

A Light Has Dawned

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: 24 December 2018

Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0 : 0 0] Music. Isaiah chapter 9, verse 2, and then verses 5 through 7.

! The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them was light shown. 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 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.

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 uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

[1 : 2 6] The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. One of the first indicators for me that we're in the Christmas season is you begin to see lights everywhere.

And it seems like we're starting to see lights early and earlier on in the year, doesn't it? It seems like in Walmart, right after Halloween is over, everything is lit up inside there in preparation for Christmas.

Some people I know leave their Christmas lights up all year long and they're cheating and they turn them on, right, around sometime in November. For me, I don't like to put ours up until after Thanksgiving. In fact, I hate putting Christmas lights up on our house.

It's one of the things that I like to do least in life. But I'll tell you that once they're up and once they're shining, especially as we roll back and we come home and it's later at night and the sun is down and to see all the lights lit up in your neighborhood, it's something wonderful to behold.

And so I really enjoy it. Did you ever wonder why we do that? Why do we use so many lights this time of year? Is it just because they look pretty? Is it something nice to look at?

[2 : 4 0] I think that there's more to it. I think that there's another reason altogether for why we seem to see so many lights this time of year. The Bible frequently uses light and its opposite darkness in symbolic ways.

Often you'll find when you read Scripture that the world is described as being in darkness. The Bible describes the world often as being a dark place.

Why is that? How is the world dark? Well, first of all, the Bible, when it says that, it means that the world is filled with evil. The world is filled with untold suffering.

The same issues that plague our society and our world today plagued the society back when Jesus was born. Violence, injustice, abuse of power, oppression, grief, and despair abounded just like they do in our world today.

In fact, if you remember, when King Herod found out that Jesus was to be born, the king of the Jews, he asked the Magi to come back. And he made it seem to them like he wanted to know so he could go and worship.

[3 : 5 5] But reality was he didn't want to share his throne with anybody. And when he found out that the Magi had left, had tricked him, he was enraged, and he had his soldiers go to Bethlehem.

And they took all the sons in that community, aged two years and younger, and they dragged them out of their houses, and they slaughtered them in the streets in front of the eyes of their mothers and fathers.

That's horrible. That's dark. The other way the world is described as being in darkness in the Bible is that it is referring to how the world doesn't know how to eradicate.

It doesn't know how to deal with the evil and suffering that it experiences within it. As we look at ourselves, as we look at the world around us, we realize that we're broken. We realize that other people are broken, and we desperately want to fix it. We know in our hearts that things aren't as they should be. So we look to the government, or people will look to things outside of this world to try to figure out how to fix what is broken, to try to look to some other source of light.

[5 : 09] But Jesus, the Bible says, was the light that shone into the darkness.

Have you ever noticed that at this time of year, people tend to act better than they normally do? And not only do we act better, we encourage other people to do the same, right?

Don't be a Grinch, you'll often hear people say, or don't be a Scrooge. Don't make Christmas bad. Be nice. And we wish that it could be like this all the time.

And so for many, Christmas becomes about this notion that one day, maybe we can possibly achieve this kind of perfect peace and unity with one another.

Maybe it's possible. We feel that and sense that this time of year. And then December 26 comes. And everybody's in line at the stores trying to take back their stuff.

[6 : 06] And they're crowded. And the streets are crowded. And the restaurants are crowded. And all of a sudden, all that goodwill towards our fellow men seems to be forgotten. Though our attempts to eradicate the darkness in our world may be sincere, the Bible never supports the illusion that humanity holds the answers.

That humanity is capable of fixing what's broken within themselves and what's broken in the world that they live in. That we live in. Now you might hear that and you might be thinking, well, that doesn't sound very optimistic.

Pastor Mike, you seem like you're acting very much like a Grinch tonight. Hold on a second. Because that's the bad news. But boy, is there good news.

The good news of Jesus Christ. The gospel. That says that while we can't overcome the darkness on our own, that we still are not without hope.

No, we have tremendous hope. The Christmas message is that on those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has shone.

[7 : 18] Notice that it isn't a light from within this world, but a light from outside of this world that shines into this darkness. There's a light outside of this world.

And Jesus, the Bible says, has brought that light to us. To save us. As a matter of fact, the Bible says that Jesus himself is that very light. In John 1, 9 through 12, it says, Later on in John 8, verse 12, Again, it says there, Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Why does the Bible use light to symbolize Jesus?

Well, first of all, because light gives life. Think about it. Without the sun, we are hopeless. We will freeze. Life will not be able to be sustained on this earth.

And we would all eventually die. Light is needed for life to take place. And so, too, the Bible says that only in God do we live and move and have our being.

[8 : 50] Light also exposes the truth. Light shows things as they really and truly are. Another thing that I don't like to do besides putting up Christmas lights is going to the dentist.

And when you sit back, you love going to the dentist? When you sit back, when you sit back in the chair, you know, you have that powerful blinding light overhead and they pull it way down into your face.

And thankfully, they give you the sunglasses. My dentist also likes to put a little light here on his glasses. And so, when I'm back there and he's examining me, he's got that light in my mouth and then he's over me with another light in my mouth.

And so, you know that no cavity is safe when you go see Dr. Beard, right? You are blinded by light. It exposes everything that's in there for him to see. And there is nothing that is hidden.

Light reveals truth. 1 John 1, 5-6 says that the Bible is the source of all truth. There it says, This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

[9 : 53] If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and we do not practice the truth. So, at one level, the reason why we can know anything at all is because of God, who gave us our minds, who gave us the ability to reason and to rationalize.

However, on another level, we can't possibly know who God is unless he reveals himself to us. And that's exactly what he does to us through his word.

That's what he's done for us through his son, Jesus Christ. And only by his saving us, only by his giving us his spirit, are we then illuminated to be able to see things as they truly are.

Light is a symbol of Jesus as well because light is beautiful, isn't it? Light is dazzling. Light gives joy.

In those parts of the world where they have a shortened day and there's not much light, there's depression. The suicide rates go up because we need light for joy to see its beauty.

[11 : 03] So then God alone has the life, has the truth, and has the joy that we lack and are desperate for.

Despite our many efforts, we are unable to generate these things ourselves. And so Isaiah reveals to us in verses 6 and 7 that this light of life, this light of truth, this light of joy has flashed upon us, has shone upon us.

For to us, he says, a child is born. To us, a son is given. The child is the one who brings it to us. How? Because Isaiah says he's the wonderful counselor.

He's the mighty God. He's the everlasting Father. He's the Prince of Peace. What's interesting is that these four titles given to this child belong to God.

God. Which means that if this child born that first Christmas day is really mighty God and everlasting Father, you can't just like Him.

[12 : 13] In the Bible, the people who actually saw and heard Jesus never acted indifferently to Him after they encountered Him. Once they realized what He was claiming about Himself, they'd either become scared of Him, they'd either hate Him or they'd fall down at His feet and worship Him.

But rest assured that nobody came away from an encounter with Jesus thinking something like this. He seems like a good guy. He's awfully inspiring. He just wants to make our lives a little bit better.

And if you don't believe me, then I encourage you to read the Scriptures for yourself.

But if the baby at Christmas that was born is the mighty God, then He is truly worthy of our worship. He's truly worthy of our praise and He's truly worthy of our service.

If the baby born on Christmas is the wonderful counselor, if He is the Prince of Peace, then you should want to worship Him. You should want to praise Him. You should want to know Him and serve Him.

Think about it for a minute. What does a counselor do? Well, a counselor gives counsel. And a counselor usually gives counsel to those who are going through something very difficult in life.

[13 : 29] And it's helpful for us too when we're talking to a counselor if they've been through it, whatever we're going through, if they can identify with the struggle that we are experiencing. And so if God has truly been born to us, then we have something that no other religion claims to have.

It's a God who truly understands us. A God who has suffered like we suffer. A God who knows what it's like to be abandoned and left alone and rejected.

A God who knows what it's like to be treated unjustly and to die. And so Christmas reminds us that we have a Lord and a Savior who has experienced the pain that we have gone through, who understands us.

He had the infinite highness of being the mighty God, yet he chose to come down to become one of us. He got down into the dirt, down into this darkness.

And he did so all the way to the cross. He did it for our salvation. Jesus is the light of the world because he brings a new life to replace our spiritual deadness.

[14 : 42] Because he reveals to us the truth. He cures our spiritual blindness. And because of the beauty of his grace, it's able to break our addiction to all other worldly pleasures that we seek for life, for hope, for beauty.

As our wonderful counselor, he walks with us through the valley of the shadow of death. He is a light for us when all other lights seem to go out.

So then the question should be, how can this light be yours? Jesus, we'll notice that verse 6 doesn't just say, for to us a child is born. It doesn't stop there.

It also says, to us a son has been given. It's a gift. In verse 5, hints at this very thing. There in verse 5, Isaiah says, for every boot of the tramping warrior in battle, tumult, and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

What is he talking about? Why Isaiah uses this imagery to show us that victory over our darkness will not require our own strength. We won't need a warrior's boot to overcome it.

[15 : 56] In fact, we can melt down our weapons and burn them up because someone else is going to come and do the fighting for us. It isn't until we get to the Suffering Servant Songs of Isaiah 42 through 55 that we find out exactly who this mysterious deliverer will be, but about them there it says in Isaiah 53, 5, but he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds, by his wounds, we are healed. When Jesus Christ went to the cross, he paid the penalty for our sin.

And so when we repent of our sins, the Bible says, and we trust in Christ's work on our behalf rather than our own moral efforts or our own good works or good choices, that God will forgive us, that God will accept us, that God will renew us, that God will fill us with his Spirit.

This light that brings life, this light that brings truth, this light that brings beauty comes as a gift to us. And the only way that you can receive it is to admit it as an undeserved grace. And so Christmas means that we are so lost, we are so unable to save ourselves, that nothing less than the death of God's Son could save us.

[17 : 32] And that this is why he came. This is what should motivate our celebration this time of year, that Christ has come.

That Christ has come and he did so to die so that we might live. The Bible says that this has always been God's plan.

On the day that Jesus was crucified, the Bible says that a great darkness fell over the land. The light of the world descended into darkness in order to bring us into and to fill us with light and life and truth and beauty.

1 Peter 2.9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light.

So I want to close by reading to you the last verse of Hark the Herald Angels Sing. And I know that we already sang that, but for me there's something about not just when you sing some of these old hymns, but when you read them.

[18 : 55] You just get a better grasp of what is being said. And so I want to read to you that last verse. Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace.

Hail the Son of Righteousness. Light and life to all he brings. Risen with healing in his wings. Mild he lays his glory by. Born that man no more may die. Born to raise the sons of earth born to give them second birth.

Hark the herald angels sing. Glory to the newborn king. Thank you.