

1 - Wonderful Counselor

12.3.2017 Isaiah 9:6 Bland Mason

BIG Idea: Jesus leads us out of darkness into eternal light.

INTRODUCTION

- Advent started this week officially so we are in the Christmas season. I know it was two months ago that we started hearing Christmas music on the radio and in stores but NOW is the season. I know some of us mark it by Black Friday or Cyber Monday but the church for hundreds of years have celebrated Advent as the 4 Sundays leading up to Christmas.
- When we think about the Christmas season there are two predominant ways of thinking about it. For some it is something like this...
- PICTURE - Santa Claus. From a very young age we tell children that this guy watches them while they sleep and we teach them to be good moral performers since if they are good he will give them gifts. Not sure why Santa is smoking a pipe but maybe this is a post-Dec 25 picture. If you don't know, this is a myth. Sorry to burst your bubble but this guy and everything that comes with him is a myth that developed along the way. We see our culture buying into this image/idea so many of us who are Christians think of another image that we feel more captures the season...
- PICTURE - traditional, white baby Jesus. But while that is MORE biblical, it is still shaped by myths. As a friend on mine said, Luke 2 doesn't say, "And the angel said to the shepherds go to Bethlehem and find a glow in the dark, white baby Jesus... with his 29 year old white mother, and hipster dad with an amazing beard."
- What in fact actually happened was much less profound in its appearance but infinitely more significant in its impact. In fact, what happened on that night on one hand would have looked like a real sad situation where a young teenage Jewish woman was having to give birth to her child in a stable with the presence of animals and all the filth.
- Now, think about that for a moment. When we had our kids, we were in a nice, clean hospital with great lights, multiple nurses, and doctors AND best of all, no domesticated animals. But Mary and Joseph were in this dark, dingy, animal stall and welcoming their son into this world. If we were watching in that moment with human eyes, it would have seemed sad and a bit pathetic.
- BUT if we could look with the eyes of God, if we could get the perspective of the heavenly angels, we would see the most profound and significant birth of any human being in the history of the world.
- In a similar way today, some people look to Jesus and see a marginalized Jewish peasant who died a sad, even pathetic death on a cross. But the perspective of God and hundreds of millions of people spread across this globe, it was the most precious act of sacrifice that has ever happened and is an act that secured eternal life for all who would believe.
- Far from Jesus being born in a sad, pathetic way and dying in a sad, pathetic way, Jesus entered this world EXACTLY as he wanted to and it was prophesied many, many times before. He was nothing less than a king being born in a manger, but one unlike any other king. One who's primary connection is not with the powerful or the rich or the famous in the world, but the lowly, the hurting, the needy, those who the world has not valued, just like him.
- This is the theme for our Advent series this year: encountering Jesus as we struggle with life in this world and the brokenness we experience. My hope and prayer through this series over the next few weeks is to cut through the sentimentalism of the holiday and encounter this humble King and see how he connects with the deepest longings and needs of the human heart.

•Our passage for this Advent season is one of the most famous prophecies about Jesus' birth in the entire OT: Isaiah 9:1-7. As we look at this text we will find a prophecy 700 years before Jesus. It was a dark time and Isaiah under the inspiration of God wrote about a hope that would come through a child.

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.

² 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 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.

- During the next four weeks we are going to focus on this text, and in particular the incredible titles that Isaiah gives in v.6 – Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- This week is Wonderful Counselor. When we think of counselor, we think of someone we go see and talk about our problems but this was more of a counselor to a king. The title “Wonderful Counselor” combines the idea of doing something “wonderful, extraordinary, miraculous” with the skill of “giving wise advice, making plans, or counsel.”
- Our **BIG Idea** for today is that as the Wonderful Counselor, **Jesus leads us out of darkness into eternal life.** We are going to see this in 3 ways.

1. The Wonderful Counselor sees our darkness.

- Isaiah picks up on this theme of darkness in first few verses. He was writing in a dark time as God's people were living in rebellion against God and his covenant with his people. They were living in darkness as a people as false gods were worshiped and sin was rampant.
- There was individual sin and corporate sin as the people and God was in the process of judging them. There sin was darkness and God was going to let them experience punishment for their sin. Isaiah said in v.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.*
- There are three ways to think about darkness today
- ONE - The darkness “out there” – it is the injustice, the evil, the immorality that we see on the news or in the lives of the people around us. Someone abuses another person, someone is cruel with their words, one group of people take advantage of another group.
- Many of us this week saw that Nigerian men were being sold in a slave market in Libya for \$800. A human being for \$800. BUT it isn't just the big stuff like this, it's the underlying greed, selfishness, lying, and pride we see at work in our city and in even in the people around us. It is the darkness “out there” and Jesus sees it.
- TWO - The darkness “in us” -
- But there is also a darkness in us. In our moments of clarity, we see that we haven't always treated those around us with the dignity and respect that they deserve. We want OUR way. We lie, we ignore others

needs, we assert our desires and we use our words to tear down or fail to build up. All the while, we tend to turn a blind eye to the darkness in our own hearts.

- We cry out against the injustice we see in Libya, but then we treat our uber driver or restaurant server like they are a machine there to complete a task for us, not image-bearers of God.
- The truth is, I don't like to admit the dark in me. I can talk about it in general terms but I don't like to be specific and I certainly don't like to be thorough when I look at it. I make excuses and diminish the significance. Of the 3 types of darkness I'm talking about this is the one that is hardest to see fully. This is the darkness "in us" and Jesus sees it.
- THREE - The darkness "on us" – this one is a little different. It is not necessarily tied to the darkness of our own sin but it rests on us none the less. For some it is emptiness, loneliness, fear, or depression. There is no logical reason for it but its there and it rests on us, some much more than others. This darkness closes in and makes us feel like we don't matter or nothing matters. It can cause us to be anxious and fearful about the future. We think "will it always be like this?" This is the darkness "on us" and Jesus sees it.
- He sees all the darkness better than we do. We get accustomed to the darkness and so feel like there is light. I remember going into a restaurant a few weeks ago and I had been outside in a bright day. When I first walked in the place seemed dark, like awkwardly dark. At first I thought they had their lights off and weren't open but after a few seconds my eyes adjusted and I could see. After a few minutes everything seemed normal.
- We have a tendency to get comfortable with the darkness in us and even on us. We feel like there isn't any light to help or that our lot is to simply function in the darkness.
- The good news is that Jesus sees our darkness and he did something no one expected.

2. The Wonderful Counselor entered the darkness.

- Jesus wasn't just some kind of casual observer of our darkness. When he came into this world, he saw the darkness and while he was the light, he experienced the darkness around him.
- John 1:9–11 *The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.*
- Jesus knows the darkness around us, in us, and on us because he entered into it. And our world today NEEDS some light.
- Many of you may know that: Clinical depression and anxiety disorders are at an all time high among Millennials. At the same time, the suicide rate among Millennials is at an all time high.
- Yet, at the same time predominant message among Millennials is just figure out for yourself what is best for your life. Figure out your own truth. BUT... that plan is not bringing the best plan for our lives.
- The problem is that if there is darkness out there, and there is darkness in us, and there is darkness on us, how in the world can we ever overcome it with just us? Let me say that again. If there is darkness out there, and there is darkness in us, and there is darkness on us, how in the world can we ever overcome it with just us?
- You can't overcome the darkness on your own BUT the good news is that you are not alone in the darkness... Jesus entered the darkness. He stepped into this world. The Wonderful Counselor didn't do a fly by. He didn't drop off some pamphlets with advice. He didn't FaceTime with this world to get us on track. He ENTERED the darkness.
- *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given (v.6)*
- When Jesus entered the world, light broke into the darkness and the darkness would never be the same. This means when you are feeling the weight of a dark world, the Wonderful Counselor came into that darkness. You're not alone. When you experience the darkness of your own sin and see your guilt, your shame, and your fear, know that Jesus entered this darkness. When you can't even explain the darkness

you feel on your life and you don't know if you can even make it another day, know that Jesus entered the darkness.

- But when Jesus entered the darkness something changed for the same reason that when light enters a dark room something changes. When Jesus entered the darkness, it wasn't just that he can now relate to us, but that Jesus did something about the darkness.

3. The Wonderful Counselor overcame our darkness with eternal light.

- People try all kinds of means to overcome the darkness and this time of the year it is Christmas spirit. Our culture says press through this darkness and it teases us with the idea of light. There is a tsunami of pressure to be cheerful, to be happy, to act as if everything is awesome this Christmas. INFECTIOUS, we WANT things to be good, right? I don't know ANYONE who's just really wants things to be terrible and to NOT be great. I'm not suggesting that but we seem to completely lose our perspective.
- But we ultimately know its all an illusion, right? Anyone felt that in past Christmas? But we'll sign up again like Ground Hog Day and think this Christmas will be different.
- But the darkness still wins. We taste a small, temporary joy and hope that it will last but it never does. And marketing experts know that while presents and Christmas cheer do not bring eternal joy, they are a really fun short-term counterfeit.
- But we NEED a lasting light. WE don't need a flash in the darkness, we need something that fundamentally changes the darkness. The darkness around us and in us and on us is heavy and we are hopeless to overcome it.
- ILL – Mammoth Cave, KY – by far the largest underground cave system in the world with around 400 miles of caves charted to date. Way down in the one of the caves some early explorers discovered what they called a bottomless pit where a small river ran into one side and seemed to disappear forever into the darkness below. If someone were to fall into that pit they quite literally might never find them.
- I don't know if they still do it but I heard that on tours in the past you would follow the guide for a couple of hours into the cave and to give you a perspective on how far removed you are from light and anything else, they would kill all the lights. They say it was a darkness you could feel and the guide said that if you were left without light even if you had food and water you could spend the rest of your life and never find your way out. That's darkness.
- Isaiah said, in v.2 *“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.”*
- Isaiah was prophesying that a light was coming and that those who had suffered under the darkness would experience this great light. John 1:4–5 *In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* (ESV)
- Jesus overcame the darkness and is the light of the world. The light overcomes the darkness and leads us out of darkness. This means Jesus not only leads us into eternal light but is the eternal light. The Wonderful Counselor doesn't just give us wisdom leading us out of our darkness but IS the light that leads us out of darkness.
- For those of you feel the weight of the darkness of this world, Jesus overcame the darkness. For those who feel overwhelmed guilt and shame of the darkness within you, Jesus overcame the darkness. For those of you who struggle with the darkness on you and struggle to find hope at all, Jesus overcame the darkness.
- And as Peter says in 1 Peter 2:9 Jesus *“called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”* That's the Wonderful Counselor's invitation today...

COMMUNION - Colossians 1:12-14 *“Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*

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