

The Christmas Gift Worth Getting – Is 9:1-7

Glad you've chosen to worship with us today

Celebrating the birth of Christ

Commend you for braving the elements; Special thanks to the Parking Team

By way of starting this morning, I want to read this together from John chapter 1 . . .

John 1:1,14; 10-12

Jn 1:11-12 – [Jesus] *came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God*

He gave the rt to have a relationship w/ God

To be adopted into his family; To have a family-like bond w/ the Father in heaven

I have one main point that I want to make today, and that I would love for you to embrace

One truth, and 6 reasons to embrace it

The point is this – there are a lot of Christmas gifts worth getting

But one gift exceeds them all

And that's a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ

The Christmas gift worth getting is a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ (John 1:12)

And if you haven't yet received it, I don't want you to leave here without it

B/c nothing matters more

You can get everything you've ever wanted for Christmas

But if you don't have a relationship with God through faith/belief in Jesus Christ as

your Lord and Savior – it's all for naught

It's why he came that first Christmas

And Isaiah, 730 years previous, gave us 6 reasons to embrace him

6 reasons found in one of the coolest prophecies in all the Bible – Is 9:1-7 (**Title Slide**)

6 reasons for why a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, is *the* Christmas gift worth getting; And it starts with the fact that . . .

1. With Jesus, despair gives way to hope (v1-2)

That's the bottom line in these first two verses here in Is 9

But getting there is a bit technical, and I want you to see it

B/c I believe these intricacies magnify God and multiply your confidence in his word

The time was 733BC

The Assyrian armies, w/ their pagan beliefs, were just starting to invade northern Israel

And if that weren't enough to cause widespread despair, some of the Israelites

themselves were starting to reject God and adopt the Assyrian practices

And just when it seemed as though things were completely hopeless, Isaiah prophesies

in v1 that it won't last forever

Having just said that gloom and doom may rule the day *now*, he says . . .

But there will be no gloom [in the future] for her who was in anguish [in the past]

Her referring to God's people

IOW it's been dark and hard, but it's not going to last

And then he steps into the future, prophet that he is, to explain himself . . .

In the former time he [God] brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali [he punished them], but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

Isaiah is speaking fr the perspective of the future

So when he says, "In the former time," he's standing at some point future, and referring back to the present (733BC), in the past tense

And he says that at that time, c.733BC, God punished the land of Zeb and Naph

Zeb and Naph were 2 of Jacob's sons who became 2 of the 12 tribes of Israel

And b/c the land apportioned to them was right around the Sea of Galilee in the northern part of Israel . . .

They were the first to be exposed to the contempt of the invading Assyrian armies who came in from the North

That's why he says that *in the former time*, they were brought into contempt – leading to gloom, doom, and despair

Then he says, "but in the latter time" – meaning sometime after the present, sometime after 733BC . . .

In the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations

That's the same area as Zebulun and Naphtali, just a more generic way of referring to it

And he's saying that at some point in the future, having suffered so much, God would show them favor – he would make that area glorious

And the amazing thing about it, is the way he says it

You see, we know fr hindsight of history, that what he says won't happen for 733 yrs

But he uses a past tense verb, *has made*, to describe it

In the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea

Why does he do that? B/c he's so *certain* it will happen

In Hebrew that's called a "prophetic perfect" – what is being prophesied is so perfectly certain to happen, that it's referred to in the *past* tense

All of which could be summed up by saying that – someday, bad as it is, the cloud of hopelessness over God's people will lift

Despair *will* give way to hope

• Then, starting in v2, he adds to that thought in a more poetic way

That's why you see the type set different than in the previous text (**v2**)

Again, from a future perspective, Isaiah is saying that the very ones who lived in a death-like gloom of wickedness and despair – *have seen a great light*

A light that Matthew, one of the 12 disciples, identifies as Jesus in **Mt 4:13-16** (read it)

Matt confirms that Jesus *is* the light who offers the *hope* Isaiah spoke about

And Jesus himself completes the picture in **John 8:12** when he says . . .

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness [hopelessness, despair], but will have the light of life.

W/ that one statement, he brings Is's truth of old into present, to bear on our lives, today

If you're walking in despair/darkness, embrace him; Embrace Jesus by faith
B/c w/ Jesus, despair gives way to hope

2. With Jesus, adversity gives way to joy (v3)

V3; When he says in v3, *You have multiplied the nation*, he again uses the past tense to refer to a future reality

A reality that Jesus will multiply the people of God – *the nation*

And we know from the NT that he will do so by saving people from their sins, and adopting them into his family

And with that salvation/multiplication/relationship – comes increased joy

Like the joy of the harvest, and the joy of victory

The bottom line being, that with Jesus, adversity gives way to joy

- I can think of no better example of that, than the Ziolkowski's (**photo**)
A family right here in our church . . .
Who, despite the adversity of their physical struggles, have joy

Becky and I just received their Christmas letter, and I asked them if I could share it w/ you
Looking at their picture, you'd never imagine that their daughter Abigail has had 2 open heart surgeries

Or that their other daughter Elizabeth, has a mild form of cystic fibrosis with an extra airway into one of her lungs

Or that Glenda is diabetic; Or that Cory's dealing w/ bulging discs in his back right now

All of that, and yet their Christmas letter is filled with joy

In fact, they end it with this – "May the Lord bless you *as He has blessed us*, and may Jesus be the best gift you receive this Christmas and always."

Why all the joy?

B/c they've embraced Jesus, and he's closer than a brother

B/c they believe that no matter what happens, he loves them and cares for them

B/c they trust him for their life now, and their eternity later – including that of their girls

Does that mean that all their adversity has magically disappeared? Obviously not

It simply means there's joy in the midst of it, b/c there's Jesus in the midst of it

With Jesus, adversity gives way to joy

3. With Jesus, oppression gives way to relief (v4)

V4; One of the reasons there's so much cause for hope and joy with the coming of Jesus, is that with him, oppression gives way to relief

He ends the toilsome way of life that we live – the yoke that burdens

And gives us purpose

He stops the abuse of persecution – the staff for our shoulder

And he thwarts the hostility of tyrants – the rod of our oppressors

God *has* done that, and will *continue* to do that among his children . . .

Just like he did with the Israelites, 600 years *before* Isaiah on the *day of Midian* (4)

At that time, against insurmountable odds, God used 300 unlikely men (from among other

places, Zebulun and Naphtali) to overthrow 135,000 in the Midian army
And in so doing, he relieved the people of Israel of their impending oppression (Jgs 6-8)

Point is – God, through Christ, can and will relieve you of your oppression

It's happening in the hearts/minds of those who embrace Jesus as Savior and Lord . . .

As he relieves them of the guilt and emotional pain they suffer from the effects of sin

And it's happening to varying degrees in our *physical* lives as well, at God's choosing

The *complete* fulfillment of which is *yet to come* when Jesus returns and relieves us of all suffering, pain, bloodshed, persecution, strife, hatred – once and for all

In the meantime, we rely on him for the strength to endure – fueled by the hope of glory and the joy of his presence

With Jesus, oppression gives way to relief

The 4th reason for why a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, is *the* Christmas gift worth getting, is that . . .

4. With Jesus, strife gives way to peace (v5)

V5; The *fire* most likely refers to domestic fires, useful fires

In which case this is the same idea as found in 2:4, when he says that in the latter days, God will – *Decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks*

With the coming of Christ and the victory he wins, that which was previously used for *destructive* purposes in our lives – like battle boots and military uniforms . . .

Is now used for *constructive* purposes

God is in the business of redeeming that which is spoiled

It's going to happen on a *world-wide* scale with the *second* coming of Christ . . .

And it's already happening on an *individual* scale with his *first* coming . . .

As more and more people trust him as Savior and Lord

- Some of you are familiar with Chuck Colson – founder of Prison Fellowship; a world-wide prison ministry doing incredible things in the name of Jesus

But before Christ, Chuck Colson was the angry hatchet man for Richard Nixon . . .

Spreading strife and destruction every where he could

That is, until he was caught, went to prison, surrendered his life to Jesus Christ, and found peace with God

So that now, instead of tearing people down, he uses his gifts to build people *up*

And how many of you could testify similarly?

Before you embraced Jesus as Lord of your life, you were filled with strife and peace was the furthest thing from your heart

But when you finally believed in Jesus – trusting him to save your soul and give you life ..

Something happened, didn't it? Peace filled your heart . . .

You began using your gifts and talents for *God's* glory, instead of your own . . .

And you started showing kindness to *everyone*, instead of just those for whom you needed something

Why the radical change?

B/c with Jesus, strife gives way to peace
First inwardly, in your heart, between you and God
And then outwardly, in your life, between you and others – as you live for him

5. With Jesus, man gives way to Immanuel (v6)

V6; This verse is confirmation of Isaiah's prophecy just 2 chapters earlier where he said –
*The Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and shall call his name Immanuel.* (Is 7:14)

Here's what I want you to see – the *son* of 9:6 is the Immanuel of 7:14 – that's the flow of
thought in context here

And that's confirmed, once again by Matthew, to be *Jesus* (1:23)
So the child and son here in v6, is *Jesus*; Immanuel; God with us

- And it says that *the government shall be upon his shoulder*
That is, he alone will carry the burden of his rule and reign
He alone will exercise authority over his kingdom, the K of G

A kingdom that he came to establish *spiritually* the first time – in the hearts and lives of
those who love him and worship him

The very thing he's doing right now in the church
And a kingdom that he will establish *physically* when he returns – over *all* the earth, with
every knee bowing and every tongue confessing that he is Lord

In both cases, he rules and reigns as Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting
Father, and Prince of Peace
Names that are intended to describe his wise counsel, powerful nature, loving character
and perfect peace
With Jesus, man truly gives way to God; Immanuel
The question is, have *you*?

Having come to rule/reign over all, does he reign in *your* life? As *Lord*
Are you familiar with his loving counsel? Have you experienced his strength?
Do you rest in his fatherly protection? Do you know his peace?
If not, embrace him today, and make this Christmas the best one ever

Summarize – With Jesus . . .
Finally, the 6th reason that a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ is *the*
Christmas gift worth getting, is that . . .

6. With Jesus, uncertainty gives way to assurance (v7)

There's so much uncertainty in life, but not with Jesus

V7 – that's assurance

Assurance b/c of the rock-solid certainty that his rule/reign is unstoppable
It will get bigger and bigger as more and more people believe in him . . .
And it will never end – just like God promised King David 300 years earlier in 2 Sam 7
Not to mention the fact that it will be characterized by perfect justice and righteousness

It almost sounds too good to be true, doesn't it?

Not with God; Isaiah says – *The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this*

The passion of God Almighty will bring this about
So strong, so fervent was that zeal/passion – that he was willing to send his only Son as
a helpless baby, to eventually die for our sins

He was willing to become God with us, so that we could have God in us
Saved from the consequences of our sins . . .
And given the right to become children of God – to have a *relationship* with him

And it's yours to receive, if you believe
If u trust by faith, that when he died, he died for you – paying the penalty for your sins
And rose again to secure your relationship with God, forever

If you want that, and you believe
And you're ready to live your life for him . . .
You pray with me right now

- Lord God, I so much want a relationship with you
I so much want the hope, joy, relief, peace, and assurance you offer
I know that I'm a sinner separated from you . . .
And I believe that Jesus died in my place for those sins . . .
Suffering the punishment I deserved
Please forgive me and take over my life
I want to be with you, and live for you from now on . . .
In a relationship that lasts forever
(While still praying, show of hands)

God, thank you so much that you've given us the right to become your children, adopted
into your family, if we only believe – what a privilege
Having heard the prayers of those who do believe . . .
Bless them for their humility and faith
Fill them with all joy and peace in believing
And by the power of your HS, cause them to abound in hope . . .
Forever in your care
May this be their best Christmas ever

We praise God for you
Go Tell It On The Mountain

Close (Becky and I)
New Believer's Packets
Don't forget – Christmas Eve Candlelight services
Merry Christmas