

Born a Child and Yet a King

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[0 : 00] And please take out your Bible and turn to the Old Testament book of Isaiah chapter 9. Isaiah chapter 9.

Now, if you remember, we are working our way through phrases from Charles Wesley's hymn, Come Thou Long Expected Jesus, and just kind of using portions of that hymn as an outline for our Advent series.

So, so far, we have looked at Come Thou Long Expected Jesus, Born to Set Thy People Free. Dan served us that week. And then last week, we looked at Israel's strength and consolation.

And this week, I would like to look at Born a Child and Yet a King. And then we'll have one more week next week. I'll hold you in suspense what that phrase will be.

Ryan will serve this morning. He's going to read Isaiah chapter 9 and verses 1 through 7. But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish.

[1 : 11] 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. You have multiplied the nation.

You have increased its joy. They rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For to us, a child is born.

To us, a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

[2 : 24] 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.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. Good Father, we are so grateful to have your word. Thank you for this beautiful portion of Isaiah's writing.

Thank you for preserving it for us down through the decades and centuries. And we are humbled that we have this opportunity not only to gather together in your presence and to lift our voices and to have your word and to have the privilege of sitting under the preaching of it, but also we are humbled that you have promised to be with us by your spirit.

So Holy Spirit, would you please do work in our hearts as we turn our attention to the preaching of your word? Would you help your people as they continue to worship by listening and hearing and discerning and comparing the things that they are hearing with scripture to discern whether these things are so?

And as they find them to be true, would you also encourage our hearts to believe and to joyfully obey what you have for us in your word? Father, would you please help me as I continue to worship by preaching?

[3 : 56] Please keep me faithful and guard my heart and my mind from saying anything foolish and unhelpful, anything that would be distracting or disorienting. Would you please just take that away, even right now, so that we can see our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is in his name that we pray and ask these things. For your glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and for our good. In Jesus' name, amen.

One of my greatest fears is being underground, like in a cave.

But in 1993, Lois and I toured an iron ore mine.

Do you know what a mine is? It is an underground cave. The Sudan mine is located, ironically, near a town called Tower, Minnesota.

[5 : 00] And the tour takes visitors underground on what they call, quote, authentic, expertly maintained hoisting equipment.

How far underground, you ask? Nearly half a mile, 2,341 feet. And after arriving at level 27, which makes no sense to me, because it really should be negative 27, because I'm kind of a math person. After arriving at level 27, you can take an underground train, nearly a mile underground, and arrive at the place where they stopped doing mining, at the Sudan mine.

And while we were down there, as part of the tour, the guide shuts off all of the lights. Did I mention that I was afraid of caves?

I am also afraid of the dark. Are you afraid of the dark? I'm not talking about, like, dimness, right? Where it's just kind of murky and dull, but there's a little nightlight or something like that.

[6 : 15] I'm talking about thick darkness. Darkness of night. Pitch black darkness like you can feel. The kind of darkness like when you're half a mile underground, and they shut off the lights.

In Scripture, dark darkness is often a metaphor for hopelessness. And in Isaiah chapter 8, just before the text that we are looking at today, King Ahaz of the southern kingdom is in a hopeless situation.

To his north, the kings of Israel and Syria have formed an alliance. They have formed this alliance in order to deal with the threat of an attack from a nation called Assyria.

And these two kings want King Ahaz to join their alliance, turn the duet into a trio. And when he refuses to join their alliance, they threaten to attack him.

But instead of trusting God, Assyria turns to, sorry, instead of trusting God, King Ahaz turns to Assyria.

[7 : 36] I think this is one of those, the enemy of my enemy is my friend situations. But his choice has devastating consequences on his kingdom.

His kingdom is plunged into darkness and despair. And in the absence of hope, the people grow superstitious, rather than turning their attention to God's word.

And they covet counsel from the dead, rather than seeking God's help. Look at these couple of verses just before our text. Chapter 8, verse number 19.

When they say to you, Isaiah is speaking, when they say to you, inquire of the mediums and the spiritists who chirp and mutter. Shouldn't a people inquire of their God?

Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? Go to God's instruction and testimony. If they do not speak according to this word, notice this, there will be no dawn for them.

[8 : 44] They will wander through the land, dejected and hungry. And when they are famished, they will become enraged. And looking upward will curse their king and their God.

And they will look toward the earth and see only distress, darkness, and the gloom of affliction. And they will be driven into thick darkness.

Hopeless. Hopeless is exactly how you feel when you are 2,341 feet underground and you're afraid of caves and the dark and the lights go out.

Hopeless. And because of their lack of faith in God and his word, hopeless is how King Ahaz and his entire kingdom feel.

Did you notice those words? They are dejected and starved. And they look up to heaven, not to pray, but to shake their fist at God and curse their king in anger.

[9 : 53] They experience only distress, the scripture says, and darkness. It is an endless night without dawn. They have nothing to look forward to, but gloomy affliction and thick darkness.

This is fear without faith, a recipe for hopelessness. Do you remember scrambling for flashlights, perhaps during a thunderstorm, when the power goes out?

It seems that we never expect that moment, right? The power goes out, it's dark, we scramble to find flashlights, and then we realize we have not checked those flashlights in a while, and the batteries are dead.

And so you go and you get a candle in that lighter thing that you try to use on birthdays, right? And you are trying to get that lighter thing to work, and at a birthday, you can get by without the candles, but here it is, you'd really like to have some light, and it's just...

You cannot get that lighter thing to work. And now you are in the dark. Imagine the growing fear and the helplessness as the darkness lingers and there is nothing that you can do to fix it.

[11:13] Do you ever feel like you are in the dark relationally? Or emotionally? Or spiritually?

Or spiritually? Does life ever feel empty? Meaningless? Tragic? Unfair?

And you rack your brain, and you try to come up with a solution, and you wonder, what can I do?

How can I fix this? And then you decide, you know what, I don't even need to fix this.

I'd be happy with one step forward. If I could figure out the next step, I think I could be content with the next step. But everything just feels hopeless. And darkness is your old friend.

God does not leave his people in darkness. He promises a light that breaks through the gloom.

Light that dawns on those in deep darkness.

[12:17] Light that transforms despair into hope-filled joy. Like the sun rising on the horizon after a night of darkness when the power has gone out.

Look at Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 1. So jarring, this first verse. Remember how chapter 8 ends.

Driven into thick darkness, the gloom of affliction, only distress.

Verse 1. Nevertheless, the gloom of the distressed land will not be like that of the former times when he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali.

But in the future, he, God, will bring honor to the way of the sea, the area in northern Israel, to the land east of the Jordan, and to 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.

[13:26] I'm not going to take this up today, but this is worth some personal study if you're up for it. Remember Simeon last week drawing with that thick black permanent marker and connecting dots for us?

This phrase here in verse 1, Galilee of the nations, Galilee of the Gentiles. This is the only time that phrase is used, and I think that's worth some probing and some study.

The sun begins to rise on the horizon. It gets brighter and brighter until it is a blinding light. Light on those who are living in the land of darkness.

And it shouldn't surprise us that when God brings the dawn, he also begins restoring hope to his people. And with hope comes joy.

Look at verse 3. You have enlarged the nation and increased its joy. The people have rejoiced rejoiced before you as they rejoice at harvest time and as they rejoice when dividing spoils.

[14:39] You see that? Joy, delight, hope, joy, all of these things are beginning to rise. What is the source? What is the explanation for this joy?

We find it in these next couple of verses and if you're taking notes or if you're underlining your Bible, you can spot this with the word for at the beginning of 4, 5, and 6.

Three reasons for this hope. First, God provides freedom. Look at verse 4. For you have shattered their oppressive yoke and the rod on their shoulders and the staff of their oppressor.

This hints us back. It points us back to Israel, the Jews in Egypt. They are in bondage. They're under an oppressor. There is a rod across their back so that they can carry burdens.

And not only that, but the tyrants are beating them with sticks. And it's hopeless. There's nothing they can do to free themselves from Egypt.

[15:51] It's hopeless. But Isaiah says, it's like that. Didn't God intervene? Didn't God deliver you?

Didn't he deal with those tyrants? And end of verse 4. Just as he did, just as you did on the day of Midian.

Do you remember the story of Gideon? He has an army of 32,000 soldiers. He's about to go into war. And God says to him, you have too many. You need to, I'm paraphrasing, you need to trim that army down.

Send some of those guys home. You don't need all of them. Trims this army down to 300 people and still wins. Why? What's the point of Midian?

The point of that story is to help Gideon realize this is not about military strength at all. You didn't win this because you overpowered your enemy.

[16:52] You won this because God did the victory. That's why you won. Do you see these two illustrations, the Exodus and Midian, are intended to help us point back to this dawn that is rising.

What did you do to make the sun come up today? I didn't do anything. I didn't contribute anything to that. But the sun rose and it's a blinding light and then we're reminded of the Exodus and we're

reminded of Midian and Isaiah says, remember, this is God's doing.

The source of your hope is God, not yourself, not anything that you could do. The first reason for hope, God provides freedom.

The second reason for hope, in verse number five, God ends war. For every trampling boot of battle and the bloodied garments of war will be burned as fuel for the fire.

Army boots and bloody camouflage fatigues, all of it burned. God will end all conflict, all disagreement, all division, all war.

[18:01] And despite not participating in the deliverance that God is doing, God's people reap the benefits. We read about that at the end of verse three.

It's when they rejoice when they're dividing the spoil. But you didn't participate in the battle. This is like when the Vikings beat the Packers 56 to nothing.

And their punter, who didn't punt one time, gets to celebrate the victory. He shares in the spoil of the victory. Even though he didn't participate at all.

God provides the freedom. God ends war. And finally, verse number six, God sends his son. Four, a child will be born for us.

A son will be given to us. And the government will be on his shoulders.

[19:15] He will be named Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. Notice these words.

A child. How humble. How humble. How low. How helpless. What sweet condescension.

A child. A child will be born. It points to Jesus' humanity. A son.

This hints at his royalty. And that makes sense that we would be thinking about that here in Isaiah.

A son will be given. It hints at his deity.

This is no ordinary child. This is God in the flesh. And the government will rest on his shoulders.

[20:21] How fascinating. He breaks the yoke of the tyrants. He frees his people from bondage.

And then he takes the weight of government authority and rule and he puts it on his own shoulders.

Because despite being a baby, he is perfectly qualified to rule. Notice these names. And notice, here's another little tangent that you can chase down sometime if you want.

Notice these are God-given names. Only one descendant from David ever got a name from God.

Solomon. Notice these God-given names. Wonderful counselor. Wonderful has this idea of mind-blowing.

This is shocking, surprising, stunning wisdom, insight, discernment, guidance. He is mighty God, the one who defends and liberates his people with the strength of a warrior.

[21:32] God-given God-given God-given God-given God-given God-given God-given eternal father, endlessly loving his own eternal care and concern for his people, especially those who are most helpless.

The prince of peace, the one who reconciles enemies, not by force, not by manipulation, not by coercion, no, his authority is characterized by well-being, health, wholeness, harmony, restoration, shalom.

Born a child, and yet a king. Does your car have the little dial to adjust how fast your windshield wipers move?

That thing drives me crazy. I really would rather either just turn the windshield wipers on or just flip it on when I want it to go because I can never seem to get that set just right. And either it squeaks when it squawks, when it goes across the screen, the windshield, or it doesn't happen often enough and you just feel frustrated, the people in your car are frustrated because you're not cleaning the windshield when it's raining, it's your job, you're the driver, all of those things, right?

When Jesus returns, he will not be making fine-tune adjustments like the little knob on the windshield wiper.

[23:07] His return will trigger a massive social, civil, and cultural overhaul. Will be a kingdom that appropriately reflects its king, the wonderful counselor.

the mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace. Verse 7, the dominion, speaking of this kingdom, the dominion will be vast.

I love that. 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.

This is a kingdom unlike any other kingdom this world has ever experienced. It is an empire without imperialism. It is authority free from abuse.

It is justice that is incorruptible by lobbyists or nationalists or power-hungry politicians. righteousness. This kingdom is established and sustained by Jesus' own righteousness. [24 : 52] Now, if this text ended right here, we would have every reason to hope in our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Like, this is enough, right? If the text ended here, we have every reason to anchor our hope in Jesus.

But it doesn't end here. There's one more sentence at the end of verse 7, and I want to call your attention to it. The zeal of the Lord of armies will accomplish this.

What is this? A child will be born, a son given, and also this coming kingdom.

Has God accomplished the first portion? Oh, he has. He sent his son. He gave us a baby, Jesus.

Will God accomplish the second part of establishing Jesus' eternal kingdom?

Oh, he will. How can you be so sure? The zeal of the Lord of armies will accomplish this. What is zeal? This, this, the Hebrew word underneath this English word zeal is used in Proverbs 6 to describe a husband's jealousy for his wife.

[26 : 24] The same word is used in Ecclesiastes chapter 4 when the preacher is talking about the rivalry and the envy that can happen when we try to work harder, harder, harder in order to keep up with the Joneses.

That's zeal. And the same word is used unsurprisingly, I suppose, in the passionate love between a bride and a groom in Song of Solomon chapter 8.

Now, for us to understand this word zeal, think about shopping at the grocery store. and you're there with your parent and some bully comes up behind you and smacks you across the face.

You think your mom and dad is just going to stand by while that happens? It doesn't matter how big or how small your mom or dad are. Something inside of them is going to rise up to defend you, to protect you, to deal with this bully.

Do you know what that is? Zeal. Think about how badly a claustrophobic person wants to get above ground after touring a mine.

[27 : 47] That's zeal. Think about a friend who will drop everything they are doing.

To come and be with you. Sparing no expense, giving up everything in order to spend some time caring for you.

Zeal. Think about a coach, a football coach, with his team on defense. It's fourth and seventeen. This is the game.

team. He calls a timeout. What is he going to do during this timeout? Is he going to get his team to sing the ABCs with him?

Are they going to talk about their plans for after the game? Of course not. Something is going to be stirred up inside of him. His face is going to get red.

[28 : 44] He's going to look all of his players in their eye and he's going to say, one more play. Give me everything you've got for one more play.

He is stirred up and he is handing that zeal off to his players. Determination. Urgency. When scripture uses this word to describe God, zeal, we find it in Isaiah 42 where God prepares himself like a warrior for battle.

He stirs up his zeal. And we find it in Isaiah 63 as surging compassion and empathy, something rising up in God when he sees his people in affliction.

What is that? It's zeal. We see it in Zephaniah chapter 1 and chapter 3, the fire of his jealousy for his people's love.

And we see it in the New Testament when Jesus drives those filthy crooks out of his father's house with a whip and the disciples remember a text from the Old Testament and they say, zeal for my father's house has consumed me.

[30 : 11] God's zeal here in Isaiah chapter 9 ensures the triumph of his grace and glory.

That's zeal. now our solutions our solutions to bullies to abusers to oppressors to tyrants are often just bigger bullies bigger abusers bigger oppressors bigger tyrants.

this is how King Ahaz tried to solve his problem of hopelessness. I'm going to appeal to Assyria. I'll go connect with a bigger bully and we'll fix this problem together.

God's solution is different. God's answer to every bully is a baby. death is a bully.

But by dying and rising from the dead Jesus destroyed the one who has the power of death that is the devil. And through faith in Jesus you may have abundant!

[31 : 43] eternal life. God's answer to every bully is a baby. sin is a bully. But because of Jesus' victory on the cross sin, Romans chapter 6, no longer has dominion over you.

That bully of sin, that temptation that bullies you around, Jesus has broken that power. By the Spirit you can say no to temptation.

Worry is a bully. but Jesus invites you to cast all of your anxieties on him. First Peter chapter 5. Why? Because he cares for you.

Pain and cancer and Parkinson's and strokes and aneurysms. these are bullies. Bullies that are going to bully us around until Jesus returns to give us new bodies, fit to worship him for all eternity. Oh, child of God, look forward to that day. Fear about the future is a bully. Life can feel dark and hopeless, but his response, God's response to all that is broken in our world is not a different president.

[33 : 12] It is not a more efficient government. It is not a new series of better laws. God's response to all that is broken is his son.

Insecurity is a bully, but Jesus, our good shepherd, quiets restless minds and racing thoughts, he not only accepts you, child of God, he delights in you.

God's response to all that is broken is his son. King Jesus reigns over an ever expanding realm of grace, an ever intensifying domain of glory, a kingdom that will never be conquered, never overruled, never overrun, never overtaken.

God does not leave us in darkness, not even the darkness that we deserve and bring upon ourselves. His answer to our darkness, his answer to our hopelessness, our fear, our brokenness, is the light of his son, Jesus Christ.

The light has dawned. Jesus has come, lived a perfect life, died for the sins of his people, risen in victory over death, if you are still living in darkness, come to Jesus, believe in Jesus, and walk in the light.

[34 : 42] Brothers and sisters, you don't have to live under the weight of fear, or sin, or insecurity, or worry, or anxiety, or hopelessness.

Give Jesus everything that burdens you today. He will put it on his shoulders, and then he will carry you. How does that sound?

Jesus is the wonderful counselor. He is wisdom for all of your confusion. Jesus is the mighty God, the one who defends you and fights for you.

Jesus is the eternal father who loves you so genuinely and deeply. Jesus is the prince of peace who brings wholeness and restoration.

Like a punter who didn't punt, we have done nothing to secure the win, and yet, by God's grace, we joyfully participate in the plunder of Jesus' victory.

[35 : 58] In his name, as we sang together, all oppression will cease. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word.

Thank you for giving it to us. Thank you for preserving it for us. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for helping us as we have spent time together working our way through this beautiful portion of Isaiah chapter seven.

Father, as we prepare to celebrate communion and to take the Lord's supper together, we anticipate both the solemnity and also the celebration of this time.

Solemn, because we recall and remember the price that was paid to redeem us from all of our brokenness.

And celebration, because we remember that our Savior is alive, and that we only celebrate the Lord's supper in this way until he returns.

[37 : 16] Father, as we take a few moments right now, would you help us? Holy Spirit, would you please come and do business in our hearts?

Soften us. Cause us to reflect on the things that we have heard. Give us insight into the places where we have been drawn into hopelessness, despite the fact that you have, that Jesus came to be with us and to save and rescue us.

You know our hearts. You know where there is discouragement and depression and despondency. You know where there is fear and anxiety and insecurity. You know where there is pain and hurt, physical, emotional.

Would you please help us as we prepare to celebrate the Lord's Supper? Father, we thank you that where our sins are many, your mercy is more.

Thank you that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For whatever sin and weakness and failure you brought to our hearts, to our minds, we plead and claim the forgiveness and the grace that is ours through our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
[38 : 53] Help us as we continue in this time of worship. In Jesus' name, Amen.