

“A Very Matthew Christmas: Let Christ’s Advent Disrupt You”

by
Andrew Kooman

What The disciples didn’t expect a God they would call by name, a God who would sleep beside them in the night to keep warm, a God susceptible to lice and heat rash. The Gospel Writer Matthew shares how Jesus disrupted his expectation of the Messiah and reveals that Jesus still disrupts our expectations today.

Part of the **A Very Matthew Christmas** series, letters addressed to the modern-day church from the Gospel writer, this script will bring fresh perspective just in time for Christmas and prepare your church for Advent.

Themes: Advent, Readers Theater, Christmas, Gospel, Love, Grace, Hope, Risk, Obedience

Who Reader/Actor age 13-80

When Present

Costumes and Props Candle
Candle lighter

Why Matthew 16:15-16

How **If you are reading for Zoom**, read it with passion and emotion, and don’t be afraid to take your time. Look at the audience or into the computer camera. Ensure all your notifications are turned off and emails are closed and have the PDF on screen near the camera.

If you read the script from the pulpit, be familiar enough with your lines so that your head isn’t down in the script the entire time. Look audience members in the eye. Take time to pause and breathe. Embrace the awe and mystery of the scripture.

Time Approximately 2-3 minutes

Reader: This morning as we take time to prepare our hearts for Advent, it's my joy to read a letter addressed to you from the Gospel writer Matthew.

When we reached out to the original Gospel writers to get their perspective on Advent, Matthew responded first, and he wrote 5 letters in total for us for this Advent season.

We hope these letters will touch your hearts.

In today's letter Matthew writes: Dear [Church Name],

Do you read Scripture and sometimes scratch your head at how slow the people of God are to understand him and what he's up to?

I felt that way when I read about my ancestors in the desert. Why complain and object so much? Why delay the Promise Land by forty years?

It's like watching a movie when you know the bad guy is waiting around the corner and you yell at the screen at the protagonist: "Run!" But the actor just won't listen.

It's all so clear and obvious! That is until you're in the middle of the story yourself.

As a disciple who walked with Jesus, I saw the miracles. Lepers, the blind, the lame. All healed! The dead came alive! And even then, I was slow to understand. I hope that encourages you.

But understand this, my friends: the miracles I witnessed had no explanation. No companion notes. Only the hopeful suggestion that it was God's doing. Maybe a few words were shared about the supernatural events from a young, unmarried Nazarene with little social stature.

And the crowds: they would hear Jesus' wonderful stories, his parables, and were sometimes sent home with food in their stomach, fire in their souls, a growing hope in their heart, but no clear explanation.

They saw impossible things with their own eyes – the real now made unreal – and then went back to their homes, their cities and families, to menial jobs, paying Roman taxes.

Surely their ears burned, their hearts pounded in their chests, and yet they had to sort through their expectations.

Supernatural events, yes, but no swords. He gave Beatitudes, but no battle plan. Israel remained a subject people: tired and hungry and oppressed. The Messiah was supposed to be a deliverer.

Unfortunately, many Jews, especially scribes who studied the law and prophets day after day – writings that so clearly underlined that these men were blinded by their present circumstances and their desire to be delivered from a physical and political force that occupied their land of promise.

First century Jews like me were in the drama, they were living it. I admit, I didn't expect a God I would call by name. A God who would sleep beside me in the night to keep warm. A God susceptible to lice and heat rash.

And you're not so different from the people who first experienced Jesus, from the moment he was placed in a manger to the surprise of all His miracles.

They also ate, slept, went to the bathroom, though their porcelain wasn't as nice.

Like you, they had ideas about God, and just because he appeared in their life, turned it over, disrupted it, doesn't mean all their confusion or longing or questions went away.

In real time, in their daily lives, people were interrupted by Jesus. At the dinner table of their religious friends. From their fishing boats and market stalls—people everywhere were confronted face to face with Jesus and had to make a decision about him.

Jesus' advent disrupted their ideas about God and their daily life.

Ask Mary, ask Joseph. Ask me, the former tax collector. Will you allow Jesus to disrupt your life, your plans, your Christmas?

I hope so.

With love, your friend, Matthew.

The Reader lights the candle of Advent.

As we prepare our hearts for Christmas by lighting the candle today, may we encounter Jesus, and may he disrupt our hearts with the wonder of who he is. Amen.

Lights fade.