

November 21, 2004
A.M. Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“A Light Will Shine”

Isa 8:22-9: 2,6,7 NLT

Wherever they look, there will be trouble and anguish and dark despair. They will be thrown out into the darkness. (Isaiah 9) Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever... 2 The people who walk in darkness will see a great light--a light that will shine on all who live in the land where death casts its shadow... 6 For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the government will rest on his shoulders. These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 His ever expanding, peaceful government will never end. He will rule forever with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David. The passionate commitment of the LORD Almighty will guarantee this!

A Darkness

Isaiah wrote during a dark time in history, which was much like our own time.

Politically world forces were in conflict for supremacy. When Isaiah was a young man Judah had a strong commercial trade & a strong military. There was prosperity and strength in Judah. But

Socially there were both the rich and the poor classes and the usual gap between them that brings abuses, resentment, unrest, and extortion. Corrupt city governments and bribe taking judges made life miserable for the poor. Luxury coupled with indifference to the suffering of others characterized those who were prosperous. Drunkenness was taking its usual toll, increasing poverty, sorrow, and distress.

Religious conditions were anything but ideal. Moral and ethical standards were low. Many who called themselves prophets were too busy getting drunk to give attention to the spiritual welfare of the people. And if they wanted to help the people, they lacked any message of truth or power. Women were vulgar, rude, and foul-mouth, sensual, drunken, pampered and careless. Men were violent, immoral, drunken and cold. There was a wide gulf between a person's religion and putting that religion into practice in their life. Religion was just a formality. People were devoid of the true understanding of God and His ways. Fortune-tellers, psychics and others who explore the unknown through occult means had many clients. There was a national pride and a self-complacency that led people to forget any dependence upon God. Isaiah hated and condemned the mere religious ritualism and called the people to return to sincere worship of God, warning in 8:22 that if they did not then, “Wherever they look, there will be trouble and anguish and dark despair. They will be thrown out into the darkness.” Things looked dark and could get even worse. Yet, in the midst of this dark time, Isaiah received a message from God of hope and comfort. But some would rather stay in darkness (illustration)

A Light

In our Bible Chapter 8 ends with verse 22. But in the Jewish Bible our 9:1 is 8:23 in their Bible, and with good reason. 9:1 should be part of the previous chapter. (The Bible is inspired by God but not the references. 9:1 should be part of chapter 8. So that

Chapter 8 would end like this: “They will be thrown out into the darkness. Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever.” In other words, while speaking of the darkness Isaiah is inspired by God to give hope. There is hope for a world in darkness, not from a powerful military, not in a peace conference, a better economy, government leadership or any humanistic principles. Hope is in “a Light.” (9:2) “The people who walk in darkness will see a great light--a light that will shine on all who live in the land where death casts its shadow.” People are in darkness. Darkness represents immorality, confusion, chaos, distress, and hopelessness. People don’t know where they are or where they are going. They are without purpose, meaning, and peace. They dwell in the shadow of death and danger. They need direction, hope, joy and something to relieve their fear, guilt, stress and burdens. We recently purchased a night-light that lights up our hallway. For years I woke up in the middle of the night and in darkness walking into walls and stubbing toes trying to find the bathroom. I can’t tell you how that night-light has given me direction, hope, joy and relieved my fears, and burdens! Isaiah speaks of a glorious light that would dispel our darkness and that light is a Person. (Illustration)

A Person

(9: 2,6) “The people who walk in darkness will see a great light--a light that will shine on all who live in the land where death casts its shadow... For a child is born to us, a son is given to us.” Isaiah is picking up on what he spoke of in Isa 7:14- “...the Lord himself will choose the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel--`God is with us.” Isaiah, inspired by the Holy Spirit, gives the message of the Incarnation (God would come to the earth in human form). The word “Incarnation” means personification, embodiment, or manifestation. It means that this child born to us, this son given to us, born of a virgin is God in human form. God Himself would come to live as part of our world. And this entrance of the divine in human form was to redeem His people. This, of course, is what we celebrate at Christmas. Christmas is about the birth of a baby who fulfilled this prophecy of Isaiah. The point of Christmas is Jesus Christ. He was not born on December 25, but that is the date we choose to celebrate the birthday of the most important Person who has ever lived. “For a child is born to us,” or as Luke 2:11 records what that angels announced to the shepherds, “The Savior--yes, the Messiah, the Lord--has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David!” And, “a son is given to us.” “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16). John also said of Him, (John 1:4-5 NIV) “In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” The Light is a Person and that Person is Jesus Christ. He brings light to those who cry out for direction, purpose, comfort, peace, hope, love, and salvation. Why do we need a Person? Why do we need Jesus? because religion is first and foremost about a relationship rather than rules. It’s about a Person more than a philosophy. It is about the most important relationship of all – our relationship with the God who made us. You and I were created to live in a relationship with God and until we find that relationship there will always be something missing from our lives. God came in the person of Jesus Christ to bring us into a relationship with Him, thus bringing fullness to our life. He is the light that shines in our darkness to bring us out of that darkness and

give us new life. But as John says, “The darkness has not understood it.” This statement indicates the struggle between the darkness and the light. Many in darkness do not understand or refuse to, but no matter how deep the darkness, even a small light can drive it back. If we were in a room and all we had was one little candle that candle would give light. Darkness can’t put out the light but light can overcome the darkness. The power of Christ’s light overcomes any darkness in the world and any darkness in your life. This is why Isaiah says of Him (Isa 9:3), “You have ... increased their joy; they rejoice before you...” There is joy in knowing God and being in His Presence. We need Light and the Light we need is a Person and that Person is Jesus. Jesus means, “God is salvation!” Ironically Isaiah also means “God is salvation!” Next week is the First Sunday of Advent. During Advent we will continue to discover Jesus through the titles Isaiah’s gave Him: “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah’s message was this: People are in darkness, moral corruption, no direction, no hope, no peace, no meaning to life, empty, distressed and stressed out. People are looking for a way of life that works. Isaiah says, “A Light will shine, a child will be born and He will be called Wonderful Counselor. Just what people in darkness are calling out for, a Counselor to tell them the way to life. Let the light of Jesus shine into your heart this Advent and find life.