

Isaiah 9:1-7 A Deep and Abiding Joy 12/10/17

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.

*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.*

*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.*

*⁴ 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.*

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

*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.*

*⁷ 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.

(Pastor prays)

It has been said that the darker the cloud, the brighter the rainbow, and the more severe the pain in life, the more pure the joy can be in Christ. Many of you who have shed the tears of anguished loss have found real comfort in the arms of Jesus.

Jesus. Christmas is about the coming of Jesus Christ, the one who on the day He was born, was eons older than His mother. The one whom the world was made through has come into the world like each one of us. He became *like* us to *save* us. God, the very God, born to a humble girl in a forgotten nowhere. He came in *weakness* that He might save us in *power*. Even in the text that I read you, Isaiah looks forward to the Savior and gives Him the fourfold name of a victorious King, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.

But before we target lock on that fourfold name that we love so much, we've got to go back in time. Go back through history. Before post-modernism, the industrial age, enlightenment, Reformation. Go back through the Middle Ages, Dark Ages, church fathers, and pause at the child in a manger. Then go back through the 400 years of silence, past the minor prophets in exile and into the nation on the brink of collapse, and here we find Isaiah. He's a burdened prophet. Why?

A warlike people from the North is threatening and It's not just saber- rattling. His name is Tiglath Pileser and he's a killer. His chariots with their wheels are going to blitz the northern kingdom. The hero King Uzziah is dead, and in Isaiah 6, Isaiah is thinking that maybe if he were alive, things would be different.

But things weren't different. Israel and Judah had long since quit honoring God, and in the context of Isaiah 8-9, God is bringing judgment on His people. Read the terror in 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. ²² And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.*

Distress, darkness and anguish. Some of you can identify, and in the midst of that, 700 years ago, Isaiah points forward to Christ. He points us to Christ and that's what every mention of *Christmas* must do. Reminding us, we can live in strength because of Christ. I think our country is probably more divided than ever. It's why we will never preach politics here. We preach *Christ*, who was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, died an atoning death and had a victorious resurrection. Because regardless of race or creed or culture

Jesus Christ Reconciles People to God

There are several things that I want you to know and see from this passage.

You Can Trust Him

Some of you need to hear that even now as you wrestle with your pain. This passage reminds me that I can trust him. Let me show you what I mean.

Chapter 8 tells us that God's people are under judgment. That's the distress, darkness and anguish. But then in Chapter 9, Isaiah looks forward. Verse 1 says, *But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish.* There was enormous spiritual darkness over Israel. The prophet tells us the people floundered, the religion was dead and for 400 years, God would be silent. There would be no word from God, just judgment. *In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,* But keep reading. *but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.* And verse 2 is the Golden Ticket of Grace. Let's read it.

It speaks of Christ.¹ *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.* This verse is quoted in Matthew 4:16. *the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.*" Christmas, the coming of Christ, is the light of salvation and the Gospel of Grace. Even the best of us, most educated, well-behaved of us are spiritually disabled and born without eyes to see. And Christ, who is the life-giver and soul-saver comes as John says in Him was life and that life is the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and no man can overcome it. Jesus Christ is the *only* savior of sinners, the *only* hope to escape God's judgment and the *only* reason to celebrate Christmas. By God's grace and through His

Spirit, I'm asking you to trust Him today. Jesus reconciles people to God. Christmas means you can trust Him.

Christmas Means You Can Rejoice In Him

Join me in verse 3, 4, and 5 as the prophecy gets specific. Notice verse 3 and the way joy that Christ brings is described: Joy that is a result of the light of Christ. Isaiah speaks to God the Father regarding God the Son and the liberating effects of what Christ does. He brings joy. *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.* The joy is compared to the Harvest Festival when all the work is done, and it's been a great year.

Or at the end of verse 3 the joy of Christ is like dividing the spoil after a great victory such as VE Day, VJ Day or the Emancipation Proclamation. To enter into God's grace in Christ is to finally find joy. All that gladness is found in Christ and, thereby, the joy of the Lord becomes your strength. Then notice verse 4 tells us why the joy is so great. *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 – here's the reason. Let's look at these words: yoke, staff, and rod.

The yoke: It's a harness hooked to a person or animal to pull a load. It's a burden, the weight of the world, the guilt of sin and the worry of tomorrow. And by the blood of His cross, this coming Christ removes the yokes and says "take my yoke upon you, my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Here is the slave set free. God removes the yoke. His grace gives us eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to believe. He sets us free, and when the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.

There's a deep, profound and lasting joy in the forgiveness and restoration Christ brings. Look what else the light of Christ is compared to. Let's look again at verse 4. *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.*

What happened at Midian? That's over in Judges where Gideon's army was whittled down to 300 men, which meant insurmountable odds, and God miraculously, astonishingly and incomprehensibly saved His people. And Isaiah is saying the light of Christ is saving grace, just like that.

In verse 5, Isaiah gives us another image of victory in Christ that if you're not careful, you go flying right by. Let's read it. *For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle*

tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. It's kind of graphic but what Isaiah is letting us know is that, because of Christ and what He has done, His birth, life, death and resurrection – because of all of that - all the gear for battle that the enemy has, all the accoutrements of the oppressor, the boots and spears, swords and garments, they are all heaped up into a pile and set on fire and as they blaze up, the freed slaves dance as freedmen by the cross of Christ.

This text tells us that because of Christ, Isaiah will say later, “No weapon formed against you shall succeed.” In the text, when you are in Christ, the weapons of the enemy are destroyed.

In light of what we've read, Paul tells us something astoundingly beautiful happens at the cross. Something for you to grasp in Colossians 2:13-15, *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

The message of Christmas is that Jesus Christ reconciles people to God. This morning, I'm asking you to trust Him. And for you who have trusted Him already, I'm asking you to rejoice in Him. Because in Christ, you are reconciled to God. Do you trust God to save you and to sustain you? Do you rejoice in God?

(Pastor prays)