

Good News of Great Joy

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Isaiah 7.10-16

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I. Connecting With One Another

Can you remember wanting something for Christmas? What was it? Did you get it?
What do you want for Christmas *this* year!?

II. Introduction to this Study

This week we are engaging another of Isaiah's prophecies regarding the coming Messiah. In an interesting exchange between King Ahaz, Isaiah, and God, we see the king unable to "ask for anything for Christmas"!

III. Study the Text

- a. Spend a few minutes reading Isaiah 7.1-9, mulling over what's happening in these verses. Before reading further, how would you explain it in your own words?

At this time, King Ahaz ruled over Judah, and was a vassal to Assyria. So, Ahaz and Judah were dependent upon Assyria for protection, though in verses 1-9, we see Ahaz wrestling with whether he should join Aram and Israel and turn against Assyria. God, through Isaiah, instructs Ahaz to remain loyal to Assyria.

Why do you think God instructed Ahaz *not* to enter into war against Assyria?

- b. Now, read Isaiah 7.10-16, the passage before us this week. What questions come up for you as you read it? How do you understand these verses?
- c. In Isaiah 7.10-12, we read that the LORD invites Ahaz to ask Him for a sign (all caps in our Bibles means that the Hebrew word being used here is not the general term "God", but the more specific "Yahweh").

In light of 7.1-9, why do you think God would bid the King of Judah to request a sign?

Why do you think Ahaz was uncomfortable asking God for a sign?

- d. One bible commentator writes, "[Isaiah 7.1-9] pictures the exercise of faith as a risk; without risk - no reward."

Read Exodus 15.22-26 and Deuteronomy 8.1-4. How does God test His people in these verses? How do His people "test" him? How is this risky?

- e. King Ahaz is not presented in Scripture as a model of faith. Quite the contrary! He engaged in pagan practices, even installing an idolatrous altar in the temple and sacrificing his own son. Here, however, he's merely indecisive. He will not put his faith in God.

It has been written, "Apparently the right encounter begins with God's initiative, with God's offer of a test... God offers a sign. This will clearly become a "test" both of

Ahaz's faith and of God's faithfulness. There is a risk. But without risk there is no reward."

- f. Read Isaiah 7.13-16. Isaiah declares that the king's indecisiveness is "wearying." This same word is used in Isaiah 1.14 by the LORD of His feelings about His people's worship. Do you think it's a coincidence that both the king and the general population are "wearying"? How do those in power influence the people they serve - and vice versa?
- g. Even though Ahaz is unable or unwilling to ask God for a sign, Isaiah declares one anyway. The sign is simple enough to understand: Aram and Israel will no longer concern Ahaz before the child of the virgin will know between right and wrong. How would that be good news for Ahaz?

IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. Have you ever asked God for something? What was it? How did God answer your prayer?
- b. Has God ever "tested" you? Have you ever "tested" Him (by trusting in His promises)?
- c. How has acting in faith been risky for you? How have you been rewarded?
- d. Have you ever felt like your spiritual life was wearying? How does celebrating the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy - the Advent of Jesus - transform your weariness?

V. Pray

- a. Pray for our ongoing search for a permanent Worship Leader at our Modern Gathering, that God would reveal the candidate who could best lead us in worship (that isn't wearying)!
- b. Lift up our weekend and Christmas Eve gatherings, that believers and non-believers alike would hear and accept the good news that "the Lord himself has given us a sign: The virgin has conceived and given birth to a Son, and we call him Immanuel"!
- c. Ask God to fill us with a risky faith, willing to go into the world living as Jesus' disciples and inviting others to join us following after Him.