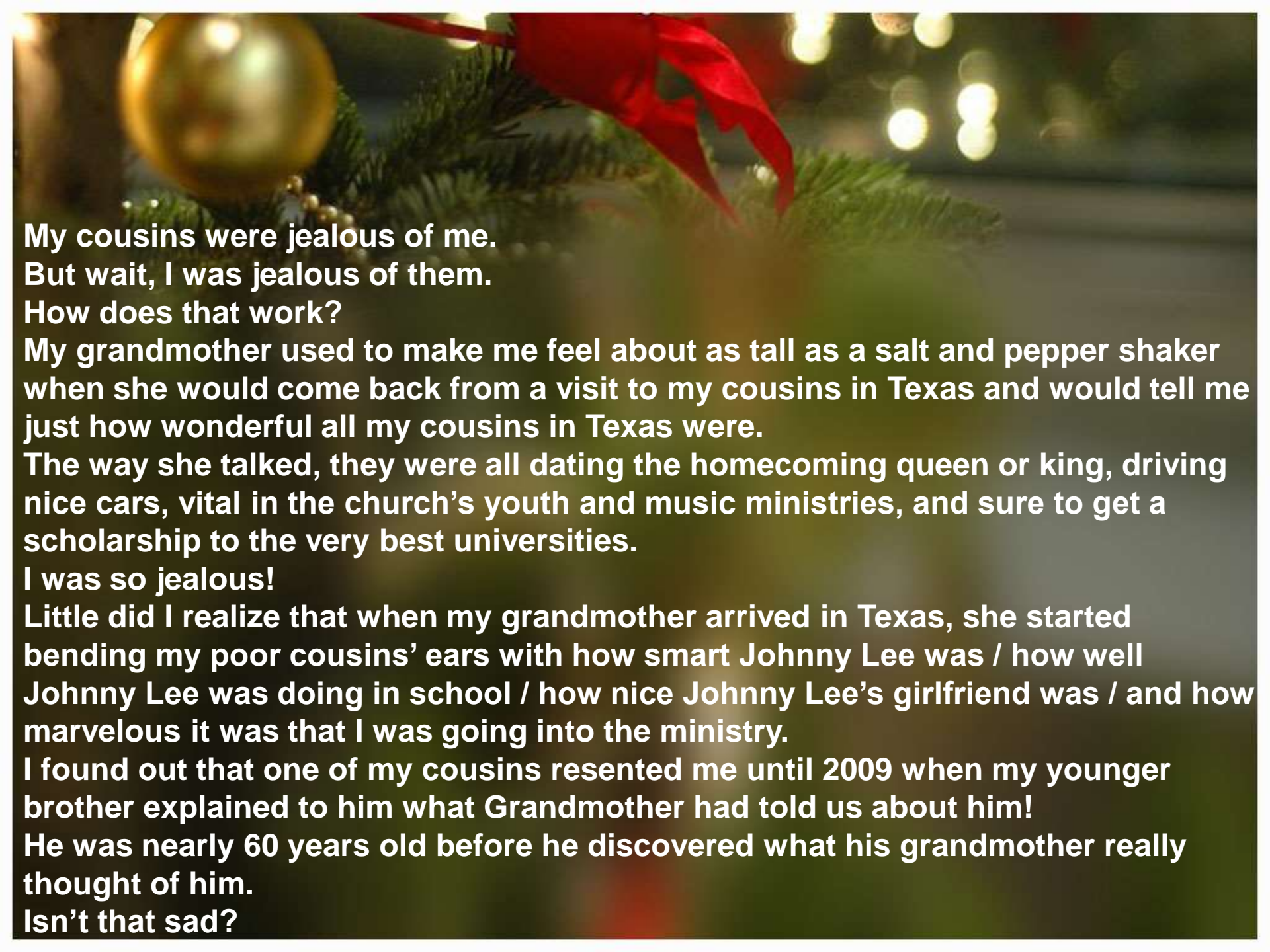




Horn of Plenty

Luke 1:67-69



**My cousins were jealous of me.
But wait, I was jealous of them.
How does that work?**

My grandmother used to make me feel about as tall as a salt and pepper shaker when she would come back from a visit to my cousins in Texas and would tell me just how wonderful all my cousins in Texas were.

The way she talked, they were all dating the homecoming queen or king, driving nice cars, vital in the church's youth and music ministries, and sure to get a scholarship to the very best universities.

I was so jealous!

Little did I realize that when my grandmother arrived in Texas, she started bending my poor cousins' ears with how smart Johnny Lee was / how well Johnny Lee was doing in school / how nice Johnny Lee's girlfriend was / and how marvelous it was that I was going into the ministry.

I found out that one of my cousins resented me until 2009 when my younger brother explained to him what Grandmother had told us about him!

He was nearly 60 years old before he discovered what his grandmother really thought of him.

Isn't that sad?

John's Famous "Cousin"

著名表弟



Imagine though, if you'd been John the Baptizer. Not only would you have had to hear about your mother's prophecy to your Aunt Mary in Luke 1:42-43, but you'd have to hear about how wonderfully your 12-year-old cousin Jesus debated with the priests and elders in the temple. And even worse, your own father made a prophecy about you and spent more time during that prophecy about your cousin Jesus than it was about you. How would you feel?



Apparently, John didn't feel like Johnny would have. / Johnny would have felt cheated; / Johnny would have felt frustrated.

John fulfilled his father's prophecy and became God's advance man. John said that he wasn't worthy of fastening Jesus' sandals before Jesus convinced John to baptize Him.


How could John do such a thing?

I believe it is because John was focused on God instead of himself.

And I believe that when we focus on God instead of on ourselves, we find hope for every aspect of our lives.

We don't have to worry about who we are or what people think about us. We are at peace with God.

Today, in honor of the Advent Sunday where we celebrate HOPE, let's look at the first portion of this prophecy.



Let's read the text, first in Chinese and then, my English translation from the Greek.

Luke 1:67-69

67) So, Zechariah, his (John's) father was filled up with the Holy Spirit and he prophesied saying:

68) Speak well of the LORD God of Israel, BECAUSE He has visited us [to assist us] and He has accomplished a ransom for His people

69) And He has raised up a horn of salvation for us within the House of David.

Zechariah's Prophecy 预言应验

Now, verse 67 helps me answer one question.
How could any father talk more about someone else's son that of their own?

Of course, I already mentioned that Zechariah talked more about Jesus than about John in his prophecy, but now we know he was filled up with the Holy Spirit.

Zechariah isn't speaking from a father's perspective; he's speaking from God's perspective. And notice that when prophecy speaks of God's action, it is often spoken of as though it has already happened, even though it's in the future.

And prophecy isn't for people who are curious about the future; prophecy is a call to action. What does John's father, Zechariah want his hearers to do?

Speak well, speak boldly, praise God **BECAUSE** God is at work!

Whenever you see **BECAUSE** in the Bible, it usually points to a major idea in the passage.



GOD'S PROMISE TO ZACHARIAS

- Holy Spirit = God's Perspective (v. 67)
- Prophecy often past tense because when God speaks it is as good as done!
- Speak well, Praise, or Extol is a call to recognize that God is at work (v. 68)

He Has Come To Visit (v. 68)

And how is God at work?
God has come to visit His people for the purpose of helping. In the old days, doctors made house calls to help folks get well. In fact, that's very appropriate because the verb translated as "visited us" in my translation is translated as "taken note of" in Joseph Fitzmeyer's Anchor Bible translation.

The root can also mean "to examine" or "to take note of." As well as making a "house call," it might also mean that God has given His people a medical examination and discovered what they need.



医生拜访

He Has Come To Visit (v. 68)



Even today, we ask plumbers and roofers to come to our houses and fix what we can't.

Zechariah tells us that God is coming because God's people need help.

水管工

Pay the Ransom 贖金

What help do God's people need?
They need to be bought back from the slavery they are in.

Today, we usually only think of ransom in terms of kidnapping. You buy someone back out of captivity.



In the ancient world, you could buy people out of slavery. Most people who would have heard

Zechariah's prophecy would likely have thought they were slaves to the Romans while God knew they were slaves to the tyranny of SIN.

The price? It is the body and blood of Jesus that we remembered this morning in the Lord's Supper.

- Pay a price to get something or someone back
- God sent His Eternal Son, Jesus, as ransom for those captive to SIN

动物角 “Horn” of Salvation

So, the purpose of God’s visit is to raise up a “horn” of salvation for God’s people.

There are some echoes here from the Old Testament.

In I Samuel 2:1, Samuel’s mother claims that her “horn” has been raised high after she gave Samuel into God’s service at the tabernacle. In verse 10 of the same chapter and as part of the same prayer, she speaks of God’s king as being Israel’s horn.

Of course, that’s an interesting idea since Israel doesn’t actually have a king until her son grows up and anoints one.

- I Samuel 2:1 – Samuel’s mother says her “horn” has been raised when she offers Samuel for God’s service
- I Samuel 2:10 – God’s king is Israel’s “horn”

动物角 “Horn” of Salvation

In Psalm 18:2 (English), the psalmist claims God as his shield and horn of his salvation. In Psalm 89:17, God honors the “horn” of the people when they obey God. In Psalm 132:17, there is a Davidic promise of a “horn” for David (ie. the king in David’s dynasty) and a light for the “anointed one.” The word used for “anointed one” we would know today as Messiah. So, the term has Messianic overtones.

- Psalm 18:2 -- God is a shield & “horn of salvation”
- Psalm 132:17 – God promises a “horn” for David & light for the “anointed one”

动物角 “Horn” of Salvation

Why would the Messiah be associated with an animal horn? In the ancient world, people considered horns to be symbolic of an animal's strength.

At least in some cases, we practice some of the same ideas, today.

Want to know how successful a deer hunt was? The hunter is likely to tell you how many points were on that buck's antlers.

Even as late as the Greeks and Romans, you would see horns on the statues of their gods—even Zeus, as pictured here.

Of course, horns are only symbols of the animal's power. So, when the kings of Israel and Judah were called God's "horns," they were horns driven by God's power.

Show me a pair of fighting bull horns from Mexico and I'll be curious, but not afraid. Show me that fighting mad bull with no fence between us and I'll show plenty of fear.

So, the reference to the "horn" hints of a Messianic prophecy.

Is there anything else significant in Zechariah's oracle?



House of David, His Servant 仆人

Well, he does refer to the House of David, His servant!

Mentioning David is not only consistent with the expected Messiah, but it reminds those who heard Zechariah's prophecy that God is consistent, God keeps His promises.

And even though you and I may not believe that this picture I took in Bethlehem is definitely where the manger was supposed to have rested, we are reminded at the time of the year how Jesus was of the house and lineage of David. And what does it mean that David was God's servant?

Well, David is called God's servant in the title of Psalm 18, the very psalm we saw earlier that described God as shield and "horn of salvation." David and David's progeny are instruments through which God fulfilled His promise.

So, let's take these simple verses from Zechariah's prophetic utterance after John's circumcision and see what they might mean to us as we approach this Christmas season.



House of David means that God fulfills His promises / God is consistent.

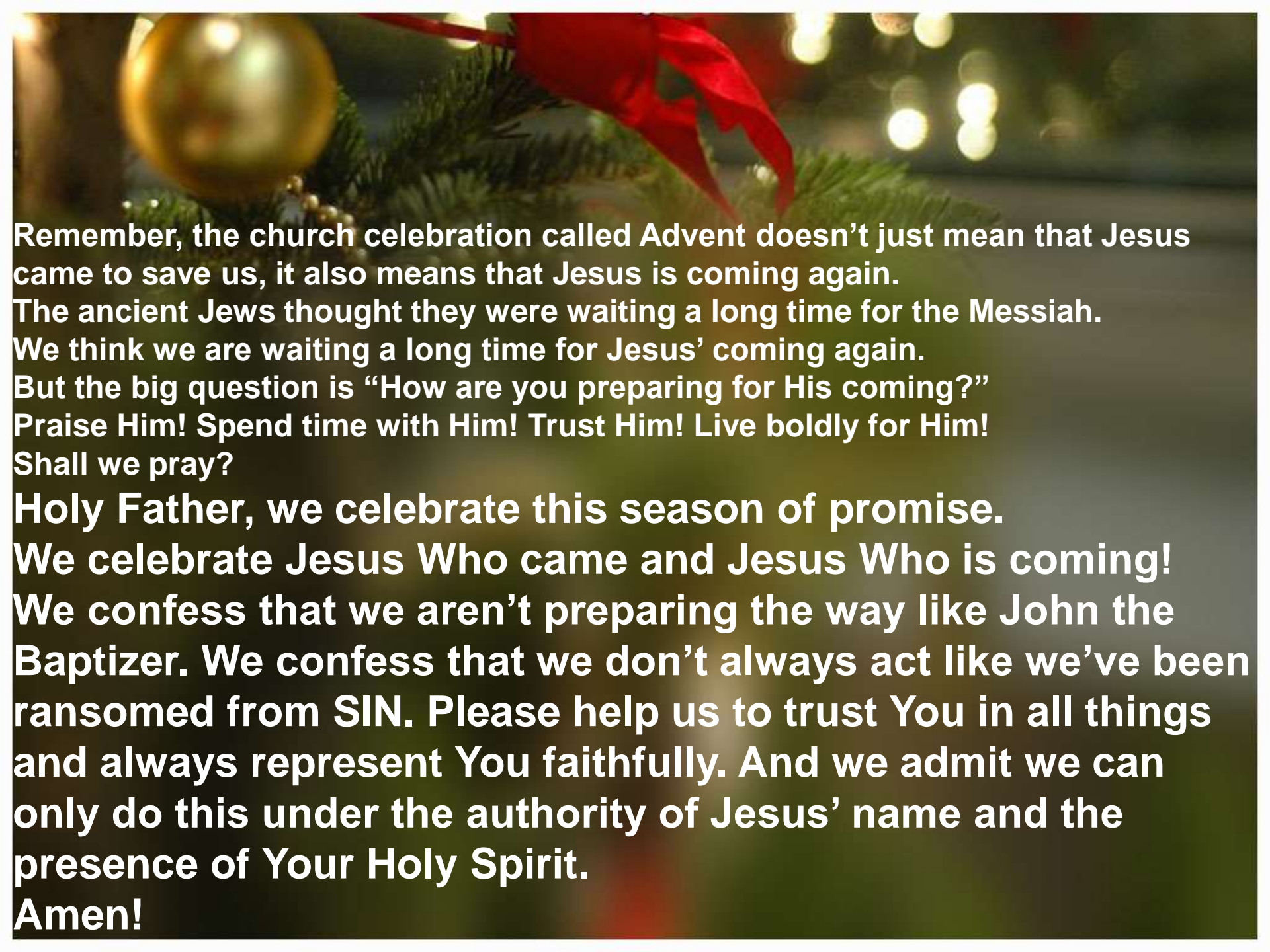
How Do We Respond?

1. Make a special effort to praise God all the time

2. Remember that God doesn't just visit us and examine us every so often. Through the Holy Spirit, we have access to God all the time and everywhere.

3. Remember that God is strong enough to rescue us from anything, but especially from our SIN (sins)

4. Count on God to fulfill His promises—even if it seems to be taking forever from our perspective.



Remember, the church celebration called Advent doesn't just mean that Jesus came to save us, it also means that Jesus is coming again.

The ancient Jews thought they were waiting a long time for the Messiah.

We think we are waiting a long time for Jesus' coming again.

But the big question is "How are you preparing for His coming?"

Praise Him! Spend time with Him! Trust Him! Live boldly for Him!

Shall we pray?

Holy Father, we celebrate this season of promise.

We celebrate Jesus Who came and Jesus Who is coming!

We confess that we aren't preparing the way like John the Baptizer. We confess that we don't always act like we've been ransomed from SIN. Please help us to trust You in all things and always represent You faithfully. And we admit we can only do this under the authority of Jesus' name and the presence of Your Holy Spirit.

Amen!