

Introduction

1. Reasons to Celebrate?

(1) Not many - Dominion

(2) Visiting family complicated

2. 2020 losses

(1) For the church

(2) For you

3. 2021 better?

(1) Before your heart goes too far down the road of vaccines & stimulus packages.

(2) My industry will open back up! 2020 had lots to celebrate

4. The Prophet Isaiah

(1) The Context

Isaiah 8:21-22 - They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward. And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.

(2) But he's going to talk about their future.

Isaiah 9:3 - "You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil."

(3) His reasons are our reasons
A prophecy about a child

I. Joy is elusive when you can't see, but abounds with Jesus as light

Isaiah 9:2 - The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone."

1. Joy is hard when you can't see

(1) where were going or what might be coming.

(2) We have no idea what 2021 might hold.

2. Jesus is the Light of the World (Jn. 8:12)

(1) "Those who follow me will never walk in darkness."

(2) Joy can abound because Christmas reminds us that darkness will never have the final say.

(3) So as we head into this next season, Don't forget the Joy.

II. Joy is elusive when loss is high, but abounds with Jesus as gain

Isaiah 9:4-5 - "For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire."

1. Joy is hard when things are being taken away

(1) 2 ϕ Grit - significant loss is coarse in its ability to send joy from our hearts.

1. Death, catastrophic financial

(2) 200 ϕ Grit - most of us, a cumulative series of lesser losses has its impact over time.

1. The slow drip of quarantine

2. Jesus is our treasure (Matt. 13)

(1) "Then in his joy he goes..." (v44)

(2) Joy can abound because we are certain what we have gained in Christ cannot be taken

So don't forget the joy...

III. Joy is elusive when God seems far, but abounds with Jesus as divine.

Isaiah 9:6 - "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."

1. Joy is hard when we don't have a sense of God's presence.

(1) But the historical accounts of Esther, Job, Ruth & Joseph remind us of one important truth

∴ While God can seem extraordinarily silent... He is never absent.

(2) The text places incredible care to highlight the divinity of this coming child... so we know that God is not far, but very near. (oppose to all other religions)

2. Jesus is God (Jn. 14)

(1) "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father"

(2) Joy can abound because God is with us (to very end)

So don't forget the joy..

IV. Joy is elusive when the world is at war, but abounds with Jesus as peace.

Isaiah 9:7a - "Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end..."

1. Joy is hard when dissention & division run rampant.

- (1) No matter how awesome things are in your world when things are hard in the world.
- (2) There's been no shortage of that this year.
- (3) Opposition always reveals character. Meaning, we're at our worst when we're hurting.
- (4) The whole world seems to be at war, & there is no sign of relenting just because of a diff. president.

1. Jesus is our peace (Jn 14:27)

- (1) "Peace I leave w/ you, peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives"
- (2) Joy can abound because Jesus brokered peace w/ God. No matter the war in the world, you can be at peace in your world thanks to Jesus.

So don't forget the Joy.

II. Joy is elusive when seasons fail,
but abounds with Jesus as hope.

Isaiah 9:7b - "...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."

1. Joy is really hard when the promise of a better day, a better job, a better spouse, a better year, a better vaccine ... doesn't live up to its promise.

(1) Even if 2021 is better than 2020, it doesn't mean it will be for everyone. And it doesn't mean 2022 won't be worse.

(2) I see a lot of people putting their hope in a New Year & a vaccine.

i. My fear, is you're setting yourself up for more sand paper moments.

(3) But Jesus is the better hope.

i. 2nd Advent

iii. Joy abounds for us as believers, because we have the manger.

Candle-light = So you don't forget the joy