

GETTING READY FOR CHRISTMAS

(Sermon Summary)

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Sunday Morning – 18th December 2022

Reading: Isaiah 9:1-7 (v9:7)

People go to great efforts getting ready for Christmas. Some people start planning next year's Christmas on Boxing Day the year before. People are anxious that everything should go to plan, that the right things be purchased and that every detail is attended to. Every effort is made to avoid disappointment. Yet how often Christmas plans get ruined by bad weather, strikes, COVID or sickness.

1. God planned Christmas a long time ago.

Isaiah, one of the Old Testament prophets, foretold Christmas, the birth of Christ, long before the event. The people were told, 700 years and more before the event, that a Son would be born and that He would have great titles. It is something to think about that the Lord was planning 700 years beforehand, and even before that, in the Garden of Eden. We would never think to plan that far in advance. To plan, say, five years ahead would seem to us more reasonable. People try to think ahead about climate change or energy supply, but these plans are quickly thrown off course by events.

God, however, was able to speak with confidence and conviction about an event way off in the future from our perspective. He could speak with authority and with purpose. The Bible, in fact, is full of such predictions.

2. God's zeal.

Zeal is a word that tells us that something is done with great desire and with passion. It speaks about the heat with which something is done.

A new manager at a football team may speak about giving the task 110%. But it is just fighting talk if he does not have a good squad of players and if the opposition is strong.

God is able to plan, sure in the knowledge that He has the power and the wisdom to carry out His purposes.

He is already there, 700 years ahead, and is able to see the end from the beginning. He does not have to wait and see what happens, and make changes to His plans as He goes along. He sees His Son's birth, death and resurrection as though they are in the present now. God has the purpose, the power and the zeal to ensure that all He has planned happens.

Lots of people tried to stop His purposes coming to pass. Different empires sought to destroy Jerusalem. In the time of Esther there were the troubles instigated by Haman. Hatred against the Lord's people was always seeking to frustrate the purposes for God.

Yet the Lord was able to overcome these opponents and prevent them being able to halt His purposes. He was able to use the wise men to outwit Herod and thwart his plan to kill the baby Jesus.

3. It has a purpose.

All that the Lord did to ensure that His plan would prevail was not so as to give us a good story to tell. It was not just a demonstration of what the Lord is able to do. All this zeal was for our sakes. The bringing of the Son of God into the world was for our sakes.

Yet there is no purpose that we will be able to see unless the Lord opens our eyes. The hardest thing for us to be able to see is our need of salvation. It is for us to realize that we are not alright in the sight of God. In our folly, we try to dis-invent God and replace Him with evolution, to relegate Him to being 'Him upstairs' or a 'sky wizard'. We cling to an idea of our essential goodness and gloss over our sad part in the drama of sin in the world.

So God acts to sway empires and bring His Son into the world. He came so that He would be able to represent us completely in life as well as death. He was ordained and anointed for this work of giving Himself sacrificially in death on our behalf. His coming to do these things shows us that we are condemned and judged. But the Lord Jesus bears our losses and restores God's favour by doing what is necessary for us to be forgiven.

His zeal actually also gives us power to believe. We are clueless and helpless until He shines light upon us. We cry out to Him and behold the mercy of God towards us in Christ. We lay hold of God for spiritual energy and power.

Christ is the best and only gift that we need at Christmas. His zeal gives us eternal security. It gives us life and unending mercy.