

Isaiah 9:1—7

December 10, 2017

The old Christmas Carols tells the Christmas story so very well—

*Joy to the world, The Lord has come,
Let earth receive her king,
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing.*

Why is heaven and nature singing?

Christ has come.

*Hark! The herald-angels sing
"Glory to the newborn king;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"*

*Hark! The herald-angels sing
"Glory to the new-born king"*

Why are the herald angels singing?

Christ has come.

*O Holy Night!
The stars are brightly shining
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth!
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
Till he appear'd and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary soul rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!*

*Fall on your knees
Oh hear the angel voices
Oh night divine
Oh night when Christ was born
Oh night divine
Oh night divine*

Why is the night divine?

Christ has come.

The old Christmas carols proclaim that God has become man to bring mankind back to God. Christmas is the celebration of the most important and only essential player in the cast of Christmas.

Christmas is all about Jesus.

What is Christmas about?

Christmas marks mankind's inability and God's ability. In other words, Christmas celebrates the coming of Jesus to do what you and I could not.

The world—mankind—needs Jesus.

- Mankind was blind—Christ came to illuminate.
 - Mankind was enslaved—Christ came to liberate.
 - Mankind was leaderless—Christ came to reign.
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- Mankind was blinded by the darkness and Christ the Son is light from heaven.
 - Mankind was enslaved to sin and Christ the Son came to liberate.
 - Mankind was leaderless—worse self-governing—Christ came to be crowned the forever king.

Jesus is the only one who could:

- Shine light into our dark lives.
- Liberate us from slavery to sin.
- Reign over us in perfect peace.

PROP: Believe that Jesus is exactly who you need him to be.

We see specifically who Jesus is in Isaiah 9.

750 years before heaven met earth in the little quiet town of Bethlehem, Isaiah spoke of the dawning of a great light to people mired in deep darkness.

“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.” Is. 9:1-7

PRAY

1. Jesus Illuminates (Isaiah 9:1-2)

The book of Isaiah is lodged in the Old Testament, centuries before the name Jesus the Galilean was on anyone's lips.

But even at that great distance, Isaiah is clear about what Jesus will do. He will come to illuminate—to scatter the darkness at his arrival.

Isaiah is so sure and confident of this that he prophesies in the past tense even though the event lies 750 years in the future.

At the time of this writing, the nation of Israel was an all-time low to that point. The great world power to the North—Assyria—was going to come and conquer and destroy the northern part of Israel. Because the people had turned from God, God now turned from them.

Isaiah says Assyria will march in and destroy everything but Jerusalem in the south.

And that is what happened.

This was not good news. And the bad news crescendos at the end of chapter 8,

“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.”
Isaiah 8:21–22

The thick darkness fell when Assyria destroyed the Northern Kingdom and the tribes there Zebulun and Naphtali were no more.

Yet, even as he promises a dark curtain will fall—he promises a greater illumination to vanquish all darkness forever.

Vs. 1,

“But there will be no gloom (the gloom will not be forever) 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.

He is hinting of a dawning of light that begins in Galilee—the northern kingdom.

The ministry of Jesus will start in Galilee, in the north. The first area to be destroyed by invading armies was the first area experience the ministry of Christ. And what do they see?

² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; (flash) those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

When Jesus stood up and said, “I am the Light of the world,” in John 8:12 he had Isaiah’s words in mind. He came to a people who lived in a land of ‘deep darkness’ lit. live in death’s shadow.

Christ the light came into the world and sought out those who lived in death’s shadow. Christ sought his people out. The light came to people who were trapped in the darkness. Jesus came to us.

He was the light that shone on those that dwelt in deep darkness.

Jesus came to us.

He was not a light at the end of a tunnel that we finally make it after a long and arduous journey. He was not a beacon on a hill calling all to climb up to him.

He shone his light on us.

He did not wait for the people of the land of darkness to come to their senses and seek out the light. Those that lived in the darkness loved the darkness and did not think they needed light.

Until the light shone on them.

Look at the last bit of verse 2,

‘on them has light shone.’

On who?

‘On them.’

The ones in death’s shadow. The ones who trapped by the manacles of death.

In the scriptures—darkness indicates both evil and ignorance. Our world is full of evil—school shootings, rampant disease, crushing poverty, rank indifference, ethnic cleansing...and no one knows how to get rid of this evil.

The evil has always been and mankind is unable to throw off the evil alone. The reality is, there is evil out there, but there is also a measure of evil in me and in you.

In other words, not only do we live in the darkness of death’s shadow mankind also has a pervasive darkness within. We are not as good as we ought to be and

sometimes given the right conditions frightfully worse than we thought we could be.

On them

On us

On you

On me

The light has shone.

That means BOTH we have no light of our own AND that Jesus has given us all the light we need.

Christmas is not a message of human potential but of failure. Christmas is not a message of human greatness but of evil. Christmas is not a message of human wisdom but of ignorance.

But Christmas is not only a story of human failure, evil and ignorance—a light has shone. Christ has come. The light has come from the outside.

Christ has come to remedy human failure, evil and ignorance.

His light flashed on earth—we did not have any light within—Christmas is the story of mankind's inability and God's great power.

He pushed through the darkness to find you.

2. Jesus Liberates (Isaiah 9:3-5)

That is the language that is being used in verses 3-5, it is one of conquest and liberation look—

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.

The day of Midian was the day that Gideon routed the 120,000 troops with only 300. It was an unlikely victory against a far superior opponent—God had done it.

And here Isaiah looks forward to much more unlikely victory from a much more unlikely source. He would break the rod of the oppressor and break yoke of the burden.

What is mankind burdened by?

Slavery to sin. You might think that sin is an archaic, outdated concept. But the reality is all of us know we are not what we should be or could be. And further, there are things that all of us have done and feel the need to make up for it.

That is sin.

Mankind—apart from Christ—is burdened by slavery to sin. It is a slavery that affects everyone. If it did not—if there was even one who could break free—Jesus would not have needed to come.

But Christ came telling us that we are not the kind who can do for ourselves or be who we need to be alone. We need someone to fight for us. We need someone both to conquer the evil in the world and the evil in my life.

I need one who can conquer the evil in my life without ending my life. Mankind needs someone who can deal with the evil in our lives without ending our lives.

We need one to conquer the evil within. We need someone to win a greater victory than Gideon every could. We need one who can conquer my sin without destroying me.

That someone is Jesus. In our world, the conqueror conquers by exerting greater power and greater strength—and that is what Isaiah says Jesus will do in verse 5,

Look at verse 5,

**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.**

There is a great battle that will be fought and a great battle is won. So thorough that the boots of warriors and the garments in battle are burned.

In other words, you will not need to dress for battle someone will fight for you. You can burn the warrior boots, you can discard the garments for war, you need no armor—someone else will fight.

Jesus does not ask us to fight for him—he fights for us. Christmas is the message of human inability. We are not able to liberate ourselves—we celebrate the fact that

Jesus—only Jesus could and does liberate those that come to him.

There is no joy like those who have been set free from slavery.

You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,

When was the last time you experienced joy at what Jesus has done for you?

How many of you are trying to gain or accumulate to make yourself happy and you find that that it does not last?

Only Jesus can give you joy.

‘You have broken as on the day of Midian.’

Gideon won an unconventional battle with an unconventional fighting force—how would Jesus win in an unconventional way?

How would he destroy evil?

How would he conquer ignorance?

How would he break the power of death?

How would he deal with the evil in me without ending me?

How?

3. Jesus Reigns (Isaiah 9:6-7)

‘For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;

It is not what you expected. How would the light dawn and the conqueror conquer? By becoming a child.

What?

God's answer to all that terrorizes us is a child. A baby. Not exactly a symbol of strength and power. You don't bring a baby to a fight—but that is what heaven sends to earth.

We do not name our battleships or aircraft carriers—baby.

Babies are helpless.
Babies are defenseless.
Babies are vulnerable.
Babies are weak.
Babies are feeble.

But this was no ordinary baby that came that night in Bethlehem. He was different.

God has the strength to overcome his enemies by becoming weak and humble. It is as if he is saying at Christmas—I will show my great strength by becoming fragile because in my weakness I am stronger than all.

Billions of babies have been born but none like this one--

This baby was no ordinary baby he was the son given promised long ago—

and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

He shall be called—

Wonderful Counselor
Mighty God
Everlasting Father
Prince of Peace

These are not names but titles. They are titles that are ascribed to God most high and yet here Isaiah ascribes them to a baby.

He is:

Wonderful Counselor
Mighty God
Everlasting Father
Prince of Peace

Those titles tell us not only exactly who he is but exactly what he does—it doesn't always work that way in our world.

But not Jesus—his titles tell us who he is. Who is he?

Wonderful Counselor:

Human wisdom and ingenuity is faulty. We do not know what will happen tomorrow and don't remember what happened yesterday. We simply lack the wisdom and perspective necessary be good counselors.

Not this Jesus.

He is wonderful counselor not only does he have all the depths of wisdom and insight—he is the one and only one we need counsel from.

The best counselors cannot impart all the wisdom we need to confront life's troubles. Jesus is different. He knows what it is like to walk this earth and face the same troubles we have to face. He was the child born and son given for us.

He is the Wonderful counselor not just because he knows all things and needs no help—that is true. But also because he knows what it is like to be human. He lived in our shoes.

Christmas celebrate Jesus who came and entered our suffering. The counsel he gives is understanding.

He knows our frames. He knows we are weak. He knows we are dust.

“He himself has gone through the whole of human experience—from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair, and death...He was born in poverty and...suffered infinite pain—all for us—and thought it was well worth his while.” Dorothy Sayers

When he speaks and guides he does so with all the heartache, trials, afflictions and troubles that we are going through. He understands.

Other religions do not offer a savior who suffers with and for his people. Other religions have high ideals but we have a savior to attained perfection for us.

“There is no other religion that says God has suffered, that God had to be courageous, that he knows that it is like to be abandoned by friends, to be crushed by injustice, to be tortured and die. Christmas shows he knows what you’re going through.” Tim Keller

He knows what you need. He knows where you need help and he is the savior you need.

Mighty God:

We can look to him for safety.

How can a baby be mighty God? Babies are not mighty. This baby would become a man and have God’s true might and power behind him because he is God. This baby, this son was really a man but also really God.

He had authority—he was mighty God.

He had power—he was mighty God.

He was holy—he was mighty God.

He was glorious—he was mighty God.

And yet he was a humble man. God the son became the God man. Mighty God made a weak baby for us.

What does this mean?

We can hide secure in the shadow of his wings. He can and will protect us. He is our Mighty God. We do not have to be mighty on our own—he is mighty for us.

Jesus is the one we need.

Everlasting Father:

He is the one who can care for us. If you think that Jesus was somehow not equal with God somehow God Jr., think that no longer. He is called Everlasting Father.

Many kings claimed to be the father of their people saying that they would take care of them and advocate for them and yet they failed.

Not Jesus. He is who we need.

He will not abandon you.
He will always be there.
He will never leave you.
He will always support you.

He will care for you better than any father could.

Possibly, your father ran off when you were young—Jesus does not and cannot do that to any who come to him.

Even the best, benevolent kings were temporary. Not this king. He is called Everlasting Father.

He cannot die—not anymore. He died once and death can no longer touch him. He has defeated death and he lives to protect all who come to him.

Prince of Peace:

He is more than an emissary of peace, he doesn't just bring news of a peace treaty. Jesus has come to bring a complete and lasting peace with God.

Christmas celebrates lasting peace with God.

Christian—you are forgiven of your sin—even more you can live without worry that you will be punished. The Prince of peace has been punished for you.

Not a Christian—Jesus is who you need too.

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.”

Do you believe Jesus is who you need him to be?

Or do you still try and make your own way. Brothers and sisters Jesus has done for us what we could never do for ourselves. We were unable. He is able.

Not a Christian—

He is who you need him to be too. He has come to us because we could never get to him.

PRAY