

“A Light in the Darkness”—Isaiah 9:1-2,6-7

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “A Light in the Darkness”, is Isaiah 9:1-2,6-7 → *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. 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 . . . 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 to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Have you ever experienced a darkness so intense that you could not navigate your every movement in it? One living in the city generally does not experience such a darkness. Even if you’re in the country away from

artificial lighting, the actual brightness of the moon and stars hinder experiencing such intense darkness. Many times eyes will adjust to darkness so that one can navigate through it safely to some extent.

The one time I came close to experiencing such darkness was on a youth outing during a tour of a cave in the Black Hills. In one room of the cave the guide had us turn off our lights to experience pitch darkness, even causing us to doubt who was standing next to us even though, to our knowledge, no one had moved. It reminded me of the plague of darkness which Yahweh brought upon the land of Egypt, described as ***a darkness to be felt*** where the Egyptians *did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, while all the people of Israel had light where they lived.* (cf. Exodus 10:21-23) Hmm . . . interesting . . . God continued to give light to His people in the midst of the darkness of their surroundings.

However, the prophecy before us this evening, spoken about 750 years after God delivered His people from slavery in Egypt, speaks about them as living in *darkness* and *gloom*. What happened to staying in the light?

The *darkness* spoken about here refers to a couple of situations which took place in the lives of God's people, each related to the other. For over one thousand years God's people living in *the land of Zebulun and . . . Naphtali* had been exposed to much Gentile corruption. As they

lived among pagans who worshiped false gods rather than Yahweh, they too allowed themselves to be influenced by them, forsaking the LORD and living in idolatry.

Even though these pagans became *a snare in their midst* (cf. Exodus 34:12), leading them into the “darkness” of idolatry and away from pure devotion to the LORD, they could not use these Gentile as an excuse to justify their own sinful behaviors and choices. They were responsible for the wrong choices which they made, filling their land with *deep darkness* spiritually. After repeated efforts to call His people back to Himself through His messengers, the people refused to listen and continued living in the darkness of their sin. Thus, the LORD allowed them to experience exile under a Gentile nation as discipline in an effort to get them to repent and trust in the LORD **alone**. This was the *contempt* into which God had brought them and from which He would deliver them referred to in verse 1 of our text.

The Scriptures are filled with pictures of sinfulness, a life separated from relationship with the LORD and the dominion of satan as *darkness*. In Ephesians 2:1-2 it is connected with being *dead in . . . trespasses and sins . . . following the course of this world and the prince of the power of the air* (i.e. the devil), *the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience*. It is also pictured in Scripture as one “groping around in the darkness” spiritually, totally lost in finding any way to the LORD. It is

groping to find one's way out of the guilt of sin which burdens the conscience by violent behavior, self-justification, despair, immoral coping behaviors, self-righteousness, and a gamut of other ways which lead to more darkness and bring the conscience no comfort. It is truly being lost in the darkness of sin, helpless to find a way out.

God has a *zeal* for sinners (verse 7) and wants them to have His light of life in the midst of the darkness of sin in the world. Thus, His promise in this prophecy is that *there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish* (i.e. His people), and *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.* (Verses 1-3) It is a word of hope in the midst of the darkness of sin! The LORD will send His *great light* into the lives of **all peoples** so they can experience His forgiving and recreating power!

How would *the zeal of the LORD of hosts . . . do this?* (cf. Verse 7) Verse 6 of our text tells us: *to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given.* This *great light* would be revealed in the incarnation—God Himself would take on human flesh and come as *a Child . . . a Son* Who would give new life to all people who believe in Him! John 1:4-5 says of Jesus: *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.* Because this is God's work He defeated sin and the devil for you once and for all. You need not walk in the darkness, groping for a way to relieve your guilty conscience. God

has brought His Light of life into your world in the Person & Work of Jesus Who lived under God's Law perfectly for you, was the perfect sacrifice for your sin and rose to defeat sin, death and the devil forever! This is why Jesus says in John 8:12 → *I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*

While the context of this prophecy is speaking specifically about Israel, the fulfillment in Jesus is applied even in His "residence move" according to Matthew 4:13-17. After being tempted by the devil, He left *Nazareth* and went to live in *Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken of in our text by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: . . . the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.*" From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" Jesus established the *peace of which there will be no end* in His *kingdom* from the time of His coming *and forevermore* (verse 7). It is a peace with God in the forgiveness of sins and the burden of guilt lifted through faith in Him.

Since this *great light*, Jesus, has come to extend God's salvation to all people, including the Gentiles, we rejoice in the words of Simeon when he held the Christ Child in his arms and proclaimed: *Lord, now*

You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation that You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel. (cf. Luke 2:29-32) Sound familiar? It should. It is entitled the “Nunc Dimittis” in our hymnal and we sing it following the receiving of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper. There we also experience the light of God’s grace in Jesus for forgiveness in the darkness of our sins. The burden of sin is lifted and we have *the Light of life!*

Since people are lost and helpless in the darkness of sin, the LORD has accomplished this great salvation through the Person & Work of Jesus Christ. Not only do you have the privilege of experiencing it in your own life but you also bring this Light of life into the sin-darkened world of others in your daily vocations, conversations and relationships. In fact, Jesus says, *You are the light of the world.* (cf. Matthew 5:14) Instead of living in the darkness of sin, burdened by guilt and the prospect of eternal damnation in hell, we come to Jesus Christ, *the Light of life*, in repentance and faith, to experience life in the kingdom God has prepared for us now and eternally. We are freed to help lift the burden of sin for others by proclaiming to them this great salvation that Yahweh has accomplished in Jesus as we reassure them of the forgiveness of their sins in the midst of a burdened conscience! We are done groping

in the darkness for we have *the Light of life!* Amen.

*At one time you were darkness,
but now you are light in the Lord.*

*Walk as children of light
(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),
and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.*

(Ephesians 5:8-10)

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