

Hope in our Darkness

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 December 2018

Preacher: Greg Hendrickson

[0 : 00] Turn with me in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 50. I want to welcome you if you're visiting in town for the holiday or here with family members or friends.

Glad that you've joined us this morning. This month, the month that we anticipate and celebrate the coming of Jesus into the world.

We've been doing a sermon series in the prophet Isaiah on messianic prophecies from the book of Isaiah. How the prophecy of Isaiah points to the person of Christ.

Isaiah lived about 700 years before the coming of Jesus in the late 8th century BC. And yet the New Testament quotes from the book of Isaiah more than almost any other book.

Over 75 times. And it refers and alludes to it even more than that. But what we're doing this month is looking at five of these texts that are used in the New Testament to help us understand the significance of Jesus.

[1 : 05] So as we look at these texts that were written hundreds of years before Jesus. And were studied for hundreds of years in anticipation of someone who would come.

We are looking at how they shed light on the significance of Jesus coming into the world. So this morning we're looking at Isaiah chapter 50.

And I'm going to read the entire chapter. Isaiah 50. And if you're looking in the pew Bibles, the page number is in your bulletin if you're looking for that.

Isaiah 50. Thus says the Lord. These are God's words to the people of Israel. Where is your mother's certificate of divorce with which I sent her away?

Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities you were sold. And for your transgressions your mother was sent away. Why when I came was there no man?

[2 : 07] Why when I called was there no one to answer? Is my hand shortened that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, by my rebuke I dry up the sea.

I make the rivers a desert. Their fish stink for lack of water and die of thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness and make sackcloth their covering. The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught.

That I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens. He awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.

The Lord God has opened my ear. And I was not rebellious. I turned not backward. I gave my back to those who strike and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard.

I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. But the Lord God helps me. Therefore, I have not been disgraced.

[3 : 09] Therefore, I have set my face like a flint. And I know that I shall not be put to shame. He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me?

Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God helps me. Who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment.

The moth will eat them up. Who among you fears the Lord? And obeys the voice of his servant. Let him who walks in darkness and has no light.

Trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God. Behold, all you who kindle a fire. Who equip yourselves with burning torches. Walk by the light of your fire.

And by the torches that you have kindled. This you have for my hand. You shall lie down in torment. Let's pray. God, we thank you for assembling us together this morning.

[4 : 13] We thank you for this text which has been preserved for us for literally thousands of years. We pray that you would speak to us by the power of your spirit through it. We pray that you would speak the message that each of us needs to hear this morning.

And we commit this time to you in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Have you ever felt like you were walking in the darkness?

Maybe you've walked or maybe you are walking through the darkness of trouble. Perhaps you're battling sickness or chronic pain. Maybe it seems like you can barely make it physically from one day to the next.

Perhaps you're in a season of loneliness or loss. Maybe it feels like nobody else really understands. Nobody else really knows. Perhaps nobody else really cares what you're going through.

Perhaps you're dealing with disappointment as you look into the past. And as you look into the future, the future only seems bleak. Maybe you're walking in the darkness of trouble.

[5 : 27] But perhaps you're also... Another kind of darkness. Maybe you're walking in the darkness of sin. Perhaps you're caught in habitual sin.

One of those things that you've said over and over. I'll never do it again. And yet you still go back to it. The Bible says that sin darkens our minds. In other words, it confuses and distorts our perception of reality.

Maybe you've been living in the darkness of deception. And half-truths and avoidance. You tell lies because you feel ashamed. You feel powerless to deal with reality so you run away from it.

Maybe you've said to yourself, my sin is so great. How could God ever rescue me from it? Or even if he can, would God even want to rescue me?

Maybe your sin and your trouble are tangled up together. Your trouble reminds you of your sin. And it's like a knot that you can't untie.

[6 : 29] And it just gets more and more tangled up. Well, this section of Isaiah was written for a group of people who were in a lot of trouble. Because they had sinned a lot.

It was written for a group of people who felt like they were walking in the darkness and had no light. They couldn't see any hope. Any way forward.

This morning I want to look at this passage in three parts. Verse 1 to 3 speaks about the people's sin. Verses 4 to the darkness that they were walking in.

Verses 4 to 9 speaks about a servant's obedience. And verses 10 and 11 speak about our hope. The people's sin, the servant's obedience, and our hope.

So let's jump into the first part. Verse 1 begins rather abruptly. Where is your mother's certificate of divorce with which I sent her away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?

[7 : 39] Behold, for your iniquities you were sold. And for your transgressions your mother was sent away. You might say, what in the world is Isaiah talking about here? Well, he's speaking to the people of Israel. And he's speaking to them.

He's speaking about the time of the Babylonian exile when they were removed from their homeland. When the temple was destroyed. The kingdom was abolished.

The cities were ruined. Everything was gone. They were given into the hands of their enemies. They were taken hundreds of miles away. It was a terrible disaster. And that's why Isaiah compares it to a divorce or to a bankruptcy proceeding.

Except in the ancient world, a bankruptcy proceeding meant you basically became the slave of your creditor. It was even worse than bankruptcy today. It's something that leaves you reeling and trying to recover for not just days, not just months, but for years to come.

And the section of Isaiah is speaking to the people who are in this situation. And if you look back at chapter 49, because chapter 50 doesn't come out of nowhere.

[8 : 49] It's in a longer section. Chapter 49, verse 14. This is what the people were saying. In other words, the people were saying our sin and our trouble is just too much.

God must have given up on us. God must have left us behind and gone on to someone else for good. Now, if you read the rest of chapter 49, which we're not going to look at in detail this morning, God basically says two things.

First, he says, I want to help you. Verses 15 to 21. God says, I love you even more than a mother loves her baby. I have not forgotten you.

And then God says, in verse 22 to 26, I can help you. I don't just want to help you. I can. I have the power to help you. I am your redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob.

I have not forsaken you. And I have not forgotten you. Even in the middle of all your trouble, and even though all this trouble is your own fault, I am with you.

[10 : 11] And then we come to the beginning of chapter 50. Now, these first three verses of chapter 50 are a bit of a hard word. Basically, God is getting in the people's face a little bit.

He's saying, let's be real about why you're in all this trouble that you're in. For your iniquities, you were sold. For your transgressions, your mother.

So the mother is referring to the prior generation of Israel. Okay? For your transgressions, your mother was sent away. In other words, Isaiah is saying, the trouble you're in is your own fault.

And it wasn't just because of a mistake you made or even a failure. No, he uses a far more serious word. Your iniquities. That is your transgressions.

Your flagrant, ongoing, serious violations of my covenant. And then verse 2 he says. He says, I didn't just leave you alone.

[11 : 08] I came calling. I came knocking at your door. And no one answered. God is saying, don't act like your trouble came out of nowhere.

Don't say that I didn't want to help you. And don't say that I can't help you. The second half of 2 and first half of the rest of verse 3.

Is my hand shortened that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? God is saying, remember who I am. I'm the Lord of the universe. I'm the God who holds all things together.

And I'm also the Lord who brought judgment on the land of Egypt. Who turned the river to blood and made the sky dark so that I could redeem you. And set you free from your slavery there. In other words, God is saying, don't say that I don't want to help you.

Don't say that I can't help you. God is saying to his people, we need to get real. Now let me be very clear here. In this fallen world, sometimes trouble comes upon us through no direct fault of our own.

[12 : 20] The Bible acknowledges that in many places. The book of Job is an entire book all about that theme. When all kinds of trouble comes upon someone and it wasn't a direct result of anything he did.

So if you're dealing with all kinds of trouble, sickness, loss, disappointment, or even worse, if other people are attacking you or falsely accusing you or trying to take advantage of you, that does not necessarily mean that you are on the wrong path or that God is disciplining you.

Sometimes people blame themselves for things that they never had any control over and that were never their responsibility in the first place. And if that's you, you might need to be reminded today the specific trouble you're walking through is not your fault.

On the other hand, many times we are the cause of our own troubles. At least in part. And many times we don't want to face up to our own part.

Instead, we want to pity ourselves and say, I deserve better. Why is the world so unfair? Or we blame God and say that if we ran the universe, we would do so slightly differently.

[13 : 41] Or we want to blame everybody and everything else in the world before we look at ourselves. We're not willing to acknowledge that we have dug the pit that we now find ourselves in.

When I was a boy in second grade, I was always looking for ways to correct my teacher. It's probably my lowest point in that regard.

Because I was clever and I had a technical mind, sometimes I succeeded. It was a hard year for my teacher. And I think a year or two later, I don't remember exactly the chronology, but at one point I finally went back and apologized.

But sometimes God is trying to teach us something and we don't want to listen to him. Sometimes God is knocking at our door and we are not answering.

And sometimes God lets us experience some of the consequences of our own sin. He gives us over to the idols that we have worshipped. He gives us over to the masters of our own making and the result is not pretty.

[15 : 00] Our sin can get us into a whole lot of trouble. Sometimes we need to get real about our sin and its consequences. We need to get real with ourselves, with others, and with God.

That's the first part of this passage. God confronting the people with the reality of their sin and its consequences. But then, in the second part of this chapter, the tone abruptly and unexpectedly changes.

It's no longer God confronting the people with their sin, but in verses 4 to 9, we hear the voice of a servant, a human being, declaring his faithful obedience.

It's as if you're listening to an orchestra and you hear the crashing cymbals and blaring horns of God confronting his guilty people and suddenly they give way to the voice of a solo violin, a haunting but beautiful melody of faithfulness in the midst of chaos and disaster and darkness.

It's a bit like if you're walking through a neighborhood with broken windows and bullet holes and boarded up houses and vacant lots and trash everywhere and then you come upon a block where the houses are freshly painted and the sidewalks are swept clean and children play freely in each other's backyards and neighbors look out for one another.

[16 : 33] It's not what you'd expect. It's an oasis of hope in the midst of darkness. So far we've heard God declaring his people's guilt but now we hear the voice of a human being proclaiming his innocence.

The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, verse 4, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Not only is this servant obedient but he gives help and sustaining grace to people who are weary.

Now you might be wondering who exactly is speaking in these verses, verses 4 to 9. Now if you read the book of Isaiah, in the second part of Isaiah which is chapters 40 to 55, the prophet introduces us to this figure who is called the servant of the Lord.

And the servant speaks and is spoken about, the servant speaks basically four times. Or there's sort of four passages that are particularly focused on this figure but there's even other references throughout these chapters.

It's sort of a major emphasis of these chapters. And at first it's sort of mysterious, who is this servant? The first reference to the servant is back in chapter 41, verse 8.

[18 : 08] But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend, you whom I took from the ends of the earth and called from its farthest corners saying to you, you are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off.

So at first, it seems like the people of Israel as a whole they are the servant of the Lord. So the figure of the servant represents the whole people.

But then here's the problem. Throughout these chapters, not only in chapter 50, verses 1 through 3, but in several other places, Isaiah, he castigates the people.

He says, you failed to live up to your calling to be the servant of God. You've turned to idols. You've been unfaithful. You're in all this trouble because you've transgressed God's covenant. You've seriously violated, you've messed it all up.

Now, other people say Isaiah was speaking about himself as God's servant. Especially if you read here in chapter 50. The servant, one who listens to God, who speaks for God, perhaps that could be true of Isaiah.

[19 : 21] But chapter 50, verse 5, the servant says, I was not rebellious. I turned not backward.

Now, if you go back to the beginning of Isaiah in chapter 6, Isaiah has a vision of the Lord. And you know what he says when he sees the Lord on his holy throne? He doesn't say, I have not been rebellious.

He says, woe is me. I am ruined. Because I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the Lord God Almighty.

Isaiah had a very clear sense that he was not, that he was in the mess along with the people. And yes, he was speaking for God and yes, God had set him apart.

But the servant can't just be the people of Israel even though some of it applies to them and the servant can't just be Isaiah even though some of the description could apply to Isaiah. Beginning in chapter 49, the figure of the servant begins to emerge more and more clearly where the servant is both identified with the people but also stands out from the people.

[20 : 38] Now, let's look at chapter 50. As we, let me put pause on the question of who the servant is and let's look at what 50, chapter 50, how chapter 50 describes the servant and then I'll get back to who actually fits the description.

Chapter 50, verses 4 to 9 basically show us three things about this servant. First, he obeys. Verse 4 to 5. Unlike the people who were sent into exile for their iniquities and transgressions, this one says, I was not rebellious.

He's different from all the rest of the people. Unlike the people whose ears had been closed, this one says, verse 5, the Lord God has opened my ear. The servant here is, you might say, a model disciple, excuse me, of the Lord God himself.

What's a disciple? A student. A student who's closely associated with his master and who takes into himself all that his master knows and then gradually becomes like his master.

like a student of a great artist or who closely observes his master teacher.

[21 : 54] And yet this servant's teacher is the Lord himself. So the servant obeys. He speaks for God because he listens to God and he speaks words of hope and encouragement to people who are weary.

But second, the servant not only obeys. In verse 6, we see that the servant suffers. I gave my back to those who strike and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard.

I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. Rather than being rewarded for his obedience, the servant suffers for his obedience.

And he endures public humiliation and physical abuse and he does not run away. And he does not retaliate. But in verse 7 to 9, we see the third thing.

The servant obeys, the servant suffers, and the servant triumphs. He can stand up in court confident of his innocence. He can withstand public humiliation, confident that one day he will be vindicated and he can challenge his adversaries because he knows, as he says in verse 7 and verse 9, the Lord God helps me.

[23 : 10] Who is this servant who obeys and suffers and triumphs? In all of human history, there's only one person who completely fulfills the whole description.

And that is Jesus Christ. He obeyed. Morning by morning, Jesus listened to the voice of his father.

He would often rise early and go to solitary places to pray and be alone with God. And day by day, he sustained the weary with his word.

People hung on his words. Not just because he was intelligent, but because his words fed them. Because people found life in his words.

And because he spoke with authority. His words carried weight. And his words made a difference. But he not only obeyed, he also suffered. He set his face like flint with resolute determination to go to Jerusalem.

[24 : 19] Despite knowing that opposition awaited him there, when he arrived, he was betrayed, he was falsely accused, he was arrested, and he was condemned to die. You know, if you think of it, almost every other religious leader in the world lived a long life and their life ended in honor and victory.

They were recognized by their followers. they were praised by others. And they lived a long life. Only Jesus died at the young age of 33 in humiliation.

Strung up on a cross. Executed as a criminal. And before he was killed, he was publicly mocked, beaten, spat upon, struck on the head.

Sometimes the humiliation is even worse than the pain. And yet, through it all, he triumphed.

Like this servant, when he stood before his accusers, he calmly and confidently maintained his innocence. When he hung on the cross and took his last breath, he cried out in a loud voice, it is finished.

[25 : 50] And three days later, his followers testified that God raised him from the dead. And the world has never been the same ever since. Jesus obeyed, Jesus suffered, and finally, Jesus triumphed.

You know, maybe you're here, maybe you're not a Christian. Maybe you're just visiting today. Let me challenge you. What do you make of a passage like this?

Isaiah wrote these words hundreds of years before Jesus lived. We have manuscripts of the book of Isaiah from the Dead Sea Scrolls, from 100 or 200 years before the birth of Jesus.

These words were not doctored up by Christians after the fact. And if this passage by itself is not compelling, go on to chapter 53.

The climax of the servant songs, which describes the servant's suffering in even greater detail. Here's some of what chapter 53 says. He was despised and rejected by men.

[27 : 00] A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. As one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted, but he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and by his wounds we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people, and they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief. When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days. The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

[28 : 27] Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous and he shall bear their iniquities.

How does a man living hundreds of years before Jesus in a society where crucifixion had not even been invented yet, how does he describe Jesus' crucifixion and its meaning so powerfully and poetically?

Some people might want to dismiss these passages as mere coincidence or Christians seeing whatever they want to see in the Old Testament but I think that's a very superficial judgment. The more I read these passages, the more compelling I find them.

they're uncanny, strange, mysterious, eerie and yet real and powerful messages from God himself that point to his ultimate work in the person of his son Jesus.

What do you make of passages like these? For those of us who are Christians let me say two additional things. And if you're not a Christian these are really about the meaning of these passages and the difference they make.

[29 : 51] First, the way this passage speaks about the servant's suffering, the servant suffers and triumphs all alone.

One of the commentators, John Oswalt, who I found very helpful in Isaiah, says one aspect of what is being said here that should not be overlooked is this, the aloneness of God in the work of redemption.

What do I mean by that? Read through verses four to nine and notice all the pronouns. They're all first person singular. I, me.

Now many times you can read lots of passages in Isaiah and the prophets like to go back and forth. I, we, he, they, singular you, plural you.

That doesn't even come through in the English but sometimes there's a note that makes you see that. But here it's one lone individual speaking.

[30 : 57] The suffering, the obedience, the suffering and the triumph is the accomplishment of one person who did it without the help of any other human being.

With only the help of the Lord God. The servant accomplished, in other words, the servant accomplishes something that nobody else can and nobody else will do.

All right, if you go back to verse 2, God says, why when I came? Why when I came knocking at your door did no one answer? Only one answered with perfectly faithful obedience, this servant.

Chapter 59, verse 16, Isaiah picks up this same theme. He says, the Lord saw that there was no man and he wondered that there was no one to intercede.

There was no one to stand in the gap between God and his people. So, his own arm brought him salvation and his righteousness upheld him.

[32 : 09] And chapter 53 speaks of the servant as the arm of the Lord. The power of the Lord himself in this human being.

Working deliverance. Working salvation. You see, when God decided to redeem his people, he sent his one and only son to do the work that nobody else could and nobody else would do.

To bear our sins on the cross and to triumph over them in his resurrection. That's why Christians call it the finished work of Christ. He did it without our help and he doesn't need you to add something on to his saving work either.

You can't. Because it's complete. He accomplished the work of redemption alone so that we might enjoy the fruits of his labor with him.

Second, Jesus knows how to sustain the weary with his word. Just as the servant does in verse 4.

[33 : 27] Jesus has a word to sustain you today if you are wearied by your troubles. A bruised reed he will not break and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.

Matthew says when Jesus saw the crowds he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus has compassion compassion for those who are weary and troubled.

And Jesus said to his disciples do not fear those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear God who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny and not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father? But even the hairs of your head are all numbered therefore fear not.

You are of more value than many sparrows. Jesus has a word to sustain you today if you are wearied by your troubles. And Jesus has a word to sustain you today if you are wearied by your sins.

[34 : 41] I am the Lord and besides me there is no savior. I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake and I will not remember your sins.

Return to me for I have redeemed you. Jesus said come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Jesus also has a word to sustain you today if you have become weary in doing good for his name's sake.

He says take my yoke upon you. Learn from me. I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Jesus knows how to sustain the weary with his word. And if you're weary today he has a word for you. Finally that brings us to our third point we've seen the people sin we've seen the servants obedience and finally we see our hope when we're walking in the darkness verse 10 and 11 when we feel like we're walking in the darkness verses 10 and 11 say that we basically have two options verse 10 says that we can trust God's character even though we might not understand his ways and verse 11 says we can instead of doing that attempt to create our own light that will save us from the darkness that we're in in verse 10 Isaiah paints a picture of someone who's walking in the darkness without any light and yet this person relies on

God's character the name of the Lord that is God's character and follows God's word obeys the voice of his servant verse 11 is a contrast picture Isaiah says behold all you who kindle a fire who equip yourselves with burning torches now that second line equip yourselves with burning torches is hard to translate because literally it could be translated who gird on flames so most likely I think the picture is of someone who instead of walking through the darkness without any light lights a torch and straps it to their belt so as to walk by the light of their fire as it says in verse 11 and to keep their hands free while they're walking through the darkness now the problem is strapping a flaming torch to your belt is a dangerous way to operate okay

[37 : 35] Isaiah gives this picture because he says you're going to get burned by the fire you've kindled if you refuse to obey the voice of God's servant if you refuse to rely on God and instead think I'm going to light my own fire and find my way out of this and save myself God says the very thing you think will save you will burn you up in the end and it will wear out like a garment that gets more and more old and full of holes and ruined so here's the question who will you trust when you're walking in the darkness who are you trusting or what are you trusting what are you looking to bring you through the darkness to give you hope to rescue you to go with you who will you trust in the darkness of your trouble remember that the servant whose voice you are called to obey has gone ahead of you through the darkness you are not blazing a trail on a lonely road you are following a path that has been beaten by the servant himself he has obeyed and he suffered for his obedience and he triumphed in the end and because he has done all this you can trust his voice you can trust

Jesus voice even when your depression won't lift even when the loneliness seems unbearable even when the pain seems relentless and overwhelming even if the future seems completely dark and from a worldly point of view life seems no longer worth living even when the path of obedience might lead to public humiliation salvation Jesus has walked that path ahead of you and he has sent his spirit to abide with you will you trust him in the darkness of your trouble will you trust him in the darkness of your sin or will you try to make your own way out to light your own fire to do all the things that human beings do to minimize and hide and deny and blame and manipulate and control and distract and attack or will you trust the one who has taken all your sin on the cross for you will you say

I will fix up my life first and then come to Jesus later but if you say that you will never come at all or are you tempted to despair and conclude that there is no way out that your sin is far too great Christ is willing to save you and Christ is mighty to save you rest on him today if you're trusting in Jesus what is true of him will become true of you as well he obeyed and suffered and triumphed and in him he will give you the strength to obey and he will enable you to endure suffering and he promises that the end is a triumph in verses 7 and 8 the servant challenges his accusers with three questions who will contend with me who is my adversary who will declare me guilty and in

Romans chapter 8 in the new testament the apostle Paul asks three very similar rhetorical questions who shall bring any charge against God's chosen people it is God who justifies who is to condemn Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that who was raised who is at the right hand of God who is indeed interceding for us who shall separate us from the love of Christ shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword no in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us for I am sure that neither life nor death nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord see if you're trusting that servant

Jesus who's gone ahead of you you can have that same confidence because you are in him and he is in you and he has promised never to leave you and never to forsake you even when you are walking through the darkness and there seems to be no light at all you can trust his words because he's gone ahead of us there is no darkness that he has not walked through he came to fill the darkness with his presence that's what we celebrate at Christmas that Jesus Christ came into a dark world yeah you might have been wondering where does this get to Christmas but but that's what we celebrate the people walking in darkness have seen a great light Jesus comes to meet us in our darkness in our trouble in our sin in all the mess we've made of ourselves and of the world and he comes to lead us onward and lead us to glory trust him today let's pray father father we thank you for the faithfulness of

[44 : 10] Jesus your son we thank you for your words we thank you that you do not hesitate to speak the truth to us about our situation because you don't want us to live in illusions but we thank you lord that with that word of confrontation and truth we thank you that you have also given us a word of mercy and hope we thank you for Jesus and his obedience his suffering and his triumph we pray that you would strengthen us to trust and rely on him and walk with him on all the paths that you lead us pray these things in Jesus name amen well this morning we have the joy of celebrating baptism

Jesus told his disciples to go into all the world to make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit and so we're just doing what Jesus told his followers to do and what the church has done throughout the ages baptism is an outward sign of an inward reality that Jesus has cleansed us from our sin that he has set us apart to belong to him and filled to God by his grace and he promises never to leave us nor forsake us so baptism is a sign and a seal of God's promises to us and this morning Sam Stevens is going to be baptized so Sam if you would come to the front here if you've been baptized consider this a reminder of your own baptism of God's promises to you and yours to him if you haven't been baptized consider this an invitation first to trust in

Jesus and second to be baptized if you haven't already so for anyone who's being baptized we give them an opportunity to share how God has worked in their lives and brought them to this day so Sam go right ahead good morning I'm Sam Stevens I'm 12 years old and I started going to Trinity about four years ago I was born and raised into a Christian family and I'm pretty familiar with Christianity but I just haven't really understood what it is until now and so during our Sunday school classes at Trinity when I was younger I was always taught that Jesus loved me and that he gave up his life for me and that he was resurrected from the dead but I never really understood exactly why that was so special when I started middle school I was put into a new Sunday school class where we studied a book called the New City Catechism my teachers Josh Chang and Amy Bush would talk to us a little bit and ask us a question from the book and we would learn a little bit more in depth about

God and what he did questions and answers helped me get a better understanding of why Jesus' death was so special as he was perfect and we were horrible sinners that didn't deserve to be saved by his sacrifice last year I also started going to youth group on Wednesdays as well as going to Sunday school it was here that I learned just how sinful I really am as we read the books of the Bible telling me that basically things I do all the time are sins my sister's baptism I finally found out what baptism symbolizes and I wanted to be baptized as well I'm very excited that today is finally the day I get to publicly profess my faith in Christ and get baptized thank you I need to ask you a couple questions thank you

Sam we always ask a couple of questions to people who are being baptized so Sam let me ask you these questions now why don't you come here so you can speak your answers into the microphone Sam do you affirm your faith in Jesus Christ as your and the only Lord and Savior yes and do you commit yourself to serve Christ and the fellowship of his church for the rest of your life yes and as you're becoming a member of Trinity Baptist Church today do you commit yourself to this local body of believers Trinity Baptist Church to give and receive your love and service yes to those who are members do we as members commit to love and serve Sam even as we receive the gifts that God has given him among us and to welcome him among us today if so say we do all right let's pray father thank you for reaching out in your love to Sam Lord thank you for sending your son to be his savior for sending your

[49 : 26] Holy spirit to live in him as his comforter and advocate we pray that as Sam is baptized today that you would assure him of your deep love for him that you remind him that he's a new creation in Jesus Christ and fill him every day with your spirit that he would become more and more like Jesus and be strengthened to do the good works you've prepared for him to do we pray that he would always remember this day as just a reminder of your grace and your faithfulness in his life preserve him through every temptation and trial that he will face in the future that he would always remain close to you for the rest of his life and and for all eternity we pray this in Jesus name amen all right so you can go get changed he does stand for this song come behold the wondrous mystery in the dawning of the king he the theme of heaven's praises broken through humanity in our longing in our darkness now the light of life has come look to

Christ to come descend it took on flesh to ransom us come behold the wondrous mystery be the perfect son of man and in his living in his suffering never trace nor stain of sin see the true and better Adam come to save the hell bound man Christ the great and sure fulfillments of the law in him we stand come behold the wondrous mystery

Christ the Lord upon the tree in the stead of ruined sinners hangs the lamb in victory see the price of our redemption see the father's plan unfold bringing many sons to glory race of measure love untold come come behold the wondrous mystery slain by death the God of life but no grave could ever strain him praise the Lord he is alive what a foretaste of deliverance how unwavering our hope

Christ in power resurrected as we will be when he comes what a foretaste of deliverance how unwavering our hope Christ in power resurrected as we will be when he comes to know everybody will be who Let's stand and praise God together.

Amen.