

Singing the Songs of the Season

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Isaiah 9.1-7
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I. Connecting With One Another

Have you ever experienced a serious threat to your safety, health, or wellbeing? How did you respond to the threat?

II. Introduction to this Study

This Advent Season as we turn again to the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, we will take a look at some "Songs" that burst forth from a number of individuals to whom God revealed the divine plan. It is the plan of the incarnation - God taking on human flesh, coming into this world as a baby, and living among us. Amazingly, the promise of God's Anointed One entering the world first came hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus. A man named Isaiah was given the ability to hear and proclaim God's messages. As he learns of God's intentions he records a wonderful song of promise, of hope, and of the reign of God's Anointed over all things... We might say Isaiah is "Singin' in the Reign."

III. Study the Text

- a. As you read Isaiah 9.1-7 notice the ways in which the promised One is described. What central promise is issued in this passage?
- b. Before going on, look at Isaiah 8.11-22. It pertains to the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah and their response to the threat posed by the invading Assyrian Empire (c. 740-715 BC). How have the people reacted to this threat? To whom have they turned to learn of the future? How have they responded toward God (see verse 21)? What spiritual state, according to verse 22, do they find themselves in?
- c. How do most people react to threats today? Do you think most people immediately turn to God or to other sources of help?
- d. The tone shifts in chapter 9 verse 1. What promise is given in verse 1?

Note: Zebulun and Naphtali were areas in Israel (Northern Kingdom) that were decimated by the invading Assyrians in 734-732. The suffering, death, and devastation in these areas were most severe. See 2nd Kings 15.29.

- e. God "humbled" these two lands. The Hebrew is He Qad meaning "to be brought low" or to be "brought into contempt," or "humbled." Have you experienced God humbling you through various circumstances? What purpose does this kind of humbling serve in the life of a believer?
- f. In contrast, the promise is that "God will "honor" Galilee of the Gentiles..." The Hebrew is Hik Bid meaning "to be made great," or "raised in status," or "made glorious." Look at Matthew 2.19-23 and 4.12-17 and 23-25. How was Galilee "honored" by God? Also, take a quick look at Isaiah 49.6. How are Gentiles (non-Israelites) to be honored by God?

- g. Let's take a closer look at Isaiah 9.2-5. What kind of promise is given here (the reference to "the day of Midian's defeat" refers to the time when Gideon and the Israelites drove the Midianites out of Israel, breaking their oppressive domination)? To whom does the "You" of verse 3 refer? In contrast to the gloomy darkness that shrouded Israel and Judah, there will be a day when there will be light. How would this promise impact the people facing the imminent threat from Assyria?
- h. Let's move on to verses 6 and 7. Here the promise is made more explicit and here we discover the "You" of verse 3. God's divine plan revolves around a child who is yet to be born (from Isaiah's perspective).

Note: "Son" is used here and should be understood as a title not a human filial relationship. In other words, "son" refers to a royal, kingly "Son" who is the Anointed One or Messiah. Saying Jesus is the Son of God, actually denotes his equality with God. John 1.1-14 gives a clear statement of this.

- i. How would you define the following descriptive phrases used of this One who is promised?
 - ...government will be on his shoulders _____
 - Wonderful Counselor _____
 - Mighty God _____
 - Everlasting Father _____
 - Prince of Peace _____
- j. What, according to verse 7, is the extent of his reign? How is it like and not like the reign of a human ruler? What will ensure that his reign will be as described?
- k. Look through Revelation 21.1-4, 22-26; and 22.1-5. In what ways do we experience the present reign of Jesus Christ? What dimensions of his reign are still future?

IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. How do you react to threatening situations? Are there ways you can develop a more consistent practice of turning to God first in reaction to threats or difficult situations?
- b. The resurrection and ascension into heaven of Jesus point to his present reign over all things. The day is yet to come when that reign is fully realized in a new "Heaven-Earth" world. Are there ways in which you can more fully experience "singin' in his reign" in your life now? Are you willing to surrender every aspect of your life to his reign?

V. Pray

Spend some time in prayer:

- a. For yourself and the Good Shepherd congregation to experience the presence of God and the fullness of God's Holy Spirit, to have a passion for Jesus Christ and for making him known to others, and to continue to be used by God in the present reign of Christ.
- b. For those near and dear to us who find the holidays to be difficult due to the loss of a loved one, financial distress, health problems, or other reasons.
- c. For our nation's leaders to have wisdom, courage, and integrity in dealing with significant issues like the budget, the role of government, our involvement in military actions, and other challenges they face.