

For to Us a Child Is Born

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Preacher: Mike Loosa

[0:00] Oh, good morning, church. Happy belated Thanksgiving. You guys are all stuffed with turkey and stuffing and awake and alive here this morning.

! My name is Mike. I'm one of the pastors here at Shoreline.! I'm just so glad that you guys have joined us this morning. As Brad mentioned, we just finished a series going through the elders' vision for Shoreline.

So again, I encourage the members to come to us with questions or feedback. Especially this week leading up to our congregational meeting. And we are entering now into our Advent season.

There are, some of the kids are grabbing them. I think there's some more handouts on the back for any of the kids. Sorry, adults. The vision series we had handouts for you, but not anymore. There's extras, though. Feel free to grab one.

As we walk through Advent, approaching Christmas, we're headed back into the book of Isaiah. Isaiah, which we spent the fall of 2024 in.

[1:02] But we're going back further than we were before to Isaiah chapter 9, which was read for us earlier. So feel free to turn in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 9. You know, Isaiah is a beautiful, majestic book.

I encourage you guys to spend time in the whole book. And it's a book that is vastly more quoted in the New Testament than any other. And in Isaiah 9, we find the nation of Israel in a dark state.

So I just want to set the scene for you. You know, Brad gave some of this during his Advent reflection. For centuries, the nation of Israel has been divided in two. And I think the Shoreline Kids were just talking about Solomon, the divided kingdom in Shoreline Kids recently.

So you guys know this story. It was divided between the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. And both kingdoms have experienced, you know, some good kings, but a lot of bad kings that have led the people into increasing evil.

And so right now, as we read Isaiah 9, Israel and Judah both are on the verge of national and spiritual collapse. And the tone so far, again, I encourage you to read through Isaiah up to the point that we're in.

[2:18] The tone thus far has been ominous. And the state of the nation is gloomy. Now, it's not too much of a stretch to look around at our own nation and feel a bit similarly.

On the verge of spiritual and national collapse, I mean, I think there's a case to be made. Now, even if not, our land is plagued with darkness.

The tone has been ominous. The state has been gloomy. The thing is, we don't have to look any further than our own hearts and our own homes to sense this cloak of darkness.

Family discord. Relational strife. Physical suffering and death. Anxiety.

Depression. I mean, you name it. Sometimes it feels like we are just walking about in darkness. And then Isaiah comes, sent from God, and proclaims to us a message of light.

[3:30] And so that's what we're looking at this morning. It's a message of light. So if you haven't already, please turn to Isaiah 9, 1 through 7. If you need Bibles, they're available on the back table, bookmarked to today's passage, so feel free to keep one.

And we begin this four-part Advent series, which is entitled, The Light Shines in the Darkness. And the title of today's sermon comes right out of the passage from verse 6.

For to us, a child is born. To us, a child is born. Now, before we continue, let's pause and pray again. Heavenly Father, we need your help, Lord.

We need your help. This is a glorious message of light. One that you're serving here is incapable of unveiling in all of its glory. And so I just ask, Lord, that you would be the one unveiling the glorious message of Isaiah 9 for us today.

God, teach us. Instruct us. Lead us in the way that we ought to go. Transform our hearts. Make us a people of hope. As a result of this passage, we pray in Jesus' name.

[4:35] Amen. Let me reread for us the first two verses of Isaiah 9. Look there in your Bibles, Isaiah 9, 1 and 2. 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 people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. Now, the first point I want us to consider here is the present darkness and distress.

Look at all the darkness-related words in verses 1 and 2. We see gloom, anguish, contempt, and then walked in darkness, dwelt in a land of deep darkness.

And so we have to stop and ask ourselves, what is the nature of this darkness that Isaiah is talking about? Now, I already hinted at this a little bit, but in the first eight chapters of Isaiah, we find Israel and Judah walking in spiritual darkness.

[5:49] Chapter 1, verse 4. God tells Judah that their sacrifices to him are worthless because of their evil deeds.

And so even as they give lip service to God, they are perverting justice in the land, for example.

They're bowing before idols of gold and silver. Now, this is the dark state of Judah.

God has continually called her to repentance, offering her mercy and forgiveness, but these offers have largely gone unheeded.

In fact, in chapter 6, that famous chapter, when Isaiah sees the vision of the throne room of God and then receives his prophetic calling, he's told—now, how is this for some motivation?

He's told that his ministry will only have a hardening effect on the present generation. That's what he's told. And then in chapters 7 and 8, we see King Ahaz as sort of the representation of Judah's hardened unbelief.

[6:52] Read 2 Kings 16 this week to learn about Ahaz. 2 Kings 16. He was one of those, you know, bad kings who did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Do you know what Ahaz is known for?

Burning his son as an offering. He did that. Desecrating the temple with pagan worship. And as we see in Isaiah 7 and 8, what he's also known for is for relying on Assyria for protection rather than God.

You see, King Ahaz, he's afraid because Israel, the northern kingdom, and then Syria, just above them, they were joining forces to attack Judah.

And God tells Ahaz, look, don't fear, have faith. Well, Ahaz doesn't have faith. And he makes alliance with, you know, big bad Assyria to help him out because he doesn't trust in the Lord to save.

And so the pride, the unbelief, the rebellion of King Ahaz is representative of the entire kingdom. This is the dark state of Judah. Now, there is a faithful minority, a faithful remnant.

[8:04] Isaiah and his disciples represent that faithful remnant. They are trusting in the Lord. They're waiting on the Lord. But for the rest, if you look at the final verse of chapter 8, for the rest, it says, they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish, and they will be thrust into thick darkness.

And so this verse shows us what we've actually seen throughout the book so far. The darkness is not only their sin, but it's also the judgment of the Lord that he's bringing upon them for that sin. And perhaps you find yourself this morning in a similar spiritual state to King Ahaz and to Judah. Perhaps you're resting your hopes and your dreams and your future security, not in God, but in things of this world.

Probably not a military alliance with a foreign nation, but maybe career success, maybe financial stability, maybe the approval of certain people, whether a boss or family or friends, or maybe even

your own good works.

None of these things, friends, none of these things can bear the weight that they need to bear if you're going to find the satisfaction and the safety that your heart desires.

[9:36] Now, what do I mean by that? What I mean is that the weight that those things need to ultimately bear is the weight of the righteous anger and judgment of a holy God.

You know, these worldly things can scarcely deliver on temporary satisfaction and temporary safety, let alone protect you from the fury of God's wrath.

And you might say, well, I don't think my little sins merit the wrath of God. And friend, I'd like to tell you that it's not what you or I think about our sin that determines the severity.

It's what God thinks. And what God tells us is that if we've broken yet one portion of his law, then we are, in fact, lawbreakers. That's who we are.

And God's perfect justice requires that lawbreakers be punished. And the punishment is, therefore, what every single one of us deserves.

[10:36] All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3.23. The spiritual darkness that characterized Judah in 8th century BC, it actually characterizes all of us.

All of us, that is, apart from the saving grace of God's light. And so we move into this future light and life. Future light and life.

Judah was characterized by darkness and distress. And so that makes the prophecy in chapter 9 all the more incredible. What Isaiah is proclaiming is a future in which divine light pierces the darkness that now plagues the land.

And so the first part of this is the light shining in darkness. Isaiah says there will be no gloom, no gloom for her who was in anguish. And the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea. Those dwelling in deep darkness have seen a great light. On them light has shone. In verse 1, Isaiah mentions Zebulun and Naphtali.

[11:47] If you could go to the next slide, Kevin. Zebulun and Naphtali were in the Galilee region of Israel.

They were the northernmost tribes of Israel. And they would have been the first in Israel to fall when Assyria came rampaging through the land.

And Isaiah foresees here a time when that region of Galilee would be made glorious. But why does he say Galilee of the nations?

This designation is found nowhere else in the Old Testament. Galilee of the nations. What is that about? And this here, it picks up on a theme that will only increase throughout the book of Isaiah. It was introduced in chapter 2. That not only Israel, but the nations will be included in this future dawning of light. 750 years later, the Gospel of Matthew records.

[12:53] Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali.

So that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled. And then Matthew goes on to quote Isaiah 9, 1 and 2. The light shining in the darkness is Jesus Christ himself.

The light of the world. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1, 5. This light that dawned in first century Galilee is a light that brings healing not only to Israel, but to the nations.

Those from every tribe, from every tongue, from every nation who turn their faces to behold Christ are beholding the light that overcomes the darkness. And let's not keep this in the abstract here, because Isaiah is prophesying to a people in the darkness of rebellion against God.

A people about to be punished by God at the hand of Assyria. And this prophecy is God compassionately declaring, I will not finally abandon my people.

[14:06] I will not give up on you. In divine love, I am sending an all-penetrating light to dispel your gloomy darkness. Friends, this is God's declaration to us.

He did not abandon us in our hopeless estate. He didn't leave us in the darkness, but he entered into it. In order to free us from it, he sent his son Jesus, the light of the world, to flame our dungeons of sin with his piercing light.

And that cost him his precious life upon the cross. What marvelous grace is this? Friend, are you ignoring God's call to repent and turn to him?

Are you choosing instead to chase after the things of this world? Are you seeking satisfaction in money, or in friendships, or in sex, or in personal success?

Or have you done things that you wouldn't dare tell anybody in this room? Things that you feel you could never be forgiven for. Now I'm here to proclaim to you the good news of the gospel, that there is a light.

[15:17] Jesus is the light that pierces the darkest darkness of heart. He fills those hearts that turn to him in faith with his resplendent light that shatters the darkness.

Sinner, turn to Jesus in repentance and in faith this morning for the forgiveness of your sins. Become with all the saints children of light. And to the children of light that are here this morning. How kind, how kind is our God. How gracious and how merciful to have transferred us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his beloved son.

We have tasted and we have seen Psalm 34. Oh, magnify the Lord with me. Let us exalt his name together. Isaiah's prophecy moves on and we see that this light shining in the darkness then leads to the life of covenant blessing.

That's the second sub-point here. The life of covenant blessing. Look now at verse 3. You have multiplied the nation.

[16:33] You have increased its joy. They rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest. As they are glad when they divide the spoil. This future light dawning upon Israel will lead to an experience of blessing, of abundant life.

This here is covenant language. This is the covenant blessings that were promised to Israel if they walked in love and obedience to God. You take a look at Deuteronomy 28 if you want to read more about those covenant blessings.

This will be the result of light shining in darkness. It will be increase. It will be joy and abundance and victory. The truly good life.

You know, when Jesus burst onto the scene in his radiant light, he forever changed humanity's situation. Christ ushered in a new era.

An age of new covenant blessing for the people of God. An age that's characterized by increase and abundance and joy and victory.

[17:42] Not physically, but spiritually. You know, the prosperity gospel promises physical blessing now. That's not what Christ came to promise. He came to promise spiritual blessing, spiritual abundance now, leading to blessings that flow far as the curse is found when he returns.

And we're experiencing, saints, we are experiencing the first fruits of that end times blessing now in spiritual increase and abundance and joy and victory.

And yet, you know, perhaps that falls flat on you this morning. Because, you know, we look around, brothers and sisters, and we still see so much darkness and distress, don't we?

And not just out there. I mean, there's a lot out there. But also right here in the church, right here in our hearts, in our families. And spiritual abundance is so often smothered by the pain and the problems of life.

And at times, they're all we can see. All right, like a wall that just casts a dark shadow against the light. Health and financial struggles. Relational strife and chaos.

[18:59] The weight of responsibilities. Sleeplessness. You know, where is the spiritual abundance? Where is the joy? Where is the victory? I want us to consider how far from reality this prophecy would have felt for those who received it.

You know, they were given these glorious promises. But their present reality was a nation on the brink of disaster, mired in sin, facing the might of a ruthless nation.

I mean, how do you think Isaiah and his disciples felt? Do you think that they were tempted to doubt or despair? To say, God, where are you? When are you going to at last do the things that you've promised?

Commenting on the present darkness of Isaiah's day, commentator Alec Mautier writes this, The eye of faith looks at all this, but affirms that real though it is, it is not the real reality.

As always, the people of God must decide what reading of their experiences they will live by. Are they to look at the darkness, the hopelessness, the dream shattered, and conclude that God has forgotten them?

[20:23] Or are they to recall his past mercies, to remember his present promises, and to make great affirmations of faith?

Isaiah insists here that hope is a present reality, part of the constitution of the now. The darkness is true, but it is not the whole truth, and certainly not the fundamental truth.

Children of the never forsaking God, see your lives this morning through the eyes of faith, the eyes that with hope perceive the more real reality.

Christ has come and shattered the darkness through his death on the cross. He has risen from the grave and ascended on high where he reigns supreme.

He has made you a temple of his Holy Spirit. He dwells with you. He's united you to himself and to all of his saints, making you a partaker of the divine nature.

[21:28] He is preparing right now a place for you, and he's coming again to take you to be with him. And in that day, he will wipe away every tear from your eyes, and death shall be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore. Oh, see your present circumstances in the light of this more real reality.

In the light of your eternal circumstances that have been forever changed for the best. Your darkness may be true, but it is not the whole truth, and it is certainly not the fundamental truth.

Having proclaimed this future light and life to come, Isaiah moves to provide reasons for its fulfillment.

So let's look at verses four. We see two means of fulfillment in four and five. And the first one is this, means number one, oppression broken. Verse four, Light and life will come to Israel by her oppressor being crushed.

[22:45] The language in this verse, it alludes back to Israel's captivity and then freedom from Egypt. And then the verse ends, referencing the victory that God won for Israel over the Midianites at the hand of Gideon.

You can read that in Judges chapter seven. That was a victory won completely by the Lord. Now in the near term, God would break the rod of the oppressor Assyria, but that would only result in the stronger oppressor of Babylon.

And then he would break the rod of Babylon through the Persian kingdom, but other empires still, they would rise up to conquer and oppress the nation. Well, the question is when, when would the oppressor's rod finally be broken?

The second means in verse five, victory secured. The prophecy continues, for every boot of the tramping warrior and battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

In other words, the weapons and the equipment of war will become obsolete. They're going to be burned in the fire. Victory and peace have been secured.

[24:00] We don't need the boots or the garments anymore. But if we trace the history of Israel from this point forward, again, we don't find sustained peace.

We find seasons of peace interrupted by war and violence as invading armies come treading across her land. And so again, we ask, when will the attacker's boot finally be burned?

And then we come to verse six. Verse six begins with the third and final four in the passage. It's the third and final means of fulfillment.

Look at verse six. Note this.

The third and ultimate means, child is born. Two chapters prior, Isaiah had declared to King Ahaz, therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.

[25:19] Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us. In chapter eight, Isaiah's own wife bears a son and he's given as a sign to the nation.

But if it wasn't clear before, these words in chapter nine make crystal clear that the prophecy awaits its fulfillment. Somebody far greater is going to come to fulfill these words given to King Ahaz and to the nation of Israel.

Note first that the child will be king. It says the government is going to rest upon his shoulders. And so apparently, if we connect back to verses four and five, when this child become king shoulders the burden of rule, the people's burdens will be lifted off their shoulders.

But he's going to be unlike any human king. So the next thing is the child will be divine. He'll be divine. I mean, look at the names by which he is called. The first name that he's called is Wonderful Counselor.

Wonderful Counselor. Now, of course, there are many wise and wonderful human counselors. But the Lord God, who is the source of all true wisdom and knowledge, is the ultimate counselor.

[26:43] In chapter 28, verse 29, speaking of the Lord, Isaiah says, He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom. Isaiah's talking about somebody divine.

Now that's not clear yet. We need only look at the second name. Mighty God. Mighty God. This child become king will be mighty God.

You know, we could say, well, perhaps this is just hyperbolic language. Like this is just exaggerated flattery, which was common among the Mesopotamian empires of the day.

The thing is, as one commentator writes, this is not Mesopotamia, but Judah, and Hebrew prophecy was founded on truth, not flattery.

Two chapters later, Isaiah prophesies that upon this king will rest the spirit of counsel and might. Reiterating these first two names, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God.

[27:46] Now I just want to say, we're going to be just scratching the surface on these names. I encourage you, spend time meditating and reflecting on these. There's so many connections to other parts of Scripture.

In the context of these verses, it is through this king's wisdom and power that he would liberate the people from their oppressor and then usher them into this age of light and life.

You know, it's no wonder that when Jesus Christ stepped onto the scene performing signs and wonders, the Jews wanted to make him king. Right? They thought that he was the Messiah sent to liberate them from their oppressor and usher them into an age of light and life.

Now they were right, you see. Right? They were right. Only their sights were set on far too small a liberation. See, they wanted Christ to conquer Rome.

But Christ, he came to conquer sin and Satan and death. And his victory would not come about through military might, but through suffering and death on a cross on which Christ is shown to be for us the wisdom and the power of God.

[29:06] Like, no human mind could have devised this plan. None of us, nobody could have conceived this. And Isaiah tells that to the nation later on in his book. Yet at the cross on majestic display is the wisdom and the power of God to save his people from their greatest enemies.

In the cross, we see that Christ is truly the wonderful counselor and the mighty God. And saints, if this is true, won't he show himself to be the same through every trial that comes our way?

If he did that in the cross, he can do that in the problems that you're facing. In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Colossians 2.3.

Brother, look to him to receive his wonderful counsel in your time of need. Christ is before all things and in him all things hold together, Colossians 1.17.

Sister, look to Christ for spiritual strength when yours is failing. He is our wonderful counselor, our mighty God, everlasting Father.

[30:24] You know, though infrequently compared to the New Testament, God is referred to throughout the Old Testament as a father to Israel. He's a father in primarily three ways.

In his concern for the helpless, in his care for and discipline of his children, and in their response of reverence and obedience.

Now, this is how the coming king is to reign over his people. And not just for a season, but for eternity. He's called everlasting father.

Again, Israel and Judah, they did have some good kings, some kings that reigned in righteousness, that were like, that exercised fatherly care over the nation.

But Isaiah is prophesying here the eternal reign of a coming king who will replicate the divine fatherhood of God. And fourth, he is called prince of peace.

[31:21] You know, when the oppressor's rod is broken, when the war clothes are burned in the fire, the land shall know peace like it is never known before.

The Hebrew word for peace, as most of you know, is shalom. Shalom conveys wholeness, completeness. It conveys a state of perfect well-being, of harmony and goodwill in all spheres of life.

Peace with God, peace of soul, peace with others, peace with creation. The coming Messiah king will know shalom himself and he comes to administer shalom in all of his kingdom.

He is prince of peace. You know, the apostle John writes that no one has ever seen God. the only God who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

He's speaking, of course, of Jesus, the Son of God, who revealed to us the Father in clearest display. So Jesus would later say, I and the Father are one.

[32:36] And whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Jesus manifested the compassionate care of the Father for his children in all of his interactions and chiefly upon the cross.

And Jesus exercised this fatherly care to bring about peace. So when the angels come announcing the good news of Christ's birth, they proclaim, glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

Luke 2.14. So Jesus tells his disciples, peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. And then after his resurrection when the disciples are hiding behind locked doors, Jesus appears to them and two times he says, peace be with you.

Jesus isn't just speaking platitudes. He's declaring himself to be the long-awaited, long-foretold Messiah King who would vanquish the enemy and usher in an eternal reign of peace.

Brothers and sisters, this means that though it's often veiled by sin or by suffering, right now we are able to experience the fatherly care and the messianic peace that's predicted right here in Isaiah.

[34:01] Jesus instructs us when we're anxious to consider the birds of the air, right? The lilies of the field. How much the Father cares for them and how much more He cares for us, His children.

The care and the compassion of God are disposed towards us, saints. And you know, when we look inward or outward and see all kinds of troubles and tribulations,!

We're reminded that the Lord is at hand. Emmanuel, God with us. The one who conquers our enemies. He is with us, in us, an ever-present help in times of trouble.

Saints, we can know true peace because we know the Prince of Peace. So this promised child will be king, this child will be divine, and finally, the child will forever reign on David's throne.

Let's look at verse 7 together. The child will forever reign on David's throne. 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.

[35:27] Again, kids, I think you were just in 2 Samuel in Shoreline Kids, and I think you would have read how in 2 Samuel 7, so 250 years earlier from Isaiah's day, God makes King David a giant promise.

God promises David that through his offspring, God would establish his kingdom forever. Of course, under David's son, Solomon, the kingdom of Israel enjoys abundant peace, abundant prosperity, prosperity.

But then he leads the nation into sin. And then after him, under, I think, Rehoboam, the kingdom's divided and it never recovers. And so after 200 more years of division and conflict and spiritual backsliding, this promise given to David in 2 Samuel 7 feels increasingly improbable.

But right here, God is affirming through Isaiah that his promise to the house of David still stands.

And then 750 years later, we read this passage before, God appears to the Virgin Mary and God, through the angel, declares, Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus.

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father, David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end.

[37:08] Jesus Christ is the true David. He is the true Solomon whose kingdom of peace endures forever. That kingdom, friends, has already been established through the death and resurrection of Christ.

And like D-Day, the decisive victory over the enemy has been won at the cross. It was won. His doom is sure even as the battle rages on.

But it will come to an end when Christ returns. On that day, Christ will eradicate all evil, Satan will be cast down, and the blazing light of God's presence will permeate the land so that we will need no light of lamp or sun.

Revelation 22.5. And like Isaiah, we await the final fulfillment of these promises. We live, saints, in the already not yet.

The already not yet. Already experiencing the first fruits of Christ's everlasting kingdom. Not yet enjoying the fullness of it to come. But we wait.

[38:18] We wait for it with eager longing. We wait for it hastening the day through gospel proclamation and word and in deed. We wait for it with unyielding trust in God.

With the eyes of faith. Aware, yes, of the reality of darkness, but seeing the more real reality of the heavenly blessings that are ours in Christ Jesus, now in part, and then in fullness.

goodness. And you know, when it all seems too good to be true, when it all seems too far beyond the realm of possibility, then we read these final words of this prophecy.

In verse 7, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Friends, this is the God who commands the angel armies, the hosts of heaven.

This is the God who spoke stars and planets and animals and plants into existence, who broke the might of Egypt and divided the Red Sea. This is the God who gives the barren woman children, who has orchestrated all of history to accomplish redemption through the cross.

[39:38] This God, the only God, guarantees the final fulfillment of these glorious, hope-igniting promises. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

As God told the prophet Habakkuk, if the vision seems slow, wait for it. It will surely come. It will not delay. And as the angel told bewildered Mary who asked how these things could be, for nothing will be impossible with God.

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace. Hail the Son of Righteousness. Light and life to all He brings. Risen with healing in His wings.

Mild He lays His glory by. Born that man no more may die. Born to raise us from the earth. Born to give us second birth.

Hark! The herald angels sing Glory to the newborn King. Glory to the newborn King. Thank you.