

# Introduction to Christmas

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Date: 13 December 2020

Preacher: David Skull

[0:00] Well, good morning and welcome to this pre-recorded service for 13th December 2020 for Calvary Church! And a very, very warm welcome if you're regular or if you're just dropping in. For those dropping in, I'll just say my usual introduction. We're an independent Baptist church on the south coast in the seaside town of Brighton here in the UK, directly south of London. And in former times, there were 75 to 80 of us meeting on a Sunday morning, but we're still not able to do that at the moment. My name's Philip Wells. I'm pastor elder at the church here. I'll be giving the introduction this morning. But the speaker is David Skull from Grace Church, Guildford. I'm very, very pleased and grateful that he's able to bring us the word this morning, the message from God. He's agreed to give us a pre-recorded Christmas message, or sort of pre-Christmas message, from the famous ancient prophecy in Isaiah chapter 9, which we'll be looking at as we go through. And for those of you watching in real time, our meeting this evening will be with physical presence plus live stream. In other words, you can come along if you've booked. But if you want to watch and you want to be part of that, you need to tune in at the exact time, which is 6.30. Details have gone out by email. And just one other notice next Sunday. It'll be a little bit different. We're going to have a Christmas for kids thing in the morning at the usual time by YouTube. And in the evening at seven o'clock, we'll have a

Zoom fireside carols. We usually have our carols by candlelight, but we can't be doing that. So we're going to have a fireside carols. And again, you'll find details on that. If you'd like to invite your friends, they're welcome to come. They'll need the Zoom details. So you have to arrange that as if were, as if it were a ticket. They have to apply for it, or you have to give them that information. So the plan is going to be up on the screen. And the plan is just there above my head. And as we begin, let me say a brief prayer on our behalf. Let's pray.

Almighty God, you have said that if we draw near to you, you will draw near to us. Please make that real, authentic, genuine, and true in our time this morning. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, and our great Redeemer. Amen. Well, in a moment, we're going to sing Psalm 100. Let me just read what that psalm says. A psalm for giving thanks, it says. Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us. We are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good, and his love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations.

[3:39] And that's Psalm 100. We're going to sing it in the version Psalm 100a, dated 1594. All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.

All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.

serve him with joy, his praises tell. Come now before him and rejoice. Know that the Lord is God indeed. He formed us all without a ray.

We are the flock he loves to feed. We are the flock he loves to feed. A sheep who by his hand are made.

O enter then his gates with praise, and in his courts his love proclaim. Give thanks and bless him all your days.

[5:25] Let every tongue confess his name. The Lord our mighty God is good. His mercy is forever sure.

His truth that all times certainly stood. And shall promise to age endure.

Now having sung that ancient psalm which the people of God have used for thousands of years to praise the name of the Lord, let us pray now.

And as we continue to pray at the end of this, we will say the Lord's Prayer together. Lord our God, we want to come before you and rejoice that you are the Lord, that you are good and great.

We want to worship you and great. We want to worship you with gladness and come before you with joy and with joyful songs. We remember that you are God, our great eternal almighty maker.

[6:54] We didn't make ourselves, we didn't get here by accident, but you have made us. And we belong to you through creation and through grace. We are your people, the sheep of your pasture.

So help us to come to you with gratitude and worship. We confess our sins asking that you will forgive us and deliver us if we become bitter or thankless or grumbling or unbelieving.

For whatever sins we may have done by commission or omission, we come to asking you to cleanse us and forgive us and deliver us and to grant us repentance.

We come in thanksgiving, particularly at this Christmas time, whereas we come near to Christmas, remembering that this is the time which we remember the coming of the Saviour, that you did not leave us in darkness and hopelessness, perpetually waiting for something to be fulfilled, but it never actually happening.

But rather, you did come and you sent your Son to be our Saviour. We thank you for the Word made flesh, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Redeemer.

[8:11] So as we come this morning, we pray that you will uphold all your dear people. We've been through quite a time over these months, and perhaps some of us are weary.

So we pray that we might not be wearied, but refreshed. And particularly as we come to this Christmas time, that there might be joy, gladness, and things to enable us to be grateful to you, and some taste of the peace that passes all understanding.

Please may this not just be limited to your people, but may others come to know and realise who you are and how good that is. Please bring glory and honour to your name at this time.

And be with us in this time together. Help us, not only those who have spoken, but as we listen, to have listening, appreciative hearts that are able to feed on your word.

So hear our prayers, for we pray them in Jesus' name. Amen. And let's say together the Lord's Prayer. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

[9:27] Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Amen. So following our order on the screen just by my head there, we're now going to read from Matthew's Gospel.

It's in Matthew chapter 4. Now the part of the Bible that David will be referring to is in the book of the prophet Isaiah, chapter 9, verses 1 to 7, and he'll be reading that later.

It refers, as he might well tell us, to the time when Israel's territory was being eaten into by invaders. And the invasion started up in the north, and the invaders got further and further south.

[10:31] Now the northern area is called Galilee. And they were the people under the darkness of pagan occupation. And the prophecy will say that the people who live in darkness have seen a great light.

This northern area, Galilee, Galilee of the Gentiles. And this place that was in darkness will be the first to experience the removal of darkness and the coming of great light.

And in Matthew's Gospel, Matthew tells us the story of Jesus and refers to this prophecy. And he says that when Jesus walked around and taught, this is the fulfillment of that ancient prophecy.

So I'm going to read Matthew 4, 12 to 25. When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee.

Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah. From that time on, Jesus began to preach.

[11:56] As Jesus was walking beside the sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, called Peter, and his brother Andrew.

They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. Come, follow me, Jesus said, and I will make you fishers of men.

At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets.

Jesus called them. And immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases and those suffering pain. The demon possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them.

[13:10] Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and the region across the Jordan followed him. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Well, as we're saying, we're in the season of Advent. That's the traditional season in the European cultural calendar, following the church's calendar.

And at this time we think ahead of Jesus coming as a baby, which we commemorate for various reasons on December the 25th here in England.

And obviously Jesus isn't born freshly each December the 25th each year. It isn't something that happens afresh each year, nor is it something that only has implications once a year.

There are many abiding implications and many abiding wonders concerning the coming of Jesus as a baby. And this next song, number 396, picks those out admirably.

[14:18] From heaven you came, helpless babe, entered our world, your glory veiled. So let's sing this, and then after this, David will come and pray and read and speak to us.

So let's sing, and then over to David. From heaven you came, helpless babe, entered our world, your glory veiled, not to be served, but to serve.

And give your life that we might live. This is our God, the servant King.

He calls us now to follow Him, to bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to the servant King.

There in the garden of tears, by heavy load He chose to bear, His heart with sorrow was torn.

[16:08] Yet not my will, but yours, He said. This is our God, the servant King.

He calls us now to follow Him, to bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to the servant King.

Come see His hands and His feet, hands that flung stars into space.

The scars that speak of sacrifice, hands that flung stars into space, to cruel nails surrender.

Father, this is our God, the servant King. This is our God, the servant King. He calls us now to

follow Him, to bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to the servant King.

[17:36] So let us learn how to serve. And in our lives enthroning, each other's needs to prefer.

For it is Christ we're serving. This is our God, the servant King.

This is our God, the servant King. He calls us now to follow Him, to bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to the servant King.

The servant King. I bring you greetings from Grace Church in Guildford.

And like you, we're seeking to honour the Lord during this Christmas season. I thank you also for prayerfully encouraging the new planting initiative in Brighton as we seek to plant another church.

[19:12] I pray that the gospel would expand and grow in the city of Brighton. And we thank God for your partnership and your encouragement in that as well. Let's read the scriptures.

We read the scriptures together. And our passage this morning as we prepare for Christmas coming up is Isaiah chapter 9. Isaiah chapter 9. And we're going to read verses 1 down to 7.

Isaiah chapter 9 verses 1 to 7. Nevertheless, the gloom of the distressed land will not be like that of the former times when He, the Lord, humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali.

But in the future, He will bring honour to the way of the sea, to the land east of the Jordan, and to the Galilee of the nations. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

A light has dawned on those living in the land of darkness. You have enlarged the nation and increased its joy. The people have rejoiced before you as they rejoice at harvest time, as they rejoice when dividing spoils.

[20:28] For you have shattered their oppressive yoke and the rod on their shoulders and the staff of their oppressor, just as you did on the day of Midian. For every trampling boot of battle and the blooded garments of war will be burned as fuel for the fire.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on His shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

The dominion will be vast, and its prosperity will never end. He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish and sustain it, with justice and righteousness from now on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord of armies, the Lord of hosts, will accomplish this. Let's see the Lord in prayer together, shall we?

Father, we come before you in the name of Jesus, your Son. We come not because we have righteousness in and of ourselves, but we have Christ's righteousness, and we are perfectly fitted for your presence.

[21:50] Thank you, Father, for uniting us to Jesus. Father, we come before you in our thankfulness, but also with our requests, knowing that you are our loving Heavenly Father, and you love to hear the prayers of your people.

We pray that we'll be praying in the name of Jesus truly, and in a line with your will and his will today. Father, we lift up before you our nation, and we pray for our government, Lord.

We pray that you would please sustain our leaders as they continue to help us face this coronavirus. We're so thankful, Lord, for the first application of a vaccine.

Thank you for those who are being treated. And we pray, Father, for the elderly and for those who are healthcare professionals particularly, Lord, that they would soon be strengthened.

And Father, we pray that in your goodness there will be a vaccine available for us, and for all the nations of the earth. We pray, Father, in your kindness, please, we ask that this virus will be pushed away.

[22:56] But please give our government wisdom and justice and fairness in the way that they deal with this problem. And we thank you so much for the many gifted people who are seeking to serve us and help us.

We pray, Lord, also about the Brexit negotiations. We pray, Heavenly Father, for fairness and justice there. We pray for the harmony of the churches over this issue as well as the nation.

And we pray, Father, as we move into a new era of our nation's life, we pray that we would learn to put our trust in you and to live according to your law and your good values, we pray.

We pray, Father, for the churches up and down our land, particularly in this Christmas time. Lord, it's such a challenge when the normal opportunities for outreach are quite restricted.

We thank you for the imaginative approaches that many churches can take. But we ask most of all, Father, that the name of Jesus would ring out clearly and widely from groups of your people up and down the land.

[23:57] I pray that particularly for the churches in Brighton. I pray for my friends here at Calvary that you would please unite them together in love and help them to hold out the truth of Jesus.

And you would be especially close to them at this Christmas season that you would minister to them by your word. And there'll be a felt sense of your presence shaping and transforming their lives into the likeness of Jesus and bringing them fresh joy.

Lord, you know the challenges and the troubles of this past season for them on top of the coronavirus. I just pray that you would uphold those who are grieving and comfort.

Be with those who have been hurt, Father. And pray that you would strengthen and build up your church in love and in joy in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, we pray for the other churches in the town, particularly those close to us. We think of Park Hill and we think of New Life Church.

[24:55] Think of Ebenezer as well as some of the wider churches. We pray, Father, for their encouragement and their strengthening in the Lord Jesus today. We pray that your Holy Spirit would lead and guide each church for your own glory.

And Lord, we pray for ourselves, Heavenly Father. We pray that you would renew our energy. Pray that today will truly be a day of rest and peace for us, equipping us for a new week of service for you.

And we pray, Father, for our relationships. We pray, Father, for our holiness. We pray, Father, for our own personal discipleship. And I join the Lord Jesus that you would do good to us in this season, we pray.

So please forgive our sins, Father. And we know that the Lord Jesus died once and for all. The righteous for the unrighteous have bring us to you. And we pray, Lord, that you would continue to forgive us and enable us in Christ's full and sufficient work to live joyful lives in obedience to you. Hear us, we pray, and bless us as we come to your word. Pray that our hearts will be open and tuned to it. That I'll be able to preach with your Spirit's help. And you'll do good to your people today, we pray.

[26:02] In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, let's come to that passage in the book of Isaiah. So it would be useful if you could have it at home.

Open at home. In your Bible or on your tablet. Try not to get distracted by other things on your phones, though. Let's come to God's word, shall we?

Isaiah chapter 9. Now, as we prepare for Christmas, it is possible and perfectly forgivable to feel slightly on the gloomy side.

Despite the vaccinations that are making progress and giving great hope to the nation, there is still the ongoing effect of the coronavirus upon our homes, our relationships, our works, our economy. And so we will be forgiven for feeling a bit on the gloomy side this Christmas. And Calvary, you of all churches, will be forgiven for not being full of joy, exuberant joy, in this Christmas season after the difficult season you have been through and still continue to go through.

[27:11] Please be assured of our prayers for you. And know that the Lord who began his good work in you will continue to bring it to its completion. Trust him through this season. But I want to encourage you this morning as you prepare for Christmas with these words from Isaiah chapter 9.

Because in these verses we see that there is, in the coming of Jesus, there is real joy on the horizon. It is given now, but to be fully experienced when Jesus comes back. And joy is the final word for the people of God, because of the gift of Jesus, God's Son, and the victory that he brings. So we want to encourage you with that this morning. Now this sign in these verses, or this promise of the Son, rather, is really the third you can describe in a series in the book of Isaiah.

So the first, as I said, is a sign. In Aliyah chapter 7 verse 14, the Lord himself will give you a sign, says Isaiah, and the virgin will be with child, and will give birth to a son, and you'll call him Emmanuel.

There's the sign of the coming of Jesus. Further on in chapter 11, there's the promise of the shoot, that Jesus will be a shoot. A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse. From his roots a branch will bear fruit, the promise of the Messiah coming.

[28:32] A sign, a shoot. But here in these verses, in chapter 9, we have the promise of a son. The promise of a son who will bring joy to the despairing people of God.

Now Isaiah brings this message in chapter 9. It's really a message of assurance and encouragement and hope to the people of God. And who doesn't need a bit of that at this time? Now in its own Old Testament context, God's people find themselves under the burden of the Assyrians because of their sin. The Assyrians have swept through the nation from the north and have taken the northern kingdom of Israel, and Jerusalem looks like it's going to be next.

And so God's people, because of their idolatry and sinfulness, sadly, see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom. Look at chapter 8, verse 22.

They will look towards the earth and see only distress, darkness and gloom of affliction, and they will be driven into thick darkness. I mean, is there any hope for the people of God in this situation with the Assyrians dominating them?

[29:37] Well, according to Isaiah 9, yes, there is. There's hope in the Lord. Hope in the Lord. So the Lord speaks of how he will act on behalf of his remnant people, those in verse 17 of chapter 18, who are waiting for him, who are hiding, who are waiting for the Lord, who are trusting him.

And so with all the things look dark now, the future is ultimately bright for God's people, even though they can't see it right at this moment. And in some ways, that's a parallel to us.

Although we have the finished work of Christ, our present circumstances may be circumstances where we see gloom. But on the horizon, we know fully and surely is joy and light because of the coming of Jesus.

So Isaiah speaks in chapter 9, verse 3, of joy. You have enlarged the nation and increased its joy. And then he explains that joy in verses 4 to 7.

And he's so confident in its future. And he wants to encourage and build up the despairing people of God at this time. So look at verse 1. Think about this joy. Isaiah points, first of all, to the north, to the land of Zebulun and Naphtali.

[30:47] That's the land where the Assyrians first came into on their march through Israel. And he says to those northern parts, Zebulun and Naphtali, no more gloom.

Yes, in the past, God humbled you as the Assyrians trampled over you. But in the latter time, he will make you glorious.

Verse 2 explains that into your death-like darkness, verse 2, that was your experience under the Assyrians. A light, a great light will shine.

It's like the dawning of a new day for you. It's significant that in Matthew chapter 4, Matthew quotes these verses as he describes the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

The dawning of a new day. The light has dawned. The Messiah has come. In verse 3, though God's people have been shrunk by the Assyrians, there's only a remnant left.

[31:58] Instead, they will be multiplied by the Lord. He will make their joy great. It's an expansion, an exuberant joy, as well as a numerical growth.

Now that word joy, you need to remember, is probably the very opposite of how they were feeling, of their current experience under the Assyrians.

But three times in these verses, the word joy is mentioned. Verse 3, the Lord will increase their joy. What a great hope.

They will rejoice before the Lord in his very presence, with joy like that at the harvest. A joy like that after the victory, after sharing the plunder.

There is joy on the horizon, says Isaiah. Now we need to take this on board as God's new covenant people.

[33:00] No matter what the gloom is of our current circumstances, and who could deny that there is gloom for all of us in some ways or another.

Ultimately, there is joy for God's people promised because of the coming of Jesus. As I said, there is a tension, because that joy is true, but only fully experienced at the return of Jesus, as we will think about later.

But joy is to mark the people of God, even in the midst of their trials, as they trust God. Not a superficial happiness, but a deep-seated joy that God gives.

Listen to Romans chapter 14, verse 17. The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking. That's where many people find joy.

But it's a matter of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. In Luke's Gospel, the 72 returned to Jesus after their mission in Luke 10 with joy.

[34:13] Saying, Lord, even the demons submit to us. Jesus says, do not rejoice that the Spirit submits you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

John 16, verse 22. John 16, verse 22. Jesus says to his disciples as he heads towards the cross, now is your time of grief. But I will see you again, and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

Acts chapter 13. The Gentiles hear the gospel. They glad they honour the word of the Lord. Those appointed for eternal life believe.

And their disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Let's remember, therefore, that joy is on the horizon for the people of God.

May he bring back our joy in 2021. Now, in these verses in Isaiah 9, if the Lord had just given the promise of joy, that would be enough, wouldn't it?

[35:24] Joy is coming. But in these verses in Isaiah 9, he goes on to explain why there will be joy. And why he's so certain about it. These are the reasons that joy is coming.

And the reasons for them to rejoice. There's something about our society at the moment that we look for happiness, what joy ultimately is. But we don't find the right reasons for it.

And therefore, joy to true satisfaction never comes. But here is the promise of joy. In fact, there are three promises, verses 4 down to 7.

Three reasons why this increase of joy will be the experience of God's people who are currently in despair. First of all, in verse 4, Isaiah speaks about the joy of their oppression being broken.

The Lord shattering their oppressive yoke, just as he did on the day of Midian. That was the day of Gideon, the judge, and how God rescued his people against all the odds.

[36:33] So the power of Assyria, he says here, over you will be broken. It won't be broken by you, but by the Lord himself, just as the Lord used Gideon all those years ago.

So there will be joy because of your freedom that is coming, the great victory. Secondly, there's going to be joy, verse 5, because this threat of the Assyrians will be completely removed from you. He speaks about their boots will be for burning. In other words, the boots and the bloodstained garments of their enemies will be completely removed and will be fuel for the fire.

Threat removed, peace, security, a reason for joy. And then thirdly, all this comes down to verses 6 and 7. Their oppression will be broken.

The threat will be completely removed because the Lord will give them this son, this child. He will be the Messiah. Let me read these verses to you, verses 6 and 7.

[37:42] For a child will be born for us. A son will be given to us. And the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

Ultimately, under his reign will peace and security come. And that will lead to the increased joy of God's people. Isaiah describes him here as a child to be born.

Yet, at the same time in verse 6, he is a son given, born given from God. In the second half of verse 6, you see that he's described here as not just God given, but God's King.

He will shoulder the responsibility of ruling and leading God's people. And in him, they will be safe. So, in chapter 9, verse 6, Isaiah gives four descriptions of the rule of the Messiah, the rule of Jesus. They are his throne names, as it were, describing what it will be like to be under his rule. Speaking of his character and his attributes as king. This child to be born, this son to be given, will be called a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

[39:04] First of all, he will be called Wonderful Counselor, or Supernatural Counselor. He will know exactly what to do, because he has the wisdom from God to rule and lead his people. How often have we been flummoxed over the past year?

We don't know what to do next. We can't sort it out. Well, under God's King Jesus, we have one who is completely in control, and has all the wisdom that God has given to lead and rule his people in the church.

Isn't that good news? He's the Wonderful Counselor. He's called here God's Mighty King. Mighty King. This is his name, but this is also who he is.

God's, sorry, not mighty, Mighty God. Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God. This is who he is, the God of strength and might. He has the power to defeat these oppressors, the Assyrians, and to break their rod, their staff, their yoke upon them.

He has the power to deal with Satan and his grip upon his people, to set them free through the cross. And he has the power to set us free from the power and the grip of our sin.

[40:08] Such is the power of this King, Jesus Christ. Thirdly, God's great King, born, given to us, is called Everlasting Father.

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father. Now, don't confuse the words Everlasting Father with God the Father in the Godhead. Rather, this is a description of the fatherly care of King Jesus for his people.

Psalm 68 calls God a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, God in his holy dwelling. And that's a characteristic of Jesus Christ's fatherly, tenderly care for his children.

Of course, he is an everlasting father. And that care and love and tender compassion for his children continues, continues and is never broken in the reign of King Jesus.

Fourthly, God's King Jesus is called here Prince of Peace. So he's able to bring about this great time in Isaiah's language and all the boots will be for burning. He's the great bringer of peace to his people.

[41:18] And of course, in the Lord Jesus Christ, that is a description of his rule and his reign that has begun in the church, but will be seen ultimately when he returns. And it's a picture of peace with God and peace with others.

So he is a wonderful Counselor, his mighty God, his Everlasting Father, his Prince of Peace. And his wonder wisdom, his divine mighty strength and his fatherly care and his bringing of peace to his people.

He is God's great provision. And it's for that reason, joy is dawning for God's people. Notice in verse 7 also that this king has a growing kingdom.

The reason for joy is not just in his quality, his character, his attributions, but also what he will do.

The increase of his covenant and peace, there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

All these things may have looked small and insignificant in Isaiah's day. Jerusalem would have seemed so small, surrounded and scared even, surrounded by the Assyrians.

[42:32] But God's provision of this king would lead a great breakthrough, as we know from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria, to the ends of the earth, displayed in local churches today around the world, and one day to experience when Jesus comes back.

And what is that kingdom like? It can be glimpsed in the life of the church. It's a kingdom, verse 7, full of justice and righteousness. A great place to be, a place of joy.

Just a few applications to take from these words, the joy that comes from the giving of God's King, Jesus Christ. The first application here is, if he is the great king who will rule with justice and righteousness, then please don't put all your trust in human princes.

Governments are God's gift to the world, but they are flawed and will always fail in some way or another. Governments will never be able to deliver truly on all their promises.

They will not be able to bring about world peace. So we must pray for our leaders, we must submit to them, where it is appropriate under Christ, but we mustn't place all our hope in them.

[43:48] You see, joy is bound up with the birth and reign of one ruler that we submit to overall. And that's the birth of Jesus Christ. So let's remember that our joy is bound up with him, his life and death, his resurrection, the way that the yoke or the burden of our sins and our oppressors have been broken in Christ.

We mustn't put our trust in human princes, trust Christ. Secondly, let's just remember, as I've hinted already, that this joy that is promised, and it's a wonderful joy that is promised, you have enlarged the nation and increased its joy, verse 3.

And that's helpful because we don't always feel joyful, do we, as Christians?

And we go through some very dark and challenging times. But it's both now and still to come. Well, it's now because Jesus has come. He has been given.

He has been born. And his kingdom has come. And through his death and resurrection and ascension, he is reigning at this moment. 1 Corinthians 15 tells us that Christ must reign until he

has put all his enemies under his feet.

[45:05] For Christ is reigning now. Let's remember that. So this is, in part, a joyful time, as we see the unfolding of verse 4 even, the breaking of the yoke, the staff and the rod, that Christ freeing his people through the gospel, even today.

And his churches are places of peace and righteousness and joy in the Holy Spirit. So the joy is both now. But the full experience of this joy is yet to come.

You and I know with our experiences over the past year that we go through very deep, dark times, don't we? And some more than others. But 1 Corinthians 15 also tells us that the end will come when Christ hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power, for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

The last enemy to be destroyed is death. So there is a joy now, but there is ultimately a victory, a fulfillment of these verses on that last day when Jesus returns.

And death itself is destroyed. What a hope we have. Well, let's rejoice, therefore, in what God has accomplished in giving us Jesus as we build up to Christmas.

[46:30] Think about his birth, but also his life, his death, his resurrection. And let's rejoice in what God is doing through King Jesus even now. Let's rejoice before him intentionally.

Thank you, Lord. Jesus is reigning. But also through the gloom and through the darkness, let's anticipate the full experience of that joy to come.

Verse 5. When light the joy harvests, like the joy of dividing the spoil, we will fully, safely and securely and finally and eternally rejoice before the Lord in his presence.

What a hope that is. So that's the second application. Our joy is both now and still to come. Thirdly, let's apply this to the church, shall we?

Let's apply this to the church. Where is this joyful, growing kingdom to be seen and tasted and experienced?

[47:31] Where is the Lord, as well as helping us through turmoil and trouble, increasing our joy? Where is the light today shining in the darkness?

And the answer is Calvary Church, Brighton. And also in other gospel churches in the city and up and down our lands.

Your church is in its small way, as we all are imperfect, it is a true display of the promises of Isaiah 9.

The kingdom of God, where Christ governs, he is our head. Where his peace is to be found. Something that increases, never ends.

And it begins and grows in local congregations like yours and ours. Because Jesus really is reigning. He really is the wonderful counselor to us.

[48:35] The mighty God for us. The eternal Father watching over us. And the Prince of Peace guiding us into peace. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking as the world will do.

Temporary pleasures. But of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. To be experienced in the church. The fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit.

To be experienced in growing quality and quantity amongst us. Is love, joy, peace.

May this characterize Calvary and Grace Church Guildford. And new works as they begin. Let us display the kingdom of the Son now.

Knowing that the best is yet to come. Friends, if you're watching this and you're not yet in the kingdom of Christ. You're not yet secure in these promises that Isaiah 9 is talking about.

[49:39] Then can I just encourage you with the end of verse 7. You may think, with all the problems in the world, how is such a wonderful promise going to be fulfilled? Even churches are flawed.

Even churches are not the perfect place that they should be. Well, look at those final words of Isaiah 9, verse 7. The zeal of the Lord of armies, the Lord of hosts, will accomplish this.

Friends, God is doing it in local churches through the gospel. And you today, you can be included in this too. If you will acknowledge the truth of Jesus.

His life, his death, his resurrection. And he will set you free to belong into his kingdom. And join the local church too. Put your trust in Jesus.

Repent from your sin. Turn to him today. Friends, there is a joy promised for us, despite our gloom. [50:45] A joy on the horizon. And it comes through the gift of Jesus. The one who's coming we celebrate at Christmas. Let me pray for us. Let's pray.

Father, thank you so much for this great promise of Isaiah chapter 9. And thank you, Lord, that despite the gloom that we see around us, there is a promise of increased and expanding joy in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you so much for setting us free and bringing us into the reign of Christ now in the church. And how we long, Father, how we long and pray that we will see Christ more and more exalted and his rule more and more in our congregations.

That we will not fear. But we will find Christ to be our all sufficient ruler and leader. Please help us to experience this more and more in our lives.

Please help us to fight the gloom and to face it with the finished work of Christ. And we thank you for the joy that lies before us in Jesus Christ. Bless Calvary Church in this Christmas season, I pray.

[52:05] Bring them closer to each other and closer to you through the Lord Jesus Christ. By your Holy Spirit, I pray in Jesus name. Amen. So thank you, David, for speaking to us.

We've heard how God's message brings us from darkness to light and to joy. And the very center of this is Jesus himself.

So we'll close our meeting now with another Advent type song. Joy to the world, the Lord has come. Let earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare him room.

And heaven and nature sing. It's 363 in the book and the words will come up on the screen. Come up on the screen. Joy to the world, the Lord has come.

Joy to the world, the Lord has come. 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. And heaven and nature sing.

[53:19] Let every heart repair him room And heaven and nature sing And heaven and nature sing And heaven and nature sing Joy to the earth the Savior raised Your sweetest songs employ While fields and streams and hills and plains Repeat the sounding joy Repeat the sounding joy Repeat the sounding joy

No more let sins and sorrows grow Nor thorns infest the ground He comes to make his blessings flow Where Eden's curse is found Where Eden's curse is found Where in heaven Eden's curse is found He rules the world with truth and grace And makes the nations prove The glories of his righteousness The wonders of his love

The wonders of his love The wonders, wonders of his love Here is our closing prayer To him who is able to keep you from falling And to present you before his glorious presence Without fault and with great joy To the only God our Saviour Be glory, majesty, power and authority Through Jesus Christ our Lord Before all ages Before all ages Now and forevermore Amen Amen Don't forget next week in the morning It'll be specially for kids And some of us will be meeting this evening So hope to see you soon And bye bye from me  
Bye bye Bye bye