

**“The Light of Christmas”**  
**Isaiah 9:1-7**

**Intro:** It’s hard to believe Thanksgiving is past and Christmas is three weeks from today. Are you seeing evidences of it? The temperatures are finally dropping. Lights are going up. Stores are being decorated, and people are probably starting to ask what you want for Christmas. What do you love about this time of the year? What makes Christmas so special to you? Do you love the madness of holiday shopping? By the way, how many people sacrificed sleep and sanity to go out on Black Friday? Maybe you love putting up your Christmas tree with family and seeing all of the decorations. Perhaps you enjoy all of the Christmas music that resurfaces at this time of year, Others get pumped up about all of the parties that occur during the holiday season. At this point, someone is saying, but no one has invited me to any Christmas parties this year, I must not be that special... Well, we think you’re special, so you are invited to our party, this Friday night from 6:00-8:30pm right here at Springstep (how’s that for a shameless plug).

**FCF:** This morning I want to propose to you that Christmas is about so much more than lights, and ornaments, and eggnog, and yes, even gifts. Christmas is about the gift of the Son of God coming to earth in the form of a baby named Jesus. Christmas is about celebrating the coming of Christ and understanding why he came. As we enter into this Christmas season, I want you to understand that...

**The Point: Jesus came to give the light of hope to all who receive him.**

Over the next three weeks we are going to study three OT passages and one NT passage that teach us what an incredible gift Jesus is to us. Please open your Bibles to Isaiah 9:1-7. Page \_\_\_\_\_

- Context: Before we jump into our passage this morning it’s important to understand what’s going on in Isaiah. Isaiah was a prophet who served as a spokesman for God calling the people to turn back to God.
- The Israelites had forsaken God, choosing to walk in their own dark ways, and now they were going to receive the consequences of their disobedience.
- God was about to level a judgment against his people in the form of sending them into exile in Babylon. But, even in the darkest times, God sent hope for the future. His salvation would appear through the coming Messiah, and we see this in Isaiah.
- In Isaiah 9, we have the light of God shining with an intensity that should elicit great hope. Isaiah 9:1-7 gives us a picture of the light of Christ. What’s so great about the coming of Jesus? This passage speaks very plain about Christ and the government he is establishing. What exactly is the gift of Christmas all about? Let me unpack that with three truths for you to ponder this morning. #1.

**I. Jesus came to give us the light of his joy (9:1-3).**

- **Verses 1-3:** This was written more than 700 years before Jesus was born. What does this have to do with the Christmas story? Well, in Matthew 4:12ff we have what we could call inspired interpretation of Isaiah 9 where Matthew quotes Isaiah 9 and says it is pointing to Jesus.
- Matthew is essentially saying in his gospel: “Hey, you’ve seen the preview for this movie in Isaiah 9, you’re about to get the whole motion picture with the coming of Jesus.”
- Notice that Isaiah speaks as if these events have already happened. He is using the perfect tense, what some scholars like to call the “prophetic perfect.” This has not happened yet in time and space, but in the heart and grand intention of God, this is a done deal.

- Now let me give you some theological handles on how we should approach this text. Isaiah is pointing to a future fulfillment. The initial fulfillment occurs in Christ's first coming. The final and perfect fulfillment will be ushered in at Christ's second coming.
- So what has the coming of Christ brought God's people?
- *Christ's coming turns the darkness of gloom to the light of joy.*
- Verse 1: "But there will be *no* gloom for her who was in anguish. In the . . ."
- Zebulun & Naphtali were the northern most provinces of Israel, which meant they were the nearest to the Assyrians who would soon invade in Israel, destroy their land, drive them into exile, and inhabitant their land. The people of Israel were humiliated by this national defeat.
- But in verse 2, we find the metaphor that drives the entire passage. **Verse 2**
- "walked/dwelt in a land of deep darkness" They lived in a state of despair. Darkness was a metaphor for the spiritual gloom and anguish that existed because of their separation from God.
- But... because of God's amazing grace, they "have seen a great light; on them has light shined." Light equals hope. Light equals life.
- Verse 3 begins to unpack exactly what this light looks like. He says the people will move from the tired, frustrating experience of anguish and gloom to the uplifting delightful experience of gladness and joy. Look at what it says: **Verse 3**
- Four times in this verse we have a reference to joy or gladness. To know God through Jesus is to experience true joy. This is joy in God. "before you" God does this in the hearts of those who follow him.
- God sent Jesus to give us joy. Christianity is not a dull "religion." Jesus did not come to restrict us and steal our happiness in life. Jesus came to liberate us and fill us with joy.
- Consider two verses from the gospel of John.
  - **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." (John 8:12)**
  - **"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11).**
- Do you know joy? Are you experiencing consistent, abiding joy, *or* is life more of a daily drudgery? You can know the joy of Christ by receiving him for the first time or the 1,000<sup>th</sup> time today.
- Jesus came to give the light of joy, and we see how this joy comes in verses 4-7, which brings us to our second point...

## II. Jesus came to give us the light of his peace (9:4-5).

- **Verse 4:** "For the yoke of his burden..." like an unbearable weight, the Israelites carried this burden of oppression and humiliation.
- What does God do in Jesus? Breaks the yoke, breaks the staff, and breaks the rod as on the day of Midian (quick story of Gideon)
- Point: God saves through the least expected means, so that he gets the glory.
- And verse 5 teaches us how Jesus takes this notion of peace to a whole other level. This is not temporal peace. This is lasting peace. All war will cease. **Verse 5**
- I don't know if most of our anti-war, cultural pacifists know this about Jesus, but those who have bumper stickers that say: "Make crafts, not war." Or "I won't tread on you." Or the even more clever "Tolstoy is my homeboy." They should love the reign that Christ will bring.
- *Christ's coming turns the darkness of oppression to the light of peace.*
- There will be both cosmic peace and personal peace.
- We just don't see peace in our world like we want to. Our world is fractured and broken and not well. The amount of injustice and oppression in the world is incalculable.
  - This world is filled with darkness. Darkness is among us.

- 25 people were killed yesterday in Syria.
- Child abuse sex scandals at Penn State University and now Syracuse.
- In our local news: a man was shot and killed on Tuesday in Charlestown.
- Also on Tuesday, a woman from Lowell pled guilty to sexually assaulting her four kids in the late 1990s.
- Deep down we all long for this. We long for every wrong to be made right, for every evidence of the fallen world we live in to be completely eradicated and overturned, that something new and more glorious might come into view, and I'm here to tell you it will happen when Jesus returns.
- He gave glimpses of his restorative power in his first coming. The blind received sight. The hungry were fed. The lame and sick were healed. The dead are raised. The glimpses will become the permanent reality when Christ comes again.
- But while Jesus will one day overturn all physical suffering and oppression, that does not compare to the spiritual oppression that he stands ready to deliver us from both now and forever. Do you know the peace of Christ at a personal level? Peace with God/Peace of God.
- Trans: Jesus came to give us the light of joy, the light of peace, and finally...

### III. Jesus came to give us the [joyous] light of his leadership (9:6-7).

- There would be no light of joy, no light of peace, no light of hope and life on the horizon if not for this "for"....
- "For to us a child is born (emphasizing the humanity of the messiah), to us a son is given (emphasizes the deity of the messiah)."
- God became Man in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the God-Man, and he is the leader of the people of God. Before we unpack what his leadership looks like, I want to you to consider your own need for leadership.
- Everyone needs leadership at some point in their life. The person who says they never need leadership essentially is saying I have it all together, don't worry about me, I don't have any weaknesses, I'm all set. But the reality is, we don't have it all together, we do have many, many weaknesses, and we're not all set.
- **Pic:** This has been reinforced for me again this week. I have the immense privilege of spending a significant portion of my week with a group of 14 and 15 year old kids who like to play basketball. Many of you know that I coach the freshman boys basketball team at Medford HS....
- This week we had tryouts and our first two official practices. Needless to say my guys are excited, eager, and ready to play some basketball, BUT we're not really ready to play basketball if you know what I'm saying.
- Defensive Stance... Left-handed layups...
- They need instruction, guidance, correction, discipline, encouragement. In short, they need to be coached. They need to be led.
- My guys are working hard, and we will be ready this year to put our best foot forward, so let Malden, Everett, Cambridge and Somerville know: the Medfid Mustangs mean business. Alright, sorry. This is not a halftime speech this is a sermon. We will not be running suicides after the service!
- So to bring it back to the text, Spiritually speaking, we *all* need leadership. We need someone who can guide us into the life that God intends for us all along. Who can deliver the goods for us in this way? Isaiah says, It's Jesus. Look at **verses 6-7**.
- Why would anyone want to follow his lead? Why would you want to live under his reign? Because of who he is. Verse 6 says that the government will be on this son's shoulder. In other words, the weight of responsibility will fall on him. He will take care of business as only he can.

- Isaiah goes on to tell us about this child, this son by saying he will be called four different names. His names reveal his character, what is true about him. With each of these four names we see how the humanity & deity of Christ are woven together.
- a. **He leads with wisdom:** Jesus is called “Wonderful Counselor.” [Wonderful could also be translated “miracle.”] He always leads his people with perfect wisdom & insight. He knows not only what should happen (the ends), but knows exactly how to get there (the means). That’s wisdom. In other words, there may be some things going on in your life, you may be scratching your head, wondering how this is all going to work out. If you are a child of God, you can trust that Jesus will reveal himself to you and work to accomplish his wise purposes in your life. Are you struggling with an upcoming decision, struggling in your parenting, struggling with a friend? Go to Jesus. He is our wonderful counselor. He not only leads with wisdom. He also...
- b. **He leads with strength:** He is the Mighty God, a bold declaration of the divinity of the Messiah. The word in the Hebrew is *el gibbor*. *El* is used multiple times throughout Isaiah, and as well as his “strength” to accomplish whatever he wills. He has all power.
- c. **He leads with love:** He will be called “Everlasting Father.” This is not a contradiction of Trinitarian Doctrine. God the Son, Jesus, is not God the Father. This is to give a picture of his benevolent and caring rule. Like a father, Jesus protects and provides for his children. And then the text says, as verses 4 & 5 told us, Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He brings peace for all under his reign.
- d. **He leads with justice.** I realize that you may not be getting a fair shake in life right now. I know that many of you have bosses who are demanding, unrealistic, ungrateful, and quite frankly, unjust. They do not treat you like you deserve.
- e. **He leads forever.** He is the Davidic King anticipated in 2 Samuel 7. He will reign forever and his kingdom will forever increase. Let this boggle your mind... There will never be an end to his reign, and there will never be an end to the qualitative experience that everyone will
  - This is the picture of the government of Jesus. He is wise and strong and caring and just.
  - The Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Barbarians, Asians, English, or Americans. Listen, we are moving into election year, and we will hear stories and pictures of hope...
  - Are you looking forward to a just government? Look to Christ. Receive Christ.
  - How will all this happen? “The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.” (Explain) God has an unshakable desire to save us out of this mess we’re in. His resolve, his passion, his zeal is such that he will accomplish all of his intention down to the details, even the details in your life. And that’s where I’d like to end our time this morning, with the details of your life...

### Conclusion:

- **Have you received the Gift of Jesus?** You can’t give what you’ve never received. A gift can be extended but not received. [Why would we not receive a gift? Maybe we just don’t have time... Maybe we don’t believe in the quality of the gift, or more likely, we don’t believe in the quality of the giver. We don’t have sufficient reason to trust the person who is giving the gift or we don’t like the person giving the gift. That is not the case with God. He made you. He knows exactly what you need,] and he extends the greatest gift to you today, in the person of his Son. **Receive the gift!**
- The gift is free. Otherwise, it wouldn’t be a gift! You don’t have to earn. All you need to do is open your hands, receive the gift, and say thank you. But here’s how you receive it and say thank you: repentance and faith...
- **If you have received this gift, give it away!** Do you know the joy of Christ, the peace of Christ, the awesome privilege of living under the leadership of Christ? Then go and distribute the grace you have freely received. Give it away that others might also see and savor Jesus Christ.