

Advent 2022: “A Son is Given”  
Isaiah 9:1-7; John 1:1-5

Merry Christmas Church! It’s a rare occurrence that Christmas falls on a Sunday, so this morning we gather to celebrate both the birth of Christ (since it’s Christmas Day) and the resurrection of Christ (since it’s Sunday, and every Sunday is a celebration of our Lord’s resurrection).

Since I know you are all eager to return home for your Christmas dinner and time with your families, I want to provide a brief but meaningful message for you this morning that is built around three subheadings: 1) A Child is Born; 2) A Son is Given; and 3) The Light of the World.

Let us begin by reading two famous passages of scripture:

Isaiah 9:1-7: But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>2</sup>[a] 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.

<sup>3</sup>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.

<sup>4</sup>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.

<sup>5</sup>For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult  
and every garment rolled in blood  
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup>For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon<sup>[a]</sup> his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called<sup>[a]</sup>  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup>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.

Now let us read John 1:1-5:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. <sup>4</sup>In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

### **I. A Child is Born**

I’m going to share an observation with you this morning, and once I share it, you will be amazed how often you observe it.

Over the course of my 34 years of ministry, I have observed that often when a Christian family experiences a death, a birth will follow within the next 12-18 months. I'll give you a minute to process that observation. Think about your own family...think about the families you know...and you'll be amazed how often this happens.

Many of you might remember that my family experienced a very tragic and untimely death in our family back on March 24, 2010. Christy's brother Kyle died very unexpectedly at the age of 29, and we were devastated. However, just a few months later, we discovered that we were pregnant with our fourth child (which was also very unexpected!). Our daughter Kylie, who bears Kyle's name, brought new life, hope and joy into our family when we were walking in the darkness of Kyle's absence. Make no mistake: every child that is born comes to us as a gift, and the timing of every child's birth is significant if we have the eyes to see and the hearts to understand. I could literally give you dozens of examples of this observation, but now that you are thinking about it, I suspect you have plenty of your own stories that validate this observation. Again, it's not a hard and fast rule, but it is amazing how often it happens.

Now, in light of that of observation, consider Isaiah 9 with me for just a moment. You have heard several messages on this passage throughout our Advent series, but I hope you have picked up on the historical context. The northern kingdom of Israel has just been obliterated by the Assyrians in 722 BC. Isaiah is writing to those who have experienced unimaginable loss. By the way, the Assyrians were a ruthless nation. When they conquered another country, they were famous for their atrocities such as smashing the heads of children upon the rocks, gouging out people's eyes, and many other examples too graphic and disturbing to think about on a Christmas morning. EVERY single person in the northern kingdom of Israel who read or heard the words of Isaiah had experienced this kind of tragic loss, but Isaiah assures them that EVIL would not win the day. Isaiah writes: But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. <sup>2</sup> 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.

Note the specific language here. The gloom of death and loss is temporary. The prophet Isaiah has received a vision from God...a vision of hope. A time is coming when God will "make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee." Most of you know that Galilee is the region where Jesus grew up...Nazareth was in the region of Galilee. It was a region that suffered horrific loss at the hands of the Assyrians, but there is hope yet for this region. Isaiah goes on, "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."

Now...I know that it sounds like Isaiah is reporting something that already happened. Some scholars suspect this birth announcement was initially written about King Hezekiah or King Ahaz, but there is no agreement amongst the Jewish scholars, and all agree that the description of this king whose kingdom never ends, a king called "mighty God," exceeds the description of any ordinary man. It is more likely that this passage is written in what we call "the prophetic perfect." In other words, when God gave a prophet a vision, the vision was so clear and so

certain that they would write as though it was already accomplished! I think that's what Isaiah just did...he's describing something that will happen in the future but describing it as though it has already been accomplished. "Those who were walking in darkness have seen a great light!" And what is that light?

The answer comes in vs. 6: "For to us a child is born..." Just as Kylie brought great life, hope, and joy to our grieving hearts when we lost Kyle, so God is comforting a grieving nation with a birth announcement! A child is born...to us...to those who walk in darkness and gloom.

Now...how is the birth a single child going to comfort a people who have experienced such extreme loss? Well...this child is no ordinary child. Yes, he will be born just like the rest of us. He will live a human life, feel pain, experience disappointment, and suffer injustice like we all do. But this child is more than just a man...He is also "the Son who is given". That leads to my second subheading...

## **II. A Son is Given**

God does not only comfort His people by sending a child to be born; He brings hope and light to those who walk in darkness by giving us His own Son! Jesus said this about Himself when told Nicodemus in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but will inherit eternal life." Thus, the hope given to Galilee...the hope given to all who walk in the darkness of loss and despair, is a child who will grow to be a man, yet He is also the Son of God given to the world to save us all...He will be "Immanuel"...God with us. His name shall be called, Jesus. It is His birth that the world celebrates today (whether they know it or not!). It is His birth that changed everything. It is his death on the cross that atoned for our sin and made reconciliation with God possible for all who repent and believe. And it is His resurrection and ascension that assures us that death has been defeated...evil does not win the day...and there is HOPE for this life and the life to come!

Isaiah prophecies that the attributes of the child who is born, the Son who is given, are predictable. He will be called, "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace." We have looked at each of those attributes over the course of our Advent Series, so I hope you will review those messages if you did not have the chance to hear them.

But this morning, I want to simply observe that before all the attributes of Jesus are listed here in Isaiah 9, the prophet simply describes Jesus as "a great Light" given to those who walk in darkness.

And that leads to my third subheading:

## **III. The Light of the World**

Hundreds of years after Isaiah wrote down this prophecy in Isaiah 9, and just a few years after Jesus was crucified and resurrected, the Apostle John published his gospel as a means of explaining what it all meant. In the first five verses of the Prologue to his gospel, John writes, "In

the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John is writing about Jesus, referring to Jesus as the *logos*...the Word, in whom was life, and the life was the light of men. John will write a few verses later that the Word took on flesh and dwelt among us. He was the Light who came into the world. Jesus said the same thing about Himself in John 8:12: <sup>12</sup> Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Church, can you see how all of this fits together? Isaiah wrote of a great light 700 years before Christ was born...a light that brought hope and peace to a people who walked in darkness...and that hope would come to Galilee first of all as a child who was born...a Son who was given. And 700 years later, that prophecy came to pass. Jesus was born; God gave us His Son...a Galilean; and in so doing, God sent LIGHT into this dark world so that all who walk in darkness and despair might see a GREAT LIGHT! This is why we decorate our houses with lights during the darkest month of the year (at least in North America!). This is why we decorate our trees with lights. Jesus is the Light of the World, and He has come...just as the prophets foretold. He is our Wonderful Counselor, our Mighty God, our Everlasting Father, and our Prince of Peace! As those who belong to Him, we are subjects of His Kingdom government, we have Peace with God, and our lives shine with His light. That light is obvious every time there is a changed life who chooses to forgive instead of holding on to resentment; every time a family opens their home to a hurting child; every time a person sets aside the riches of this world to bless others in Jesus' name; every time a couple chooses to honor their vows instead of giving up on their marriage...in all these things we see the government of Jesus even now, and one day His government will be all there is...and what a day that will be!

We gather and we celebrate this morning because the Great Light has come to us, and as John proclaims, "the darkness has NOT overcome it!" The darkness of disease, death, war, division, lies, deception, materialism, and despair will NEVER overcome the Light of Jesus, amen?

Now...there is one more thing that we must remember. Jesus not only saved us from the darkness...He also sent us back out into the darkness to share His light with a hurting world, right? Jesus looked at His church in Matthew 5:14-16 and said, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

We...the believers...the Church...are light bearers. We bear the light of Christ in us, and it is our duty, our joy, and our privilege to share the light of Jesus with those who still walk in darkness.

Now...it wouldn't be a very good Christmas morning if I didn't give each of you a gift, so as you leave this morning, you will each receive a gift, and I'll tell you what it is since I didn't get around to wrapping it: it's a solar powered light.

We chose to gift you with this solar-powered light as a reminder of our relationship with Jesus and our place in this world.

If you think about the solar powered light, it has no light and no power of its own. It's only when the solar powered light has its face pointed to the sun that it gathers the sun's power and then reflects that power in the light that it emits that night. Every day the little light must gather its power from the sun, or it will have no light to offer to those who walk in darkness.

In the same way, none of us have the power or the light to help anyone if we do not first draw our power and our light from the Son of God, who is Jesus Christ our Lord. We gather that light and power through the posture of worship...through gazing upon the face of our Lord...by seeing Jesus Christ crucified on the cross in our place...by seeing Jesus seated at the right hand of the Father, advocating and interceding for His Church...by seeing Jesus in the seat beside us...our constant companion who promised that He would be with us always, even to the end of the age!

So...Church...as we celebrate Christmas and kick off a new year,

Turn your eyes upon Jesus  
Look full in his wonderful face  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
In the light of his glory and grace

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, and you will shine brightly as the Light of Christ in this hurting culture!

Will you pray with me?