

## November 27, 2022 - "The Heart of Christmas" series, week 1 (#421) / First Sunday in Advent

### Me...

- Mystery
- Incarnation

### You...

- The prophet Isaiah writes one of the most classic of all Old Testament prophecies about the coming birth of Christ. The passage he writes is born of gloom and darkness.
- What Isaiah offered in chapter nine was something the Jewish people needed more than anything —hope. Hope that one day someone would come to make all things right and restore what had been broken. The birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of that hope and it offers us hope in our lives today.
- The birth of Jesus was something promised that actually came to pass. We can trust Jesus is still working today, and that gives us hope.
- No matter what we are facing in life right now, anything is possible through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- Consider the way God has been faithful in the past to give us hope for the present and future.
- The true reason there is hope at the heart of Christmas is not because of gifts but because of the birth of Jesus Christ. His arrival on the earth was the fulfillment of a prophecy spoken hundreds of years ago. That prophecy is actually one of the most well-known scripture passages shared during this time of year.

**God's Word to us - Read Isaiah 9:1-7 (NLT)...** Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory. 2 The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. 3 You will enlarge the nation of Israel, and its people will rejoice. They will rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest and like warriors dividing the plunder. 4 For you will break the yoke of their slavery and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders. You will break the oppressor's rod, just as you did when you destroyed the army of Midian. 5 The boots of the warrior and the uniforms bloodstained by war will all be burned. They will be fuel for the fire. 6 For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!

### Background / Context...

- Two kingdoms divided. North (Israel) and South (Judah)
- Israel has fallen to the Assyrians.

- Judah's king, Uzziah, ruled for 52 years and "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord"; prosperous, innovative, blessed despite some mistakes along the way.
- After Uzziah's death, Isaiah was given the task to warn Judah not to make the same mistakes Israel made or else.
- Isaiah calls out to the people to repent and get right with God; TO CHANGE THEIR WAYS AND THEIR DIRECTION.
- They didn't listen and were conquered by Babylon!

- **Darkness, despair, discouragement**
- **deliverance and HOPE!**

- Prophets speak truth that needs to be heard!
- Prophets reveal stories that need to be revealed.
- Prophets can offer clues to what is to come in the future!
- They stir the pot; they call people out; they say hard things no one wants to hear; they seem radical and crazy.

- Isaiah (the book) is one of the most Jesus-centered books in all of the OT. His name means, "the Lord is Salvation"

- Over and over, Isaiah points to the coming Messiah... how he will be born (7:14), what he will look like (53:2), what he will be like (9:6) and what he will do (61:1)
- Isaiah prophesied about Jesus 700 years prior to his arrival.
- At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, he makes this claim... **Read Luke 4:18-21...** "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, 19 and that the time of the Lord's favor has come." (Isa. 61;1-3) 20 He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. **21 Then he began to speak to them. "The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!"**

- The book of Matthew also reminds us of Isaiah's writings. The gospel writer was making the connection between what Isaiah had prophetically written and what had taken place in a manger in Bethlehem... **Read Matthew 1:22-23...** "All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet: 23 "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"

**The passage from Isaiah makes two major statements.**

**1. Darkness threatens our Hope.**

**2. God is light and His presence brings Hope. 1 John 1:5...** “This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all.”

- **John 1:9...** “The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.”
- **John 8:12...** Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”
- Isaiah saw that one day in the future, God would bring a great light and salvation through the birth of a child. It was not until hundreds of years later that Matthew recorded Jesus’s birth in Bethlehem. Jesus is the very presence of God on earth. He offers forgiveness of sin, destruction of evil, and the promise of eternal life.
- So why do we read Isaiah’s prophecy each year during Christmas? It is because seeing the faithfulness of God in the past gives us deep and abiding hope in the present and unwavering trust for the future. The apostle Paul made an appeal for hope to those who trust in Christ as he wrote a letter to the early church in Rome.

**Read Romans 5:1-5 (CSB)...** Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, 4 endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. 5 This hope will not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

**Application - You (personal)**

- The foundation of Hope, which does not disappoint us, is built into our character during the dark moments of our lives with the help of the Holy Spirit!

**H.O.P.E. COMES ALIVE...**

- Hope materializes in the midst of our cries for HELP
- Hope rises out of OPPOSITION or OPPRESSION
- Hope strengthens in the midst of our PAIN
- Hope builds through EXALTATION

**Sticky Statement...**

Hope is at the heart of the Christmas story... a story of God’s presence among His people, driving the darkness away with the light of His love!