

Joy To The World

*“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus,
for he will save his people from their sins.”
(Matthew 1:21 ESV)*

*“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy
that will be for all the people.”
(Luke 2:10 ESV)*

The Saviour Reigns

December 18th, 2022

Isaiah 9:1-7

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Introduction:

Good morning, everyone, if you have a Bible with you, please open it to Isaiah Chapter 9, verses 1-7. Today is the second week of our Advent series and, as Paul mentioned last week, we are taking our cues for each week from the verses of Joy to The World. So, our cue for this week comes from the second verse which begins with the line “Joy to the World, the Saviour reigns.” The proclamation that our Saviour has come and is ruling is one of the most significant themes of the Christmas season. It is the essence of Advent. The heart of why Jesus has come. Now, remember that last week Pastor Paul reminded us that Advent does not simply refer to Jesus’ birth but that it also refers to his second coming. This is something we will keep coming back to throughout this series and something I want you to keep in mind as we turn our attention to our text this morning.

Hear now the Word of the Lord, beginning in Isaiah 9:1.

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.³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon^[d] his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ 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. (Isaiah 9:1-7 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Now Isaiah was a prophet who served in the southern Israelite kingdom of Judah, and he prophesied near the very end of the Line of Davidic kings before the destruction of Judah by Babylon. And a large part of the book of Isaiah is dedicated to prophesying coming judgement on the people of Judah for their continued rejection of God. Yet interspersed in these dark prophecies there is a steady stream of messianic hope. In the Midst of darkness and judgement there is the light of hope. And that is exactly how this passage begins, with the declaration that those who are in darkness have seen a great light!

There is a promised salvation for a lost and desperate people. Salvation in the form of a Child. A Child who will redeem and restore the people of God.

Now we have the benefit of knowing exactly who this Child is. We know the full Story. We know that the Son of God was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Yet it

will be helpful for us to first consider what the Israelite people would have heard in this prophecy and what they would have expected this child to do.

What Will This Child Come To Do?

The First thing we see is that:

1. He will come to save.

We see this in verses 2-4 “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.”

It is pretty clear here that the promised child would come to liberate and save the Jewish people from their oppressors. This would have been a welcome promise to people in Isaiah’s day as they lived during the dwindling of Judah’s kingdom until there was hardly anything left. They would have welcomed a great messiah to deliver them from their many adversaries and powerful oppressors.

And this desire for liberation and salvation flowed steadily through into Jesus’ day. Basically, from the time of Isaiah onward the Israelite people were ruled by one kingdom or another. It was the Babylonians, then the Persians, then the Greeks, and finally the Romans. They have become well accustomed to being subjugated and oppressed. Yet this prophecy would have resonated deep in their hearts as they eagerly awaited the child who would come and deliver them from their enemies.

We see this in the conversation that Jesus has after his resurrection with two of his followers on the road to Emmaus. In Luke 24:19-20 they say to Jesus ““Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened.” (Luke 24:19-20 ESV)

These disciples expected Jesus to come and redeem Israel; to deliver them from their oppressors and re-establish the kingdom of God. And they weren't wrong to think this. This is something that Jesus would do. Just not yet. They simply didn't have the complete picture.

You see Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy. He is the promised Child. We saw last week that Jesus is the answer to the Old Testament prophecies through the excellent quote by Barry Webb that Pastor Paul shared with us:

“*all* the Old Testament promises about the coming kingdom of God find their fulfillment (ultimate meaning) in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, they are not fulfilled in some very general way (i.e. the fulfillment is ‘somehow’ related to Jesus Christ), but in the very specific *events* of his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and coming again. This means (among other things) that the fulfillment does not come all at once, but in two major phases.”¹

Isn't that good?

Jesus fulfilled this promise by breaking the curse of sin and death. He defeated our greatest enemy and freed us from our most potent adversary. And, AND, he will come again to deliver us from every enemy. He will come to defeat all those who stand against him. Notice the language used in verse 5.

¹ Barry Webb, *The Message of Zechariah*, ed. J. A. Motyer, *The Bible Speaks Today*. Accordance electronic ed. (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 172.

“⁵For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.” (Isaiah 9:5 ESV)

God will disarm the enemy. He will make them powerless. In verse 4 Isaiah references God breaking the rod of the enemy as in the day of Midian. He is reminding the people of the day that God defeated the Midianites who greatly outnumbered Gideon’s miniscule army.

God won the battle that day. And God will win every Battle.

Jesus has defeated sin and death and he will come again to defeat all those who stand against him and his people.

That’s the first thing this promised child will come to do. The second is:

2. He will come to reign.

In verses 6-7 we see that this child came not only to save, but also to reign forever.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon^[d] his shoulder, and his name shall be called^[e] Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 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.”

Again, it is pretty clear to see in this passage that the child will come to reign. He will be the king to fulfill God’s promises to David in 2 Samuel 7, “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body,

and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” (2 Samuel 7:12-13 ESV)

There was an expectation among the Jewish people that there would come a great king from the line of David who would come and re-establish the kingdom of God’s people forever. There was an eager anticipation for this king to come overthrow the earthly powers and reign on the Earth.

And we see that Jesus has fulfilled this second promise in Isaiah 9 that there would come a king in the line of David who will rule forever and over all things. He is in fact ruling right now over all creation. Remember his words to his disciples at the great commission where he says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (Matthew 28:18b ESV).

Jesus is currently sitting at the right hand of the Father and all things are subject under him. He has, however, not yet exerted his dominion over all the Earth to its full extent. That is what will happen at Jesus’ second coming.

We see this picture of Jesus’ coming power and might displayed in Revelation 19

“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. 13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in^[b] blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. 14 And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. 15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule^[c] them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.” (Revelation 19:11-16 ESV).

This is what will happen when Jesus comes again. He will completely fulfill every aspect of this prophesy. We live in what we like to call the Already and the Not Yet. We live in the time between Jesus’ first and second comings. He has already fulfilled these prophecies, he is already

reigning in heaven, and there will be a time where he fulfills these prophecies completely and utterly to their full extent.

But that leaves us with an important question.

Why is this good news?

Why is the promise of a king to come and reign forever over all the earth good news? Maybe you're looking out at the world today, at the failure of one human leader to the next and thinking maybe it is a good thing that we don't have an eternal king. Maybe you're reading your Old Testament and seeing that even David, the greatest king in the Old Testament had major moral failures not to mention how brutal his descendants were. You might just be wondering why a promise of a king in David's line who will reign forever is good news.

Well let me give you two reasons. The First is:

1. Because of who we are.

I want you to think for a moment about the fact that one of the primary analogies in the Bible for us is Sheep. I think that's intentional. Sheep aren't known for being very bright nor are they very powerful. They are one of the most helpless animals in existence. They are in constant need of guidance and leadership and in constant need of protection from greater threats.

Compare this what Peter says in 1 Peter 5:8 "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8 ESV)

Face it. There are things in this world that are much more powerful than you. There are powerful forces in this world that want nothing more than to destroy you. And these forces aren't just out

there in the World either. They are in here. The Bible warns us that wolves will come out against us from WITHIN the flock. And even more than that, these evil destructive forces are working against us from our very flesh. Look at what Jeremiah 17:9 tells us “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9 ESV) The apostle Paul reminds us that we are waging spiritual warfare against the desires of the flesh even now.

Knowing this, knowing how weak and helpless we are, how prone to wander away from our Lord and into destruction it is good news that Jesus is king. It is the absolute BEST NEWS that he will watch over us and care for us because we cannot hope to take care of ourselves apart from him.

Secondly it is good news that Jesus is king:

2. Because of who he is.

Look for a moment at the Words that Isaiah uses to describe the promised king, look at the words he uses to describe Jesus. He says he is a Wonderful Counselor. He is Mighty God, He is Everlasting Father. He is Prince of Peace!

Wouldn't you want this person to be your king? Isn't this good news?

It is great news that our king is a wonderful counselor. His counsel is wise and good. It is safe and beneficial to follow him. Our compasses our broken, our counsel is foolishness so let us delight in the good guidance of a wonderful counselor.

And he is Mighty God. Jesus is GOD! And he is MIGHTY! This is good news! We don't have a weak ineffectual king who cannot protect us from our enemies. NO! we have a king who has

defeated death, who has overcome the World. Take Heart! Rest in the knowledge that our king is mighty!

Isaiah also tells us that Jesus is our Everlasting Father. He is united with the Father for all eternity. Jesus himself says in John 10:30 “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30 ESV) and as a father he cares for his children,

he protects and provides for his family.

And finally, he is the Prince of Peace he is the one who makes peace between sinful man and Holy God. He is the king who leads his people out of strife and tribulation into peace. His is the kingdom where the Lion will lie down with the Lamb.

He is THE King. There is none like him. It is exceptionally good news that Jesus Christ is our King. It is exceptionally good news that he is the child promised to us 700 years before his birth in Isaiah 9.

And that leaves us with one final question.

How Should We Respond to This Child?

There are two primary ways for us to respond to this promised Child in the text before us.

The first thing we ought to do is:

1. Rejoice

This is the response suggested in Joy to the World and it is the response suggested to us in Isaiah 9 as well. We see this in verse 3 where we read. “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.”

If all that we have seen this morning is true. If all that we know about who Jesus is, what he has done for us and what he continues to do is true. Then we ought to REJOICE! We ought to sing louder than ever. We should sing, we should shout, we should clap, we should dance! There is no greater news than this! There is no greater joy than the joy of knowing Jesus.

He has defeated death! He has conquered the grave! He has bound the devil and set the captives free! The people in darkness have seen a great light!

Do not tell me that you have seen this great light. Do not tell me you know the good news of Jesus Christ if you can't rejoice. If you can't lift your voice to praise in the majesty of our great and mighty king.

Because that is the natural response of people who have lived in darkness and have seen a great light. This is the response of people who were dead in their sins, lost without hope, and have been given new life through the free gift of grace in Jesus Christ.

This is the reason I am standing before you today. I know what it's like to experience the darkness of a World without hope. I grew up in a Christian home and was blessed to have a Mother who did everything in her power and then some to ensure that me and my siblings had a relationship with Jesus. And, truth be told, I would not be alive today if it weren't for the Way God used her in my life.

Because in my late teens and early twenties, I went through a long and intense battle with depression. There is a myriad of reasons for my depression but one of the most significant factors was an overwhelming sense of guilt and shame. Despite growing up in a Christian home and despite putting my faith in Jesus at a young age, I did not have a complete understanding of the gospel. I had made numerous mistakes throughout my high school career and hurt a lot of people in my sin. This had led to an overwhelming sense that I had not lived up to the person I was supposed to be and that I was in fact a fraud of a Christian. These kinds of thoughts began to dominate my mind and they spiralled until I was in a very dark place. I remember crying out to God and begging him to help me and hearing nothing in return. I often prayed the words of Psalm 13 “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?” (Psalm 13:1 ESV)

I felt trapped in despair and darkness with no way out and it is by God’s grace that I am before you today. Because one day, I am not even sure when exactly, it was like a light switch had flipped in my mind. For whatever reason I finally understood the gospel. I understood that it wasn’t about how good I was or could be. There was no guilt or shame because Jesus had taken it all upon the cross. My slate had been wiped clean. I finally saw the light.

And let me tell you, THERE IS NOTHING LIKE THAT.

There is no hope, no peace, no resounding joy that compares to the joy of knowing that the God of the universe sent his son to die on the cross in your place and that every single burden of guilt and shame, every curse of sin, has been removed and laid upon Jesus.

There is nothing greater than knowing that we are fully known, fully loved, and fully forgiven.

This is why I have dedicated my life to helping other people see and experience the joy and hope that I have in Jesus.

And so, the natural response to seeing and knowing Jesus is to rejoice! It is to sing great praise to the King of kings and Lord of lords.

We ought to be filled with joy and rejoicing at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the first way we should respond to Jesus, the second thing we see in this text is that we should also.

2. Worship

It may seem odd that I have separated Rejoicing and Worship into two separate points. But I think there is an important distinction between the two. Yes, we ought to respond to Jesus with joy and rejoicing and we should also respond by worshipping our mighty king.

I was originally going to title this point something like Submit or Obey to capture the idea that we have a king who sits in heaven who we owe our allegiance and devotion. Yet I think that worship is a more complete idea. It captures the essence of the Christian response to the gospel of Jesus.

In the preaching workshop we have been working through the book *Expository Exultation* by John Piper and he provides one of the best definitions of worship that I have come across.

He says, “Worship means consciously knowing and treasuring and showing the supreme worth and beauty of God.”²

Let me read that again.

“Worship means consciously knowing and treasuring and showing the supreme worth and beauty of God.”

That is the essence, the heart, of the Christian life. Nowhere else is the supreme worth and beauty of God more clearly displayed than in Jesus Christ. It is often said that everything the Father wants to reveal to us about himself is demonstrated in Jesus. Throughout the Advent of Jesus, throughout his first and second comings we see the ultimate display of the supreme worth and beauty of God.

One of the most important things you can do through this Christmas season is strive to consciously know and treasure the supreme worth and beauty of God, because, if you know this, if you treasure these truths in your heart, then you will show them in your life.

And not just in singing praise to God. While that is part of worship, and an important part, it is not all there is. Worship is a full-time job, not something we participate in once a week for an hour. Piper also points out that there is a “stunning degree of nonspecificity for worship as an outward form and a radical intensification of worship as an inward experience of the heart.”³

² John Piper, *Expository Exultation*, (Pg. 17).

³ John Piper, *Expository Exultation*, 26.

We ought to be worshipping every moment of every day, in all that we do. What I mean by that is that we should be knowing the supreme worth and beauty of God at all times, treasuring it in our hearts, and showing it in our lives.

What that means is that it's not really about HOW we worship. It is much more about WHEN we worship and WHY we worship. It is about savouring Jesus, prizing him, delighting in who he is and showing the supremacy and worth of Jesus in our lives. It is not about singing specific songs that we like on Sunday mornings.

Your whole life should be worship. Your work can and should be worship, your commute can and should be worship, relaxing on the couch at the end of a long day can and should be worship. Worship is about prizing God in our hearts and that ought to shape how we do life.

That is what this text drives us toward. It paints a beautiful picture of what the Israelite people expected in their coming messiah. It gives us an amazing description of WHAT WE HAVE IN JESUS CHRIST!

Are you seeing that this morning?

Are you seeing that we have a Saviour who has already saved us from the curse of sin and death, who has taken our sins upon himself and paid the price, who has risen from the dead defeating death once and for all, and who will come again to defeat every enemy who stands against him and his people?

Are you seeing that we have the long awaited, forever king, who will rule in peace, justice, and righteousness forever more? Are you seeing that nothing in this world can happen to you that is

outside of his sovereign power and authority? We have a good shepherd, a wonderful counselor, mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace who is ruling over all creation and who is caring for each and every one of his people!

It is my deepest prayer that all of us would meditate upon these wonderful truths this morning. That we would take time to reflect upon, and to tell one another, about the supreme beauty of the child who came into the world as a baby born in a manger to fulfill all the Old Testament prophecies. It is my earnest desire that we would grow in our ability to know Jesus, to treasure him more fully and that this would show through our lives to all around us.

Oh, would our hearts be captivated by Jesus Christ.

Oh, would we be most satisfied in God.

Oh, would we rejoice always in our amazing saviour.

Let us do that now. Let us turn our attention to making a joyful noise to the light of the World who has rescued us from darkness into eternal life.

Let's pray together.