

A King is born

Isaiah 9:1-7

Today is our 5th week of Advent and we have lit the Christ candle to represent the light, purity, and victory that Jesus brings. This morning I want to spend our time in Isaiah chapter 9. Let's pray and we will get started.

PRAY

Have you ever been in complete darkness? I mean the kind of dark where you can't even see your hand in front of your face. It's hard to find places like that. Caves can sometimes provide that kind of darkness. Some of you may enjoy sleeping in complete darkness but even the slightest bit of light coming under the door or coming from some device in your room will eventually provide enough light that once your eyes have adjusted you can still see a little.

Before digital cameras were developed and that technology advanced enough to capture good quality pictures we had to develop our photos. Some of our children have no idea what that's like. There was a time when we had to take those little canisters to Walmart or a Walgreens and have them develop the film and 3 or 4 days later you could finally see how those pictures came out. It's amazing how far we have come in that realm of technology.

I was the photography editor of my high school newspaper so I got to learn and experience what it was like to open one of those canisters and roll the film onto the reel and pour the chemicals into the container, and shake it at the proper times to develop that film. All of that process had to be done in complete darkness otherwise you would ruin the film. It didn't matter how long you stayed in that room, they were built to keep the light out, it was completely and totally dark. That's the kind of darkness that Isaiah describes, in Isaiah chapter 9, that the Israelites are living in. It's a time of darkness because their enemies are beginning to overtake them from the north and there is nothing they can do.

They are helpless; things seem hopeless as Isaiah begins to describe to them the coming Assyrian invasion. Everyone begins to react to this news differently, but Isaiah tells the people in Isaiah 8:20-22, "Look to God's instructions and teachings! People who contradict his word are completely in the dark. They will go from one place to another, weary and hungry. And because they are hungry, they will rage and curse their king and their God. They will look up to heaven and down at the earth, but wherever they look, there will be trouble and anguish and dark despair. They will be thrown out into the darkness."

Darkness is a scary thing. Often young children are afraid of the dark, maybe as an adult you still don't like the dark. In our house to combat that we buy nightlights and plug them in around the house. We even leave a couple of pendent lights on, and if Abby and I turn them off the kids will get up and turn them back on once we've gone to our room.

In scripture darkness is often used as a symbol of sin and its effect on us. Ephesians 4:18 says, "Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him."

Isaiah sees the people of God as living in this darkness; but then the most wonderful news comes to Isaiah, and he tells the people in Isaiah 9:1-2, "Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine."

The light will shine in the darkness.

1. The Light will shine in the darkness.

That light that would shine in the darkness was Jesus Christ. In Luke chapter one Luke describes him as the morning light from heaven that is about to break upon us. In Luke chapter 2:32 Simeon is holding the little baby Jesus and he says, "He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!"

God would send his son into the world to be the light that guides our way. If you want to know what God is like you look to Jesus because he is the light that has revealed God to the nations. Jesus said in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

The light shines into the darkness and gives us life. John 1:4-9 says, "The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. God sent a man, John the Baptist, to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world."

A king was coming; God himself would become flesh and live among us. Isaiah is saying look I know it seems dark right now, and I know the darkness seems to be closing in around you, and you can't see the light, but this darkness will not go on forever. A great light is coming into the world, a light that will shine in the darkness and change the world forever through the birth of a little baby boy.

The light will shine in the darkness, and because of that the people of God will rejoice.

2. The people of God will rejoice.

Isaiah 9:3-5 says, "You will enlarge the nation of Israel, and its people will rejoice. They will rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest and like warriors dividing the plunder. For you will break the yoke of their slavery and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders. You will break the oppressor's rod, just as you did when you destroyed the army of Midian. The boots of the warrior and the uniforms bloodstained by war will all be burned. They will be fuel for the fire."

When the king finally comes and begins to shine his light the people of God will rejoice. Isaiah compares the rejoicing that will happen when Christ shows up with the time of rejoicing at the harvest and after a successful battle.

Some years the harvest would be unusually massive and that would be a time of great rejoicing. The Israelites were supposed to celebrate the Festival of the Harvest, sometimes called the Feast of Weeks. 7 weeks after they would begin to cut the grain for harvesting they would have a big celebration and everyone was involved; servants, the priests, even the foreigners in the land were invited, and it was a time of great celebration.

Think of the big celebration and parade after the Chiefs won the Superbowl. It was that kind of celebration except way more important than just winning some game. Isaiah also compares this rejoicing to the time when the army would return from battle after a great victory with the plunder from that city. That picture is the opposite of what the Israelites were experiencing at the time when Isaiah wrote this. Yet this coming king would bring great joy.

The birth of a child is typically a time of great joy for many people; those are by far my favorite hospital calls to make. Of course then they turn 2 and the joy does fade a little but it comes back eventually. Isaiah says the light will shine in the darkness and the people of God will rejoice because the king is born to rule forever.

3. The King is born to rule forever.

Isaiah 9:6-7 says, "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his

ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the LORD of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!"

For the last 4 weeks we've talked about this coming king. In keeping with Advent, we have lit a candle each week representing different aspects of this coming king. First we saw the hope, then faith, then the joy there is in the coming king, last week we focused on peace. But today a king is born, to us a child is given, so we light the Christ candle.

This king who is born will rule forever, and he will be called wonderful counselor. Jesus is our wonderful counselor, but that doesn't mean he just gives great advice, it means he understands things that are beyond our comprehension. Isaiah writes later on in Isaiah 55:8, "My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the LORD. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine."

He can be your wonderful counselor, but you have to let him. He can guide your life so that his light can shine through you so that more and more people can come to know Christ and rejoice in the fact that the coming king was born to rule forever. But you have to let him be that wonderful counselor.

He is also mighty God. The Hebrew word for mighty can be translated hero or champion. He is our hero God. Did you have a hero growing up? Someone you looked up to, someone you went to for advice. For me it starts with my dad and my grandfather, and the godly men of my church who were willing to be courageous for God, willing to stand their ground spiritually, and set an example for others to follow.

Those are my earthly heroes but Jesus is our mighty God, the hero of our faith. The writer of Hebrews after encouraging us to run the race of life with endurance throwing off the sin that sometimes entangles us says in Hebrews 12:2, "We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith."

Have you put your full trust and faith into our mighty God, the champion of our faith?

He is also called everlasting father and when Isaiah used that term he is alluding to the fact that this coming king who will rule forever, this Jesus Christ is God. Hebrews tells us plainly in the very beginning of Hebrews 1:1-3, "Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven."

He is everlasting father and his kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom as well.

The last name Isaiah mentions is Prince of Peace. We talked about this some last week and how Jesus is our source of peace. Isaiah mentions how they will burn the bloodstained uniforms some day when wars are no more. That time is not yet come, but when the king comes again all wars will be over; until then we must heed the message of Romans 12:18 where Paul writes, "Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone."

This king who was born to rule forever is our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Will you let him be those things in your life? Are you letting him be those things in your life? Today Isaiah has proclaimed that a king is born.

And the question you have to answer for yourself is does the birth of the king change anything for you? Does the fact that God entered the world to become the sacrifice for our sins change anything for you? Because his birth certainly changed the world from that point on.

Jaroslav Pelikan once said, "Regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about Him, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominate figure in the history of Western Culture for almost 20 centuries."

Jesus came into the public spot light for just a blink of an eye, 3 years at the most. Yet in a week we will celebrate the new year, 2023, based on the birth of Jesus. You can't write a check or look at calendar without seeing the influence of this king who was born. Does the birth of the king change anything for you? Jesus didn't just change the world when he came, he continues to change the lives of people today. I stand here as a man changed because a king was born.

I know some of you have heard this story before but 14 years ago I almost left the ministry, and honestly I don't know how far I would have walked away from God. But one early morning at about 4am I got stuck in some deep mud around a construction site while I was delivering uniforms. I tried to get out several times but it wouldn't budge. I turned the truck off and because of the turmoil in my spirit I realized not only was the truck stuck but so was I. I was the one stuck in the mud in the darkness.

I prayed and asked for forgiveness for trying to walk way and live contrary to his will for my life. I made a promise to him in the darkness that I would not walk away from the ministry. I fired the truck back up, put it in reverse and rolled it back as far as I could, then slammed it into driver, hammered the throttle and came right out the mud. Finished my route, went home and got a call from my dad saying a senior minister friend of ours was looking for me to see if I was interested in a full time position at his church.

Everybody here today is at a different place in their life. Some of you might be in the darkness like I was years ago, others of you are trying to live in the light but there's an area of your life that you haven't let the light shine in. And there are some here who are shining bright because the king is born and it has changed things in your life forever.

If you're in any kind of darkness this Christmas, let Jesus change you from darkness to light so that you can celebrate the birth of the king. For those of you here today who have let the light shine in the darkness, who rejoice because the king is born to rule forever, and you have let him have full rule of your life; Then like this candle let your light shine into the darkness for all to see.

Acts 13:47 says, "For the Lord gave us this command when he said, 'I have made you a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.'" Our little corner is Tonganoxie Kansas and the towns that surround it, and through our support of missionaries and mission organizations the light of Christ shines far beyond our corner of Kansas. We are here to honor God, invest in people, and make a difference by letting the light of this king who was born to rule forever, shine into the darkness. Go shine church. Merry Christmas.