



Give More — A Conspiracy Theory to Change the World

Luke 1:67-79

Sermon Outline based on a sermon by Pastor Josh Hayden, Cornerstone Baptist Church, Warrenton, VA.

This sermon is one in a four-part series encouraging congregations as they join the [Advent Conspiracy](#) and Give More, Spend Less, Worship Fully and Love All.

1. Introduction

As we draw closer to Christmas, the level of expectations of what we will get—and what we will give—reaches new heights.

- Will my wife get me that new gadget I have wanted for months?
- Will my husband get those earrings I hinted at last week?

These questions captivate our resources, our imagination, time, money and energy.

Can't we conspire together to ask better questions? Can't we give more than this?

Luke's gospel tells the story of a long-awaited Messiah coming to bring justice, hope, and restoration as he gives and gives of his own life.

This Advent season, we ask you to give more, too.

2. Anticipation: expectations rooted in the power of God

- *Luke 1:67-79*: In Zechariah's Song, we see signposts of the Messiah to come.
 - *Background*: An older couple—Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth—have been expecting a new child, but Zechariah has his doubts.
 - *Verses 62-66*: God builds up the anticipation for this family by making Zechariah mute until their son John would be born.
 - *Verses 68-70*: Zechariah explores his hopeful anticipation of the Messiah
- The Stories of Old shape the Stories of Today
 - *Verses 71-72*: We know who Jesus will be by reminding ourselves of God's covenants with his people.
 - *Verses 73-74*: We can anticipate that God will act on behalf of his people, showing mercy and acting justly.
 - *Verses 74-75*: The mercy and justice of God inspire more service and more action: people giving of themselves time and time again.
- The Messiah: Light Shining Into the Darkness
 - *Verses 76-77*: There are those who go ahead of the coming Messiah and prepare the way, proclaiming the good news of God's actions.

- *Verses 78-79:* We can see the heart of God through the description of what the Messiah will be like: merciful, just and full of peace.
- As Zechariah's song describes, the coming Messiah gives to those suffering at the hands of enemies and to those oppressed and living in darkness.
- The coming Messiah takes action, exposing oppression and guiding those who have suffered into the path of peace—a path to restoration and fulfilled hope.
- The coming Messiah is a signpost of how we can participate in the kingdom of God.

3. Participation: God's Kingdom on Earth as in Heaven

- *Isaiah 58:5-7:* Earlier in this series we took a look at Isaiah 58. Let's return to it now to see how this passage of scripture invites us to Give More. What we see God telling the Israelites here is that true fasting is more than ritual—it is action that gives of ourselves
 - *Verse 5:* Giving more is often described as becoming some kind of super-Christian, who has all of the rituals of the Christian experience down.
 - But Isaiah wonders if rituals have replaced a better way of formation: actually giving of what we value to those in need
 - *Verses 6-7:* True fasting is never a solo endeavor. Life with God leads to participation on the behalf of those suffering oppression and in need of food, homes, and clothes. It is done together – it's impossible to do alone, outside of community, with God and with our neighbors

4. What Does Giving More Look Like?

- *Ray of Hope—* Suhana's Story (link with video: <http://www.ijm.org/content/rescue-with-a-determination-that-wont-quit>)
- *Dark circumstances*
 - Suhana was only 16 when she was rescued by a team from a human rights organization called IJM and local police from a brothel. She was brought to a loving aftercare home, began to thrive and heal. This was another story of the hard work of IJM to rescue the oppressed.
 - After a year, Suhana and her counselors decided she was ready to begin a job outside of the shelter.
 - She made a new friend through the job, but the friendship has terrible consequences. Suhana was tricked and betrayed, sold to a pimp and returned to the nightmare she thought she had escaped forever. She was trafficked again to a faraway city.
 - This could have been the tragic end of Suhana's story: a young woman who was saved once, but ultimately, oppression won.
- *Relentless Love*
 - But IJM didn't give up. In fact, they gave more. And more and more. While Suhana was gone, and out of sight, IJM was determined to rescue her—no matter how impossible it seemed.
 - After four months of relentless searching, IJM investigators pinpointed Suhana's location. In the gigantic city of Mumbai, with over 18 million people and a huge red-light district, *one girl was found.*
 - After being reunited with the IJM staff, Suhana said: "IJM didn't give up on me. They searched for me and they found me, rescued me again."
 - For IJM, it meant more time, more resources, more work, and all in seemingly impossible circumstances to give more to Suhana.

5. Restoration—The Kingdom Yet to Be Fulfilled

- We can have hope for a New Reality

- We can give more:
 - Our sin and injustice has made a mess of God's hopes and dreams for our world.
 - But the Messiah promises to shine light in the darkness, to set the oppressed free, and break every yoke.
 - **What can you give this Advent season to and become a living signpost of God's hope? How can you give of *yourself* to those you love, and to those you've never even met, but whom God is calling you to love?**
 - We have heard the promises about the Messiah, so let us work together to restore the world to its intended wholeness.

6. The New Reality Begins Here

- *Revelation 21:1-4*: Our long-awaited Messiah will go to great lengths to demonstrate his love for his people and to break the yoke of oppression.
- Each of us is invited to participate in this new reality, to become walking, breathing, talking, living agents of God's eternity beginning now – and by demonstrating through the gifts of our time, our presence this love.
- We can truly live out the spirit of Advent, of hopeful expectation of things to come, by helping God's vision become reality today.

7. Action Steps:

- **Two steps we can all take:**
 1. To become people who change the world – who take up this great promise and who follow God, ushering in his righteousness and justice – we need to become people who *Give More*. We need to be able to hold out an open hand to God with our time, our love, our passion. The great news is that as *we* give more, relationally, God deepens our relationships; as we give more of our love, he gives us more love to share. We want to be the kind of people who are ready to give it all – and Christmas is the perfect time to get to work on becoming the kind of people who can!
 2. So, this Christmas, my simple challenge to you is to choose to be people who give more relationally to those you love – so take your kids sledding, spend some time with your mom watching old holiday movies, or make a gift that turns into the next family heirloom. In the same way the IJM team never gave up on Suhanna, there are people that the God who never gives up may be calling you to love, to serve, to spend time with. When I say that this Christmas we should *Give More* by giving of ourselves and our presence, it feels natural and pleasant to some of us. But for others, you are struggling through difficult relationships. You are struggling through loving well in situations where you have given and given and given. This Christmas, your heavenly Father is right beside you in this work – and joy – of giving.
- You can also check out www.IJM.org to hear more stories of rescue, and discover ways to educate, explore, pray for and engage in the work of justice with IJM today.