

SUMMARY AND REVIEW

1. Take 5-10 minutes to discuss last week's sermon.
2. What does it mean to *yearn* for something?

INTRO TO THE TEXT

Have you ever heard of Advent? *Advenire*, meaning “to come”, and *Adventus*, meaning “arrival”, give us a sense of what this season is about: expectation and anticipation of God's coming. As 21st century Christians we realize that God came in the form of a babe (Jesus) 2,000 years ago, to bring hope to a dying world. This month, our series on advent will take us on a grand adventure to learn about the coming of Jesus to fulfill the promises foretold to the Jewish people in the Old Testament and who we look forward to coming again, establishing his throne forever. We begin this series by studying Isaiah 9. In the beginning verses of Isaiah 9, Isaiah offers the hope of restoration, peace and joy through the birth of a new king. Verses 6 and 7 describe this new king, what he offers to Jerusalem, and ultimately, in light of Christ, what he offers to us today.

READ Isaiah 9:6-7

ANALYZE THE TEXT

1. What do you make of the phrase “For *to us* a child is born, *to us* a son is given”?
2. At the end of verse 6 are several names given to this king. Which name most resonates with you and why?
3. What are hallmarks of the new king's reign (v.7)?
4. What descriptions are given to this new king in verses 6 & 7 that let us know he is different than any mere earthly king?
5. How many times is the idea of “forever” alluded to? How do you think Jesus fulfills this and what future hope does this give us?

A FEW THINGS TO CONSIDER

Isaiah's prophecy comes in the context of darkness, war and anguish for the Lord's people in Judah and Jerusalem. This difficult period of time came as a result of King Ahaz not trusting the Lord to protect the nation of Judah from its enemies to the north. When Ahaz takes matters into his own hands, his

plan incurs unintended consequences, and the Assyrians end up invading Judah and Jerusalem, causing mass destruction. In Chapter 9, Isaiah is telling the people that this darkness will lift, that they have a reason to hope: there will be a new dawn, a new king who embodies justice, righteousness and peace, and whose kingdom will prosper.¹

Christians commonly interpret this passage as a prophecy to the coming of Jesus (in addition to the prophecy of the rule of King Hezekiah of Judah). As we focus on these verses in relation to Advent, we see that God's answer to the pain and plight of his people is to send his son Jesus to redeem them. Dr. Luke A. Powery calls Jesus the “unsuspecting bearer of peace,” writing, “throughout the biblical narratives, the birth of a child signifies a new day dawning, breaking in with light while breaking the bonds of darkness [...] God comes in the form of a child to demonstrate that the peace we so deeply desire will only come through God's power and not our own might.”² What a promise: the child Jesus bears on his shoulders the yoke of our sin, the pain of our circumstances and the weight of our struggles.

APPLY

1. Put yourself in the shoes of the people of Judah and Jerusalem, surrounded by the effects of war and destruction. For what might they be yearning?
2. What are you yearning for in your life right now?
3. Can you think of a time that, like King Ahaz, you have struggled to trust God in the midst of difficult circumstances? What happened? How did God show up for you anyway?
4. How can Isaiah's description of the new king in these verses help us explore the idea of Jesus as dawn breaking into our darkness during the Advent season?

MEMORIZE

Isaiah 9:6 *For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

FURTHER READING Isaiah 7-14

¹ Warren E. Berkley, <http://www.bible.ca/ef/expository-isaiah-9.htm>

² *Peace*, A Sermon preached in Duke University Chapel on December 24, 2013 by the Rev. Dr. Luke A. Powery