

Activate Advent
Activate Hope
Isaiah 9:1-7; 53:1-6, 12

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Text Introduction: This year at Christmas we are on a journey to Activate Advent. Thank you for joining us. We begin with the word “hope.” What is hope? At the root of Christmas is hope. When the prophets of the Old Testament prophesied the coming of Messiah, they did so with hope.

Luke recorded for us the account of Jesus’ earthly parents bringing Him to the Temple for an ordained time of consecration. His parents are doing for Him all that “was customary under the law.” (Luke 2:27) This would have been some 40 days after His birth. In this experience, further revelation is made known as to who Jesus is. This recognition is made by a man named Simeon, who was righteous and devout and looking forward to Israel’s consolation, and a woman named Anna, righteous in her own right, being one who stayed in the Temple Complex to pray. In other words, both of these, fully aware of the Prophets’ message of the coming of Messiah, longed to one day be alive to see the Messiah.

One of those prophets was Isaiah. We call Isaiah a prophet. More precisely, we call Isaiah, along with Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel, **major prophets**. The remaining books of the Old Testament are called minor prophets. The terms major and minor refer to the size of these books, not the degree of their importance. (Lamentations is considered with these books as a major prophet because it is written by Jeremiah.)

Isaiah 1:1 indicates that Isaiah preached these prophetic messages contained in the book during the reigns of Uzziah (also called Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Second Kings 15-20 gives us a reference point for the time of Isaiah’s prophecy. The years covered are 740 B.C. to at least 701 B.C. Some would say that there is evidence that Isaiah’s prophetic ministry lasted until nearly 680 B.C. We must remind ourselves that this time frame puts us in the midst of the divided kingdom (Israel in the North, Judah in the South). In fact, even though Isaiah’s prophecy is focused on Judah in the South, the fall of the Northern kingdom would have happened during his ministry. “Judah faces extinction at the hands of the cruel Assyrians. In this crucial hour of national emergency, God sends Isaiah—a unique man with an unpleasant message. The nation of Judah is rotten to the core and ripe for judgment. Her habitual sins of idolatry, hypocrisy, injustice and corruption have not escaped the notice of her holy God. His righteous wrath will soon fall upon king and commoner alike, that all might learn that the Lord Almighty cannot and will not be mocked.” (*The Daily Walk Bible*, p. 809.)

But, as is always the case with the prophets, their purpose was two-fold—immediate, but also, in a marvelous way, always pointed to a future time to come. They pointed to the coming of the Messiah. This is fundamental and obvious to the passages before us today. Here’s the text.

Text: Nevertheless, the gloom of the distressed land will not be like that of the former times when He humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. But in the future He will bring honor to the Way of the Sea, to the land east of the Jordan, and to Galilee of the nations.

²The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;

a light has dawned
on those living in the land of darkness.
³You have enlarged the nation
and increased its joy.
The people have rejoiced before You
as they rejoice at harvest time
and as they rejoice when dividing spoils.
⁴For You have shattered their oppressive yoke
and the rod on their shoulders,
the staff of their oppressor,
just as You did on the day of Midian.
⁵For the trampling boot of battle
and the bloodied garments of war
will be burned as fuel for the fire.
⁶For a child will be born for us,
a son will be given to us,
and the government will be on His shoulders.
He will be named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷The dominion will be vast,
and its prosperity will never end.
He will reign on the throne of David
and over his kingdom,
to establish and sustain it
with justice and righteousness from now on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will accomplish this.
Who has believed what we have heard?
And who has the arm of the LORD been revealed to?
²He grew up before Him like a young plant
and like a root out of dry ground.
He didn't have an impressive form
or majesty that we should look at Him,
no appearance that we should desire Him.
³He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of suffering who knew what sickness was.
He was like someone people turned away from;
He was despised, and we didn't value Him.
⁴Yet He Himself bore our sicknesses,
and He carried our pains;
but we in turn regarded Him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
⁵But He was pierced because of our transgressions,
crushed because of our iniquities;
punishment for our peace was on Him,
and we are healed by His wounds.
⁶We all went astray like sheep;

we all have turned to our own way;
and the LORD has punished Him
for the iniquity of us all.

Therefore I will give Him the many as a portion,
and He will receive the mighty as spoil,
because He submitted Himself to death,
and was counted among the rebels;
yet He bore the sin of many
and interceded for the rebels.

Introduction: We sure could use a little good news today. We could use a little hope. Our nation is in a state of deplorable downward-spiraling morality. It's like we are living in the time of the Judges again—"everyone is doing what is right in their own sight." Then there is the threat of North Korea. Then, there is the threat of where the next terrorism strike will occur. Then, there are things like the church shooting in Texas. On and on we could list the bad news.

Then there is the personal bad news you might be facing.

We sure could use a little hope. That's the same thing Isaiah faced. Remember that classic line that begins Isaiah 6, "It was the year that King Uzziah died." That might not mean much to us, but it meant everything in Isaiah's time.

Where do we find hope?

We find hope where Isaiah found hope. Let his prophesy guide us. But, first, we have a question to consider that is paramount to our rightly applying this text.

Can we be sure Isaiah was speaking of Jesus?

The answer is a resounding, "Yes!" I want to take some time to show us that this morning.

- Luke 24:25-27—Jesus affirmed that the prophets prophesied of Him.

²⁵ He said to them, "How unwise and slow you are to believe in your hearts all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Didn't the Messiah have to suffer these things and enter into His glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted for them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

- Acts 8:30-35—Philip affirmed that Isaiah spoke concerning Jesus.

³⁰ When Philip ran up to it, he heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you're reading?"

³¹ "How can I," he said, "unless someone guides me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² Now the Scripture passage he was reading was this:

He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb is silent before its shearer,

so He does not open His mouth.

³³ In His humiliation justice was denied Him.

Who will describe His generation?

For His life is taken from the earth.

³⁴ The eunuch replied to Philip, "I ask you, who is the prophet saying this about—himself or another person?" ³⁵ So Philip proceeded to tell him the good news about Jesus, beginning from that Scripture.

- 1 Peter 2:21-25. Peter affirmed that Isaiah spoke concerning Jesus.

For you were called to this,
because Christ also suffered for you,
leaving you an example,
so that you should follow in His steps.

²² He did not commit sin,
and no deceit was found in His mouth;

²³ when He was reviled,
He did not revile in return;
when He was suffering,
He did not threaten
but entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly.

²⁴ He Himself bore our sins
in His body on the tree,
so that, having died to sins,
we might live for righteousness;
you have been healed by His wounds.

²⁵ For you were like sheep going astray,
but you have now returned
to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

We find our hope in the promise of the Messiah. We might say it this way. We find our hope in Christmas. Because Christmas, the coming of Christ into our world means...

A personal relationship with Christ is possible.

What does that look like? He is our . . .

- Wonderful Counselor

Sometimes we need a counselor. How does He do this? Sometimes, he does this through other people. The Wonderful Counselor counsels us through His Word. Third, He does this personally. He is with us. We must know Him, trust Him, and ultimately listen to His counsel.

I tell people that the most frustrating thing of counseling is that people don't do what you counsel them to do. Then, they come back, and they are still having the same issue. I might ask, "Have you done what we talked about doing last time?" They say, "No!"

Can you imagine doing that to God when He desires to be our Wonderful Counselor?

- Mighty God

This is the reminder that God is all-powerful in our lives. There are things this morning that some of you are thinking, "I need a miracle." You are thinking, "Only God."

We need Him to be Mighty God.

- Eternal Father

Think of the beginning of the Lord's Prayer. "My father who is in Heaven." God's position ought to anchor us to some of our deepest convictions in life.

What did God want to give to us in giving Himself as our Everlasting Father? Isaiah wrote to a hurting people—a people uncertain about their future. They needed to be reminded that God was going to be to them as a Father and He was going to be forever.

- Prince of Peace

We will talk more about this next week, but just be reminded now that real peace is in a person—Jesus Christ the Lord.

A perpetual reign of Christ is promised.

This reign of Christ is both now and forever. The Lord Almighty reigns! But there is coming a day, when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that "Jesus Christ is Lord."

Here's what I want us to remember. We must wait and anticipate that second coming of Christ with the same faith that those Godly ones waited and anticipated His first coming.

This promise helps us to live by faith that Christ is coming to make all that is now wrong, then right.

Which kingdom are we going to serve? Are we going to serve the kingdom of this world which is passing? Or are we going to serve Christ and the kingdom which cannot pass away?

A perfect redemption in Christ is provided.

Isaiah rightly pointed to the ultimate reason for Jesus' coming—to be our Savior. He, the perfect one, took upon Himself our sin so that we might have forgiveness of sin, freedom of sin, abundant life, and eternal life.

So What?

We activate hope by . . .

Believing

Sharing