

The Light of the Son

Isaiah 9, Matthew 4

I was a child of the 80s.
And I must say it was a great decade to grow up in
The music was big and so were the hairstyles
It was the decade that gave us Rick Astley
Nothing was subtle and understated
And it was a lot of fun
But there was another side to the 80s.
That was a bit darker
It was the last decade of the Cold War
A tense stand-off between America, its allies
And the Soviet Union
I remember learning about nuclear weapons
And that between America and Russia
There were enough stockpiled nuclear missiles to destroy the world multiple times
And so I wondered as a kid of the 80s
Whether the next world war would be the one
That ended civilisation
This was the dark shadow that many of us lived under for decades

And then something amazing happened
When I was fifteen, the Berlin Wall came down
The iron curtain dividing nations fell and just like that the cold war was over
I remember at the time, feeling this incredible sense of hope
As we saw images of people tearing down the wall that divided nations
Perhaps there could be lasting peace and prosperity in the world

Fast forward 35 years later and the world is in as much conflict as ever
With wars raging in the Middle East and Ukraine
Countries with nuclear weapons once again flexing their muscles
And now my children live under the same dark shadow as I did
Except the music is worse but the mullet is back in fashion
And it raises the question of what hope is there
Of lasting peace and prosperity?

The passages we are looking at today
Have something to say about this.

And there are two points I want to look at as we unpack the passages

In the Darkness

Comes the Son

Firstly, **“In the darkness”**
At the time that Isaiah wrote his words in chapter 9
The nation of Israel was under the dark shadow of exile

Isaiah prophesied that Assyria was to invade Israel
Sending them as a means of judgement by God

Against His own people for their sin against Him

And in 722 BC, Assyria invaded Israel,
The Capital Samaria of the northern kingdom was destroyed
And most of the people of the ten northern tribes were exiled to Assyria
And in their place other people who were conquered by Assyria were settled in Israel
This then is the context of Isaiah chapter 9

Here is the darkness that faced God's people – violence, occupation, exile
We see this in the first five verses
Look at those words in verse 1 – the gloom of the distressed land
Verse 2 the people walking in darkness
Verse 4 their oppressive yoke, the staff of their oppressor
Verse 5 every trampling boot of battle
And bloodied garments of war
But it is not just the darkness of exile and war and conflict
The very reason the Israelites are in this position is because of the darkness of their sin
The Israelites have turned their back on God
A few verses later in verse 12

¹² The people do not turn back to the one who struck them,
nor do they seek the Lord of hosts.

¹³ So the Lord cuts off from Israel head and tail,
palm branch and reed in one day.

It's a dark situation for the people of God

We fast forward now more than 700 years
And as Jesus begins his ministry in Galilee in northern Israel
Matthew takes two verses from Isaiah 9
And now applies them to Jesus as the fulfillment of this ancient prophecy
Israel is still under the power of a foreign nation
But this time it's the Roman Army
And darkness still covers the land
But Matthew is not focused on the darkness of foreign occupation
It is the darkness of sin and death that Matthew focusses on

Look at the start of Matthew chapter 1
An angel appears to Joseph to give a particular name to the baby Mary will give birth to
He is to be called "Jesus" because he will save his people from their sins.
Sin is such a significant problem that God will send a Saviour for His people
And in chapter 4 when Matthew actually quotes Isaiah 9
He adds just a little bit more detail than Isaiah when describing the darkness
He says, "for those living in the land of the shadow of death"
Death is mentioned explicitly
Sin and death are the battlegrounds for Jesus

Isaiah chapter 9 is a prophecy of hope in the darkness
For thousands of years
these words have brought comfort to generations of people
First in Israel and then to people all around the world

At Christmas, Isaiah chapter 9 is often read or sung from Handel's Messiah
As we remember and celebrate the birth of Christ
These words still bring hope today
But you will never understand the hope of Isaiah chapter 9
Until you understand the darkness

So let me ask you
Do you feel the weight of sin's darkness?
At the heart of all violence, war and conflict is sin
At the heart of every broken relationship is sin
Rebellion against God
And what comes with sin - death

This is what Paul said in Romans 5
Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way
death spread to all people, because all sinned.
In Adam, in his original sin against God, we all sinned as well
We are all guilty of saying no to God
And we know that not just from the bible
But from our own human experience
We know we sin against God and others
And the wages of sin is death
The consequence of our rejection of God is death
Every funeral you attend
Every coffin that you see
Is a reminder of a world broken by our sin

I have a friend whose fourth child was still born
She died during childbirth
I once asked him what he felt after she was born
And he said when he held her lifeless body in his hands
He felt the immense weight of his sin
The sin that he contributed to a rebellious world
That meant that death was now in the world
A death that cast its shadow on his beloved child
I will never forget his answer because a part of me
Was expecting him to say he was angry at God

Now I want to be careful here
I'm not saying that he was directly to blame for his child's death
As though God was punishing him directly
No he was indirectly responsible because he is a sinner

In fact all of us are indirectly responsible for his baby's death
including you and I as sinners in a sin broken world
All of us have contributed to a world that says no to God
Such that the judgement of death affects all of us
Including this little baby

My friend, that day, felt the full weight of sin's darkness?
Do you feel it?

Do you feel the despair and futility of sin

Imagine staying awake all night in a cold, barren valley
So dark that you can't even see your hand in front of your face
You despair that you will not make it to the morning
And then just when you are about to give up hope

A sliver of light rises on the horizon of the mountains
And more and more the light of the Sun starts to pierce the darkness of the valley
And then the warmth of that light hits your face
You close your eyes, and you feel the light
Bringing life to every part of your body

² The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
a light has dawned
on those living in the land of darkness.

In the darkness Comes the Son

Here is our second point.
The light that comes is the light of the Son

Verse 6 of Isaiah 9 is the start of the most memorable verses of this passage
For a child will be born for us
A son will be given to us

Matthew connects the dots from this prophecy in Isaiah and he takes
Another prophecy from Isaiah 7 about a term for God "Immanuel"
And he applies that to the birth of a son – Jesus
This is chapter 1 verse 22

²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ See, the
virgin will become pregnant
and give birth to a son,
and they will name him Immanuel, which is translated "God is with us."

Another gospel writer John picks up the aspect of Jesus being the light of the world
The one who pierces the darkness of human sin

⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ That light shines in the darkness, and yet
the darkness did not overcome it...⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into
the world.

Jesus is not only the light
But he is the Son who rules as King

Isaiah 9 verse 6
For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his
shoulders.... Then in verse 7

He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish and sustain it with justice and righteousness from now on and forever.

Last week Clinton unpacked 2 Samuel chapter 7
And Psalm 2

Both passages pointing to a Davidic son who would be God's forever King
A king who does not govern for himself
A king who is not driven by corruption
But rules with justice and righteousness for the good of His people

The Lion King is about a son Simba who is promised one day
To rule his Father Mustafa's kingdom
But in order to do that, he must overcome the darkness of his jealous uncle Scar
Who kills Mustafa his own brother and takes the throne
Only to bring drought and darkness into the land
Simba must now take on his role as the Saviour and the rightful King of his people
At the start of the movie
There is this touching scene when the Father tells his son
That everything the light touches will one day be his kingdom
You see, the best stories are not new stories are they
Lion King producer Don Hahn said that the inspiration for The Lion King
Were the stories of Joseph and Moses from the Old Testament
Exiled Sons who would one day save their people from darkness
And of course,
Joseph and Moses are just types in the bible of the ultimate Saving Son Jesus

Isaiah gives four distinct titles to the Son
In Verse 6

For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his
shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace

Are these verses referring to the coming of Jesus?
Matthew didn't quote them when talking about Jesus
Some believe Isaiah was predicting King Hezekiah
Hezekiah was also a descendant of David and a King
And you can read about Hezekiah's reign in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles
His rule was a righteous one compared to most of the kings of the Old Testament
Who were by and large pretty terrible
Hezekiah on the other hand, purified and reopened the temple
Destroying the idols and pointing the people back to God
And God spared the destruction of Jerusalem by the Assyrians because of Hezekiah
But in the end even Hezekiah messed up a bit
These titles that Isaiah gives to the Son are far too lofty even for a good king like Hezekiah.
In fact, these titles could be attributed to God himself
In fact on the outline I've given a bible reference from the book of Isaiah
Describing God with these characteristics
But in Isaiah chapter 9, the prophecy is applying them to a person
A son - a Divine Messianic figure
The Christ - God's promised anointed King

But is it Jesus?

Matthew doesn't quote this verses from Isaiah 9
Does he think that Jesus is the Messiah?
As we've already seen
Matthew clearly thinks that Jesus is "Immanuel - God with us"
And so it's not a stretch to think that he believes that if Jesus
Fulfils this prophecy of Isaiah chapter 7 then he could well fulfil the prophecy of chapter 9
And the other writers of the New Testament
would say that these titles are completely appropriate for Jesus
Let's look at them one by one

Jesus is our Wonderful Counsellor

Two words we have to clarify – wonderful doesn't mean lovely as we use it
It means to be filled with awe and wonder
Counsellor here doesn't mean therapist
When you seek counsel from someone it means they give you wisdom worth listening to
And in Jesus is awesome wisdom

In Colossians 2 what does Paul want for believers verse 2

2 I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love, so that they may have all the riches of complete understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery—Christ. 3 In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

To have Jesus as our Wonderful Counsellor
Means you can find there is wisdom and loving counsel that you will not find anywhere else
Because his wisdom is without comparison
And he knows us better than we know ourselves

And in John 2 we see that
Jesus does not need to gain wisdom from anyone else
He is the one who knows what is in every person's heart
So he knows exactly how to guide and direct us if we turn to him.

Jesus is our Mighty God

The term "Mighty" in Hebrew literally meant "warrior"
Someone who went into battle for you
So it means "God is Warrior"
Someone so strong and so full of valour that no one can defeat Him

The disciples of Jesus were once filled with terror
Because they thought they would die in a storm on Lake Galilee
Jesus quietly stood up in the boat and told the storm to be quiet
And the torrential wind and waves were instantly reduced to glassy, calm waters
Demons were scared of Jesus when he drove them out of people
And on the cross Jesus dealt a crushing blow to Satan's powers and principalities

The apostle Peter having witnessed these mighty acts told his own people in Acts 2
²² "Fellow Israelites, listen to these words: This Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through him, just as you yourselves know.

These acts were the acts of the Mighty Warrior God walking amongst His people.
To have Jesus as our Mighty God
Means that when we feel helpless and things are out of our control
And everything is pressing in against us
We can turn to Jesus who is strong and kind

Jesus is our Eternal Father

This is not to say that Jesus is two persons of the Trinity the Son and the Father
But rather Jesus reveals to us the Eternal Father
When we see Jesus in the Scriptures we see His Father God

John 14 says:

⁶ Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you know me, you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

In Jesus we see what God the Father is like
A father of grace in Luke 15 who longs to welcome back lost sinners
A father in Romans 8 who adopts his children into his family
And invites them to call Him Abba – a term of closeness and intimacy

To have Jesus as our Eternal Father means that into eternity we need never be alone
When we are lost because of our own sin
And fearful of what happens after we die
Jesus went to great lengths to show us the heart of His Father.
To say to us that none of us sinners are beyond redemption
To say that even if everyone one else rejects you,
our Eternal Father will welcome us if we turn to Him
And can even bring us back from death to be with Him forever

Jesus is our Prince of Peace

We are divided by borders and bigotry
Our nations are at war or preparing for war
Our relationships are broken by sin and suspicion
And all of this is because we have turned away from God
And yet through his death on the cross
Jesus provides a way of peace between us and God
And us and each other

Colossians 1

¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

To have Jesus as our Prince of Peace

Means we recognise that we are no better than anyone else
Because all of us stand before God – equally guilty for our sin
There is no reason for any "ism" - Racism, Classism, Ageism, Sexism
And God has provided only one way of lasting peace with God
And peace with each other – and that is through Jesus' death on the cross
We need Jesus to have lasting peace

I bet that right now
You are going through something in your life
Where you would benefit from having one of those people in your life
A Wonderful Counsellor maybe because you are going through a time of confusion
A Prince of Peace to deal with all the conflict in your relationships
A Mighty God who can help you as you grapple with health struggles
An Eternal Father who loves you as you struggle with grief and loneliness
Actually you need all four,
And all four are found in the Jesus
In the darkness, you need the Son

To help me meditate on these attributes of Jesus
I wrote a prayer using all four and I will pray this prayer at the end of the sermon
But can I encourage you this week to do the same
Take time to write a prayer based on these titles of Jesus
And then pray that prayer.

I'm going to finish with two points of application

Here's the first point
Put your hope in the Son not the man

This week the world's been focussed on the US presidential elections
With good reason
This is the country with the largest economy and the strongest military
America sneezes and the rest of the world catches a cold
The experts predicted a tight contest but it was a landslide victory
Donald Trump at least according to Donald Trump is the man
And it seems many Americans believe he is the man as well
He's the man to solve inflation
He's the man to solve the middle east conflict
He's the man to bring an end to the stalemate in Ukraine
He's the man to stand up to China and North Korea
He's the man to grow the economy
He's definitely not the man to fix climate change though
World leaders and countries are waiting with baited breath
For what he will do when he takes office
Why? Because he is the most powerful man in the world

But he's not the most powerful is he?
He's not Jesus
He's not the King of Kings
He's not the Son who carries all governments on His shoulders
He's not the man – He's the Son
And look how good the Son is
Jesus came not to be served but to serve
He washed the feet of his disciples
He bled and died on the cross for his enemies
Which world leader do you know
Would die for those who hated them?

Put your hope in the Son not the man

Politicians will come and they will go
We will be disappointed by their hypocrisy
And thqqueir broken promises
We will be surprised by their self-serving behaviour
But we shouldn't be because we would do the same
The sin that darkens our world is the sin that lives in every human heart
There is only person who has never sinned
One person who keeps every promise
One person who loves with courage and consistency
And never takes advantage of anyone else
Only He can bring the lasting peace and prosperity
And that is Jesus the Son of God.

Here's the final application

Proclaim the Son

In 1971 John Lennon released two Anti-War songs
They were his protest to the Vietnam war
He released "imagine" earlier in the year
Then that Christmas he released "War is over"
And more than fifty years later
That song is played every Christmas
But we are no closer to peace
War is Over If you want it
He wrote

But what will actually bring lasting peace?
Hasn't Jesusa already come?
Why didn't he bring. Lasting peace when he came?

I want to show you this slide to explain what prophecy in the bible is like
From where Isaiah was when he wrote Isaiah 9
He was looking at one mountain in the future
And this was the coming of the Son, the Messiah
And then Jesus came, and Matthew recognised Him as the promised Son
We now are placed after the first coming of Jesus and waiting for his second coming.
We can see from where we stand that there are two mountains
And so the prophecy of Isaiah was partially fulfilled when he came the first time
But Jesus will complete fulfil Isaiah 9 when he returns for the final time
Upon His final return. everyone will bow their knee and confess Him as Lord
It is at this point, Jesus will establish his kingdom forever
When lasting peace and prosperity will finally be in place
Where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain
War will finally be over then

²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it. ²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

And so what should we do while we wait for the return of the Son?
We should proclaim the Son
The main ministry of Jesus when he came the first time was that of preaching and teaching
He came to prepare people for his coming kingdom
By repenting and making sure their names were written in the book of life
And our ministry is no different
We proclaim Jesus to people who are yet to know Him
Because this is how lasting peace and prosperity will come
When the Son rules
When all rulers and nations bow before Him
Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus to others
Is to bring peace

When it comes to our own elections next year
There are two certainties when you go to vote,
There will be a sausage sizzle and volunteers from the various political parties
Trying to shove their how to vote cards at you as you walk past
They are there campaigning for their leaders and presenting their vision of the future
They are in fact proclaiming their great hope for the problems facing us
And I admire these volunteers that they are so willing to campaign
Even when there is no certainty of the outcome
In fact most of them know that their leaders will never win
And yet there they are still proclaiming their message to others

How much more reason then do we have to proclaim Jesus to others
Because we know His government is a certainty
He will take office when he returns in a landslide
There will be no competitors.
And people will meet him as either the Prince of Peace
Or they will meet Him as the Just Judge.
So proclaim the Son
Make it your priority to pray for those around you
That they might receive Jesus for who He is.
And that they too might put their hope in Jesus and find light in the darkness.

Gracious Father,
Thank you for Jesus my Wonderful Counsellor. Please direct me and give me your wisdom for
I'm often so confused and I don't see my blind spots.

Thank you for Jesus my Mighty God. Please help me when I feel overwhelmed because I know
that He is greater than my greatest fears and problems.

Thank you Eternal Father for Jesus showing us your heart. Please remind me of your love and
grace when I feel misunderstood and rejected. Help me to seek you Abba Father, and not the
world's approval

Thank you for Jesus our Prince of Peace. I'm sorry for my arrogance towards you and others.
Please help me to keep coming to the cross to find peace and joy in my relationships with you
and others.

In Jesus' name. Amen