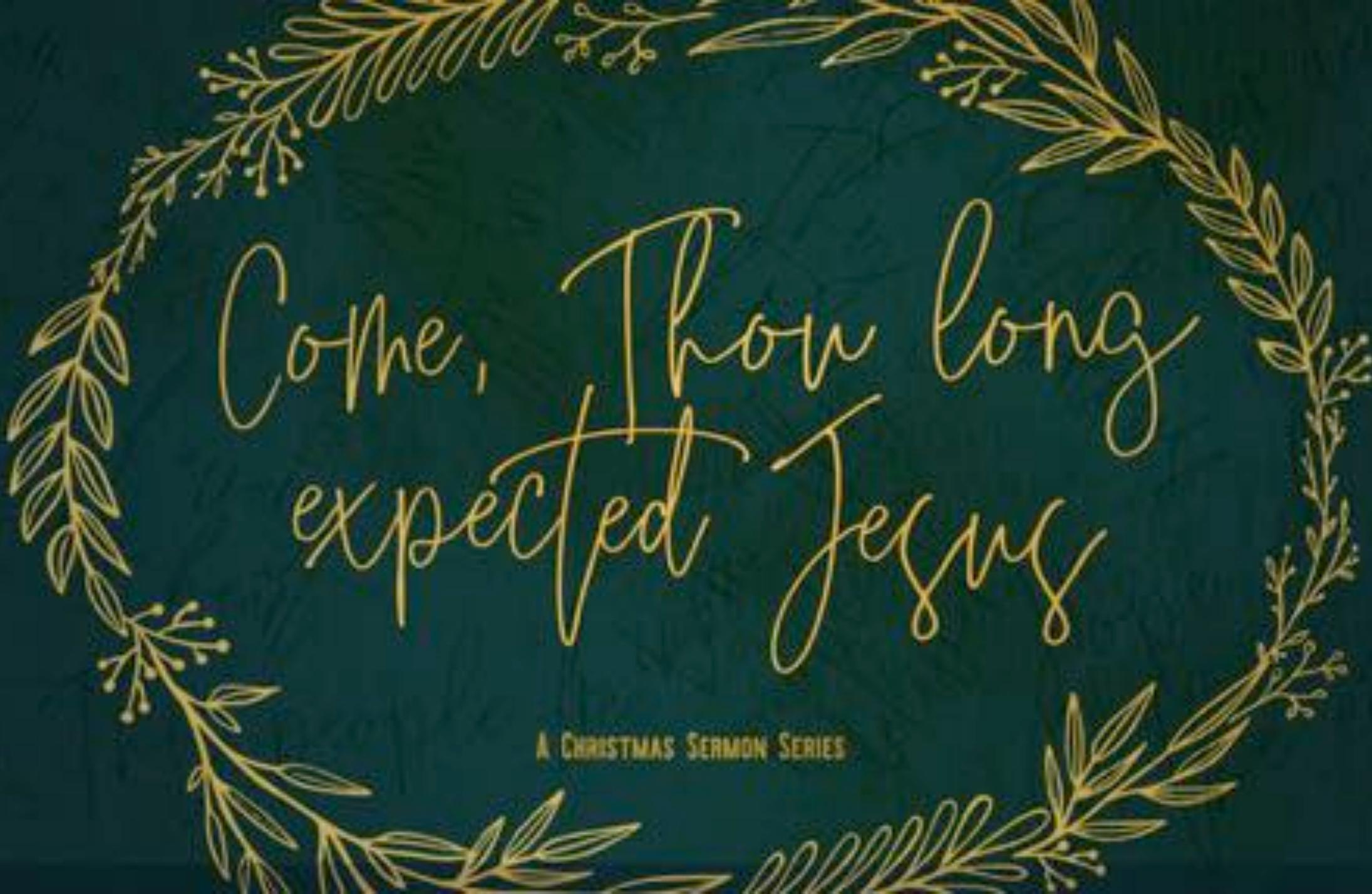


A Christmas Devotional

The Gospel Is Better

FALSE IDOLS AND
THEIR FALSE PROMISES

HOPE COMMUNITY CHURCH



Come, Thou long
expected Jesus

A CHRISTMAS SERMON SERIES

THE CRY OF THE SOUL OF

Nehemiah

The Old Testament in brief

Abraham

David

Exile



Ezra-
Nehemiah

Previously in the book of Nehemiah

This week's message:

Hearts turned away and toward the LORD

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Nehemiah 13:23-31

²³ Moreover, in those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. ²⁴ Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah. ²⁵ I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God's name and said: "You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves. ²⁶ Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women. ²⁷ Must we hear now that you too are doing all this terrible wickedness and are being unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women?"

Nehemiah 13:23-31

²⁸ One of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest was son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite. And I drove him away from me. ²⁹ Remember them, my God, because they defiled the priestly office and the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites. ³⁰ So I purified the priests and the Levites of everything foreign, and assigned them duties, each to his own task. ³¹ I also made provision for contributions of wood at designated times, and for the firstfruits. Remember me with favor, my God.

Nehemiah confronts the Israelites due to interracial marriage

Nehemiah 13:22-25

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What are we talking about?

Is this an ethno-centric message?

What are we talking about?

Is this an ethno-centric message?

This is a theocentric message!

“Don’t you remember our history?”

Nehemiah 13:26-27

²³ Moreover, in those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. ²⁴ Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah. ²⁵ I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God’s name and said: “You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves. ²⁶ Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women. ²⁷ Must we hear now that you too are doing all this terrible wickedness and are being unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women?”

What's the big deal with marrying a non-Israelite?

Solomon disobeys God's directive

1 Kings 11:1-3

¹ King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter – Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. ² They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. ³ He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray.

What's the big deal with marrying a non-Israelite?

God's Word proves true – Solomon's heart is turned away

1 Kings 11:4-8

⁴ As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. ⁵ He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. ⁶ So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done. ⁷ On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. ⁸ He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.

What are we talking about?

Is this an ethno-centric message?

This is a theocentric message!

Nehemiah confronts the priests

Nehemiah 13:23-31

²⁸ One of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest was son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite. And I drove him away from me. ²⁹ Remember them, my God, because they defiled the priestly office and the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites. ³⁰ So I purified the priests and the Levites of everything foreign, and assigned them duties, each to his own task. ³¹ I also made provision for contributions of wood at designated times, and for the firstfruits. Remember me with favor, my God.

THE CRY OF THE SOUL OF

Nehemiah

The God-centeredness of the Bible message

Exodus 20:3

³ “You shall have no other gods before me.”

The God-centeredness of the Bible message

Isaiah 42:8

⁸ “I am the LORD; that is my name!
I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols.”

The God-centeredness of the Bible message

Exodus 34:10-14

¹⁰ Then the LORD said: “I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world.

The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the LORD, will do for you. ¹¹ Obey what I command you today. I will drive out

before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ¹² Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land

where you are going, or they will be a snare among you. ¹³ Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and cut down their Asherah poles.

¹⁴ Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”

The God-centeredness of the Bible message

Deuteronomy 4:21–24

²¹ The LORD was angry with me because of you, and he solemnly swore that I would not cross the Jordan and enter the good land the LORD your God is giving you as your inheritance. ²² I will die in this land; I will not cross the Jordan; but you are about to cross over and take possession of that good land. ²³ Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the LORD your God has forbidden. ²⁴ For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

The God-centeredness of the Bible message

Not only are we not at the center, we stand opposed to God

Romans 3:9-12

⁹ What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. ¹⁰ As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

What are we talking about?

How do we fix this?

The God-centeredness of the Gospel

2 Corinthians 5:20–21

²⁰ We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

The God-centeredness of the Gospel

2 Corinthians 5:20–21

²⁰ We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us,
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The God-centeredness of the Gospel

In Christ Alone

In Christ alone, Who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save.
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied;
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid –
Here in the death of Christ I live.

Possible responses to the LORD

Remember and celebrate Jesus in his death through communion

Respond with giving and prayer

Worship the LORD through song