

Advent Week 3 2018

On July 22, 2013 Catherine the Duchess of Cambridge gave birth to her first son, Prince George of Cambridge. This newborn prince entered into a world of privilege possessing a royal position from the womb. By family heritage, he was born third in the line of succession to the British throne.

- For the first time in the history of the United Kingdom, the Royal Mint in the U.K, in Canada, New Zealand and Bermuda issued commemorative coins in honor of Prince George's christening.

British News outlet, "The Telegraph" Reported:

Outside St. Mary's Hospital in Paddington, half the world was waiting. Hundreds of reporters gathered in the streets, sending live pictures of the hospital to millions of people across the planet. The people of Australia, New Zealand and Canada were watching, of course. Interest in the birth of this future head of state spread from Belize to Tuvalu. But the largest battalion of camera crews actually came from the United States.

- The bells of Westminster Abby rung out in celebration of the Prince's birth.
- Twenty-one gun salutes announced his arrival in the UK, In New Zealand, Canada and in Bermuda.

Keeping this royal birth in proper perspective we should consider these important facts:
Before his birth:

- No ancient prophet ever foretold his Advent.
- The Heavenly Host did NOT break through the skies to announce the good news George's arrival.
- And I don't know of any wise men from the east who traveled for months to bring gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to St. Mary's Hospital.

What I am getting at is this: The Birth of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, God's exalted Son was Unlike the birth of any other baby.

Dr. Steven Lawson said, "Christ is the infinite infant. When he was born he was as old as His Father and older than his mother." (Think about that.....)

His appearing was such a monumental event in the history of mankind that the very ages of time were separated and the calendar was reset to 0 at his birth.

The time prior to His incarnation is commonly spoken of as B.C. "Before Christ" and the time after his appearing is considered A.D. which stands for the Latin Phrase, "anno domini" which means "in the year of our Lord."

Next to His Death and Resurrection, the birth of Christ is the most monumental and JOYOUS event in the history of the world.

The Angels who announced his arrival proclaimed to the Shepherds

Luke 2:10 – 11, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

- In a very brief period of time these lowly shepherds moved from the sheer terror of sinful men facing the Glory of God, to joyful messengers proclaiming the Good News.

This morning as we, return to the Book of Isaiah we will consider how the light of Christ's appearing brings joy to the heart of those who once dwelt in the gloomy darkness of God's judgment. Here is our outline for this morning's devotion:

1. Manifest Light – verses 1-2
2. Multiplied Joy – verses 3-5
3. Magnificent King – verses 6-7

Background: As citizens of the U.S. in 2018, it's hard for us to imagine the darkness and fear that gripped the children of Israel in Isaiah's day.

- The people had broken covenant with God; they abandoned the Holy One who delivered their ancestors from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. Now, on every high hill and under every green tree they bowed down in immoral worship to the idols of the heathen nations that surrounded them.
- The strong arm of divine discipline was upon them. By abandoning the True and Living God they had no defense against their enemies, and in a desperate attempt to save themselves they made alliances with the treacherous rulers of Assyria.

At the height of the Assyrian empire, Sargon II and Sennacherib violently expanded their rule, viciously carrying whole populations away, dragging them into captivity literally with hooks in their noses.

- The Assyrian army was greatly feared because of their heartless cruelty. When they conquered a city, they hung the dead bodies of its leaders on the walls as a warning to anyone who would defy them.
- The Assyrians decimated the 10 northern tribes of Israel, covering the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali like a swarm of locusts, bringing darkness, death and destruction.
- Amidst this dark backdrop of Assyrian invasion, the Prophet Isaiah provides a glimmer of Light, a spark of hope to God's chosen people.

Isaiah 9:1 **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.

- The gloom of God's judgment on the land would give way to the light of His salvation. The regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, which were the first to go into captivity, would also be the first to see the light of God's salvation.
- Nazareth, the childhood home of the Lord Jesus was in the land of Zebulun, and Cana of Galilee, the location of His first miracle was in the land of Naphtali.

And so it was that **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.**

- In Isaiah's day, there was a deep darkness that could literally be felt. The threat of death was looming over the people, and still they did not repent.
- They rebelled against God & the fury of His Holy Wrath descended upon them. His strong arm of discipline carried sinners away to destruction.
- In His faithfulness, God sent the prophets to warn them; but they were blinded by their own sinfulness and refused to listen.
- The Apostle Paul writing to the Corinthian Church said:

2 Corinthians 4:3 **If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

- My Friends, there was a time IN all of our lives when we were blinded by sin, worshipping the idols of this fallen world, chasing after the lusts of our eyes, the lusts of our flesh and the pride of life, living in darkness under the wrath of God.
- BUT in His infinite mercy and for the display of His Glory, God shined the light of Christ in our hearts, bringing us from death to life by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Back in Isaiah Chapter 9.....

The light of the world is about to break on the scene. The Advent of Christ would bring light and hope and joy to the people of God who were awaiting his arrival.

- Isaiah writes:

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.**

- The light that began breaking through the clouds in Vs. 1 and the joy that spread through the region of the Galilee in Vs. 2, now becomes a chorus of praise in verse 3.
- The light of Christ will multiply the people of God to the ends of the earth, resulting in joyous praise to God across the globe.
- Isaiah describes the JOY of Christ's coming in two unique word pictures.
- The first is the image that of a farmer who has just finished bringing in a great and bountiful harvest. Today we might compare that to the joy of receiving a huge Christmas bonus. That would certainly fill you with joy.

- The second image is one that some of our older members might remember, V.E Day, V.J Day, War is Over, the cruel enemy has been defeated. Peace has come!

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.

- War has ended, the rod of the oppressor is broken, and the people rejoice!
- Isaiah describes the victory over our enemy as a time when all of the instruments of war were burned and the people rejoiced in God's great victory.
- Isaiah likens the JOY of Christ's coming to that of the Israelites when they had routed the armies of Median under the leadership of Gideon.
- Well my friends, we have a more glorious leader than Gideon. Christ has broken the power of the oppressor. He defeated the enemy of our soul putting Him to open shame through his victory in the cross.

Today, as we gather for public worship, we celebrate Christ's great victory over sin and death. We rejoice like farmers at the richness of his provision and we revel like soldiers in the abundance of His glorious peace, As Peter said:

1Pe 1:8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

ALL of the wonderful things that Isaiah has described:

- The complete removal of the gloom and anguish of God's judgment.
- The dawning of a great and brilliant light.
- The multiplication of God's people and the exponential increase of their joy is all the work of a child, a promised child, a magnificent King. That brings us to verse 6 and our final point for today:

3. Magnificent King – verses 6-7

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.

- ALL of the promises of God are tied to the advent of this Holy Child.
- Isaiah identifies him in the unmistakable language of deity.
- The Prophet foretells the unique Dual Nature of Christ.
- Describing him as a natural human child who was born of a woman, but also the divine son of God who given to us by the Father.

In order to redeem men from Sin, the Eternal Son of God become a man.

- He obeyed the Law in every way so that He could give us the gift of his perfect righteousness.
- He was tempted in every way like we are and yet he was without sin so that he could serve as our great high priest.
- He became a man so that He could die in our place as the perfect sacrifice for our sin.
- Jesus took on flesh and became the Son of Man so that we could Put Off This flesh and live as the Sons of God. He was born of a virgin so that we could be born of God; He came to earth so that we could go to heaven.

More than 700 years before His arrival Isaiah speaks of Christ's Advent in what we call the "**Prophetic Past Tense.**" IN essence, He is saying the coming of Christ is so certain that it can be spoken of as if it already happened.

- He is Immanuel, the child who was born of a virgin, (Isaiah 7:14)
- He is the Eternal Son of God who was given by the Father to be the one and only atoning sacrifice for our sins.
- IN the Book of Daniel He is the ROCK that shatters all of the governments of man, replacing them with his own eternal Kingdom where the government will rest on His shoulders and he will rule forever.
- NOW, Isaiah describes the divine nature of this Holy Child.

Throughout the Bible, the names that are given to specific individuals serve to identify their unique character. Abraham – Father of many nations, Peter – Rock.

Here in Vs. 6 Isaiah describes the nature of Christ in a series of names. **His name shall be called: Wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace**

- This child will be endowed with infinite wisdom, so vast, so glorious that He is described as "**Wonderful Counselor**"
- This word for Wonderful (PELI) means Extraordinary or Miraculous. It's used in Judges 13:18 where the angel of the Lord said to Manoah, "**Why do you ask my name seeing it is Wonderful?**"
- The words of his counsel, the content of his guidance the insight of his plans are far beyond the boundaries of human intellect.
- That is why the officers who were sent by the Jewish leaders to arrest Jesus in John Ch. 7 returned saying. "**No one ever spoke like this man!**" (John 7:46)
- The Apostle Paul described Christ as, (The One) "**in whom are hidden ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**"
- He is the storehouse, the source, the spring from which ALL wisdom flows.
- In this wisdom He is **able to work all things together for good for those who are called according to his purpose.** (Romans 8:28) What great comfort!
- And since He is the source of all wisdom James tells us:

James 1:5 **If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.**

- My Friends, there is no one you could possibly turn to, in all the world who could give you better advice or more competent counsel than Lord Jesus Christ.

When we seek to live our lives apart from his wisdom, when we rebel against the counsel of His Word we walk down a very dark and dangerous path.

Proverbs 14:12 **There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.**

The second characteristic that is laid out for us by the Prophet Isaiah identifies this child AS undiminished deity. He is called “**Mighty God.**”

- The Jehovah Witnesses who come to your door will argue till they are blue in the face that Jesus Christ is not Eternal God, but my friends, there is no other way to interpret this text, Isaiah is plainly saying that the child who is to come is divine, He is **mighty God!**
- Of course, this points back to Isaiah 7:14 where the prophet gave him another name.

Isaiah 7:14 **Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.**

- He is the Eternal God who condescended, taking on human flesh in order to dwell among men as Immanuel. Mighty God walking among us.

What this tells us is that Jesus Christ has the power to bring to pass all of the wonderful counsel that he graciously provides to all who believe.

- He doesn't merely provide counsel and then step away from us, leaving it up to us, in our own strength to accomplish his purpose and will. NO, **He is at work IN us both to will and to do what is His good pleasure.** (Philippians 2:13)

Throughout the New Testament Jesus is declared to be God over all, blessed forever, the great God, the Living God and eternal life, He IS spoken of as the Mighty One, who created all that exists and even today He continues to uphold and sustain all things by the word of his power.

- What does this mean for those of us who believe?
- He has the power to rescue us from the dominion of darkness and He has the strength and the ability to guard, to protect and keep those he has saved.

John10:28 **I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.**

John Calvin: *“We learn from this title (Mighty God) that there is in Christ abundance of protection for defending our salvation, so that we desire nothing beyond him; for he is God, who is pleased to show himself strong on our behalf.”*

- His counsel is wonderful, His power is unlimited and now we find that he is the father of eternity.

The description of Christ as the “**Eternal Father**” has caused some to ask, Is Jesus the Father as well as the Son? Friends the answer to that question is a resounding NO! The Biblical revelation of the Trinity tells us there is one God who eternally exists in three distinct persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- This description of Christ as the “**Eternal Father**” does not denote His position within the Godhead, rather it describes HIS eternal character and divine nature.
- A Literal Rendering of the Text describes Jesus as the “**Father of Eternity**” In essence Isaiah is telling us that eternity past and eternity future are in Him.

In Chapter 57, Isaiah describes Him as: **the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity,**

The Psalmist declared, “**He is from everlasting to everlasting**”

When the prophet Micah foretells the coming of Christ, He pinpoints his birthplace, BUT he also declares His Eternal Nature.

Micah 5: 2 **But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.**

Isaiah and Micah both tell how this mighty God will step out of eternity and step into time.

WHAT DO WE know about the Lord Jesus so far?

- The wisdom of his counsel is “miraculous” He is the **Wonderful Counselor**.
- He is unlimited in power so he has the ability to bring to pass his sovereign will and no one can stand against him because He is **the Mighty God**.
- Although He will enter into human history at a definite point in time, BY His very nature He is the **Father of Eternity**.
- Finally, Isaiah declares he is the Prince of Peace.

Now remember, at the time of Isaiah’s writing, Israel was living under the dark cloud of violent aggression from Assyria.

- News of a Savior one who would be called the Prince of Peace would spark HOPE and JOY in the lives of God’s People.
- The words of the Prophet were true and all who believed them would be preserved safely through the judgment of God.
- More than 700 years would pass until that sacred night when the angelic host would burst through the stratosphere announcing the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy.

Luke 2:13 **And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”**

- This Promised Child will be the source of peace for men. But what kind of peace will he bring?
- If there is one thing that we have learned from human history, any cessation of hostilities between rival nations and peoples has been temporary at best.

Remember the article I referred to last week from the New York Times. IN 3400 years of recorded human history, there have only been 268 years of peace.

My Friends, if there is any hope for lasting peace this promised Child must deal with the root cause of man’s hostility and that is SIN.

- The source of our hostility, the spring from which all animosity begins is our rebellion against our Creator.

The problem is this: By himself, Man is Powerless, totally incapable of mending his broken relationship with God. Why we can’t even mend our broken relationships with one another.

BUT the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ came to reconcile the hostilities that exist between Holy God and Sinful man.

- I am happy to say, he accomplished this peace through the shedding of his own blood on the Cross.

Colossians 1: 19 **For in him (Christ) all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.**

- This is the peace of which the Angels sang. Peace with God that was purchased at Christ’s expense on the Cross at Calvary

The Darkness and Gloom that was described by the Prophet Isaiah in Chapters 7 - 8 was the Judgment of God that came through the Army of Assyria. That Judgment was real and it was horrific.

For those of us who study God’s Word today the darkness that came through Assyria represents the outer darkness of God’s eternal judgment that will come upon everyone who rejects the peace of God that comes through Jesus Christ.

- IN the Days of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel ALL who believed the Word of the Lord were protected from the wrath of God that came upon the nation.
- Even in those days, ALL who believed in the Promised Child, the Messiah were saved from the Wrath of God by Grace, through Faith in Jesus Christ.
- AND so it is today:

Romans 10: 9 if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.11 For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

- WILL you call upon Him today?
- WILL you submit to Him as Lord?