

Theme: The key to sustaining faith and resisting doubt, discouragement, & disobedience is to regularly remember and recount God's Story of Promise.

I. Intro - Runs of Unknown Length

- A. Trick we used in Marine Corps - change length of runs
- B. Might make it look like almost over and then keep going
- C. Tested if they would continue to push or give up
- D. What happens when the fulfillment of God's promises seems to be delayed? How do we respond?

II. The Advent Promise

- A. God promised a Seed to redeem, rescue and restore
And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. Genesis 3:15
 - 1. This gracious promise came in the wake of our treason and treachery
 - 2. Satan would not win but would be crushed!
 - 3. It appears Eve thought Cain might be the fulfillment - but he clearly was not!
 - 4. The promise would be fulfilled but not on our timing!
- B. The Promised Seed would come through Abraham
I will make you into a great nation and I will **ble**ss you; I will make your name great, and you will be a **ble**ssing.
³I will **ble**ss those who **ble**ss you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be **ble**ssed through you."... ⁷ The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your **offspring** I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.
Genesis 12:2-3, 7

- 1. God has promised to bless Abram and give him offspring
- 2. But this promise was unfulfilled for many years!
- 3. But eventually God gave Abraham Isaac - and promised the blessing would go through him
I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, ¹⁸ and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me. Genesis 22:17-18
 - a. A restatement of God's covenant with Abraham
 - b. The blessing will now be given to and through Isaac and future offspring
 - c. But the idea of a single Seed is still there - this Seed will come through Abraham and Isaac
- C. The Promised Seed will come through Jacob????!!!
There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. ¹⁵ I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Genesis 28:13-15
 - 1. Jacob had longed to be heir to the covenant promise - and he deceived Esau and Isaac to get it

2. Then he had to flee for his life - and the promise seemed to be going nowhere
3. But God renewed the Abrahamic covenant - with the deceiving schemer Jacob!
4. Amazingly the Promise had not been forgotten and was still on track
5. With Jacob, the number of offspring starts to grow - but then family rivalry and a famine send the family to Egypt - away from the land of promise
6. Would the promise of the Seed really come to pass? Or had the sands of time cause God to forget?

III. The Advent Promise Delayed

A. The promise is delayed in time

1. Exodus is 400 years after Abrahamic covenant!
2. This was a definite delay in the promise!
3. But God continued to bless and multiply His people
Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, ⁷ but the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them.
Exodus 1:6–7
 - a. Even though the ultimate fulfillment had not come, God was blessing His people and giving them a taste of the full blessing to come
 - b. Often, the fulfillment to God's promises seem to be delayed, but He gives us blessings to sustain us on the journey

B. The promise is delayed by opposition

So they put slave masters over them to **oppress** them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. ¹² But the more they were **oppressed**, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites ¹³ and worked them **ruthlessly**. ¹⁴ They made their lives **bitter** with **hard labor** in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their **hard labor** the Egyptians used them **ruthlessly**. Exodus 1:11–14

1. God had noted there would be struggle in fulfilling the Advent Promise - and there was!
2. The Egyptians **oppressed** them to make life **bitter with ruthless hard labor**
 - a. It had been 400 years - and the situation seemed to be getting worse! How would God's promise be fulfilled?
 - b. Would Israel cling to her the covenant promise and to her covenant identity, or would she trade it for temporal ease?
 - c. The delay in the fulfillment of God's Word of Promise often leads us to doubt and even despair - but God will be faithful!

C. The delay in the promise is meant for our good and God's glory

But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites Exodus 1:12

1. The time of oppression actually caused Israel to increase!
2. In fact, the growth in Israel was proportionate to the struggle they were experiencing

3. The oppression and difficulty only worsened as the time for fulfillment and deliverance drew near (see Exodus 5)
4. There is no growth without struggle and testing!
5. The time between the giving of God's Promise and its fulfillment is often attended by great difficulties to test our faith and shape our character
6. Like Jacob, those who have wrestled with God through times of delay, disappointment, difficulty and danger walk with a limp for the rest of their lives - but never forget God's Word of promise to them
7. This is why the Church has often prospered and grown the most in times of intense struggle and persecution
8. All of this also works to the glory of God - for He alone could bring the promise to fulfillment through the delay and opposition!

IV. Applying the Word

- A. How do I respond when God's Promises are delayed?
 1. The normal pattern with God's Promises is delay - not immediate fulfillment
 2. As we noted, there are very good reasons for this
 3. But delay can cause doubt and discouragement! Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage. Exodus 6:9
 - a. We can relate to this!!

- b. Discouragement - can't see promise due to circumstances & delay
 - c. Doubt - we no longer listen to the promise
 - d. If this is not checked it leads to disobedience
4. Has the delay led to discouragement in my life?
 5. Has the delay led to doubt in my life?
 6. Has the delay led to disobedience in my life?

B. The Table of Remembrance

1. The key to sustaining faith and resisting doubt, discouragement, and disobedience is to regularly remember and recount God's Story of Promise
2. This Table is a Table of Remembrance
 - a. Here we recount the fulfillment of God's Promise of redemption
 - b. Here we see God's past faithfulness - and stoke faith for future fulfillments
 - c. Here we look back to the work of the First Advent, and forward to the work of the Second Advent
3. Come, remember, and have faith strengthened and restored!

The Advent Promise Delayed

Exodus 1:11-14
 December 10, 2017
 Communion
 Romans 15:5-6

Teaching keywords: Advent and Christmas; covenant; suffering; testing and trial; faith

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:5–6

So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. ¹² But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites ¹³ and worked them ruthlessly. ¹⁴ They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly. Exodus 1:11–14