



[Author Note: I began the message with an illustration of something that many people are desperately hoping will happen during their lifetimes. You can use this illustration, or you can change one that may connect better with your demographic.]

“Just one before I die.” That’s a common saying for Lions fan like me. You can get t-shirts in Honolulu blue and silver with these words emblazoned on the chest. What is it we want? Let the Lions win just one Super Bowl before we die. Let the Lions even get to a Super Bowl before I die! The Lions have never been to or won a Super Bowl. The last time they won a championship was the year before Super Bowl I. That was well before I was even born!

It’s a joke, of course, but it sure would make a lot of us happy. Lions fans are longsuffering, with an emphasis on suffering. A certain part of us would feel complete if they ever had real success, because that would fill a void that’s been missing our entire lives. Just one before I die. The idea is my life would be complete, and I could die a happy man, if they could finally get it done.

There are things for which we are desperate. We feel incomplete without them. We have a sense of longing, an empty feeling inside of us, because we do not have something. We have the idea that if we could just have \_\_\_\_\_, our life would be complete. I don’t know what it is for you right now, but I can tell you this: it’s always moving. Once you get that one thing you are desperate for, it’ll be replaced with another thing you want to receive or see happen before you die. When I was younger, I just wanted to get married before I died. Then I wanted to be a dad before I died. Then I wanted my kids to get place their faith in Jesus and get saved before I died. Now I want grandkids and a Lions Super Bowl.

Some people will live their entire lives without ever seeing that one thing happen. It doesn’t matter if it’s a big thing or a trivial thing. Sometimes it just never happens. But does that demean the thing you hoped for your whole life? Does that make your hopes silly? I don’t think it does. I think it’s good to hope, even if it’s for something small. I think it’s good to look forward, to look for something, even to strive for something. Sometimes the

results are out of our hands. It may be in God's hands, and we have to be okay with that.

A lot of people lived and died looking forward to God's fulfilling a promise that they never saw fulfilled. God promised that He would rescue us from our sin, which separates us from God, all the way back at the very beginning.

### *Genesis 3:15 (ESV)*

*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."*

In Genesis 1 and 2, God created everything, and it was perfect. Adam and Eve were the first humans, and they were put in perfect paradise. There was a rule: they could not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Well, they ate from it, anyway. They broke God's rule in Genesis 3. That's what sin is: breaking God's rules or laws. So, in Genesis 3, God punished them. However, it wasn't *only* bad news. Right in the middle of it, God promised something great.

God didn't get into too many details when He first promised it. He just told them that He would send a rescuer that was going to be the offspring of a woman. That rescuer would crush the head of the enemy who had just brought humankind down in the Garden of Eden. Over the course of the Old Testament, He gave more and more details about what that rescuer would be like and how He would come. In Genesis 15, we learned that He would descend from Abraham. In Genesis 17, God was more specific and told Abraham that his wife Sarah would give birth, even though she was well beyond child-bearing years, and the rescuer would descend from that child. Sarah did give birth when she was in her nineties!

### *Isaiah 9:6-7 (ESV)*

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with*

*righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

This is probably my favorite prophecy about the Messiah, about Jesus, because it should clear up any confusion. What do we know about the Messiah, the coming rescuer, from these verses? He would be the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father Himself! God Himself would take on flesh, become a human child, grow up, and ultimately rescue His people! I don't know why it's difficult for some to understand that Jesus is God. There are people who believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, but they don't believe He was God. But what does Isaiah 9:6 tell us? If He was one, He has to be the other. Jesus is God.

*Hebrews 11:13 (ESV)*

*These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.*

So many lived and died waiting for this promise. Thousands of years passed from the initial prophecies until Jesus arrived on the scene. They were desperate for it. They knew that once He came, their lives would be complete. Even though they did not receive the promise in their lifetimes, they were convinced it would happen. They didn't lose hope or faith. They fully embraced what was promised, believing it would still come in the future. And as we know, it did.

You know the Christmas story. Mary was a virgin, but God caused her to become pregnant, anyway. God promised that would happen, too, in Isaiah 7:14. That baby, born of a virgin in Luke 2, was Jesus, the Messiah, the one who had come to rescue His people from their sin. The promise had finally come. Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple to be dedicated, as we're going to read, and they met a man who clearly had waited for just one thing his entire life. He knew his life would be complete once it happened.

*Luke 2:22-32 (ESV)*

*And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it*

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