

A Child is Born to Us
Isaiah 9

Turn to Isaiah 7 please. We began Advent with Isaiah 7, and now we go back to Isaiah on Christmas day. Today we celebrate the child that was born and the son that was given.

Isaiah 9 says, “A *child* is born to us, a *son* is given to us.” In Hebrew, the stress of these lines is not on “to us,” it is on “a child” and “a son.” The people of God desperately needed help. Their leaders were failing, leading the people into trouble, and what would God’s people do?

Could they be rescued? “Yes,” says God through Isaiah, “yes, a dawn is coming, a bright morning is coming, a great light, and the answer is a child, a baby boy. A *child* is born to us, a *son* is given to us. This *baby* is the answer. The government will rest on *his* shoulders.”

To Us – To who exactly? (Isa 7:4, 9)

But first we will talk about “to us.” We will go back to Isaiah 7 to pick up the story, to find out who the “us” is. King Ahaz, king of Judah, descendant of David, was worried about two other kings. These two other kings and their armies had attacked him recently, and been very hard on his nation Judah, and then had gone home.

And now Ahaz hears that they are planning to attack Judah again. “The hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind” (7:2). They are terrified at what will happen if these two kings come again. It will probably cause even more suffering.

But king Ahaz has a plan to care of this. He will get together all the gold and silver available, and he will take it to the king of Assyria, and he will pay the mighty Assyrians to destroy the two kings he fears. Ahaz thinks that’s a good plan.

But it is a terrible plan, because the Assyrians are terrible people, and furthermore, although those two kings that Ahaz fears are indeed planning to attack Judah, God says that they will have other problems, and they never will attack. God says: the attack you fear will never take place.

Here’s the core of God’s word to Ahaz: “*Be careful to keep calm and don’t be afraid. Do not lose heart.... if you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.* Isa 7:4, 9.

What mattered was not how frightened Ahaz felt, what mattered was his choice. Would his choice show that he trusted God? But Ahaz had already decided that he would not trust God, he would follow his plan even though God warned him not to do that. And most of Judah agreed with Ahaz that this was the right thing to do.

Warning and Instruction – Isa 8:11-14

Now we'll go to Isaiah 8, where God takes the prophet Isaiah aside and has a crucial talk with Isaiah. This is God's stern warning about what Isaiah himself must not do. It is a warning, and an instruction.

*This is what the Lord says to **me** with his strong hand upon **me**, warning **me** not to follow the way of this people: [Here is the warning:] “Do not call conspiracy everything this people calls a conspiracy; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. [Here is the instruction:] The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, let him be your fear, let him be your dread. He will be your holy place.*

Ahaz and his people, the nation of Judah, were living in a time of fear, an age of anxiety. I think probably a lot of human history takes place in times of general anxiety. We are definitely in a time of anxiety now about climate change and war and the economy and the next pandemic and crime and who knows what all.

Ahaz and Judah were in a time of anxiety, and this included Isaiah and those who were faithful to God. God put his strong hand on Isaiah himself, and warned him: “don't you be like them, Isaiah. Don't you dare fear what they fear, or dread what they dread. That would be your downfall. You just worry about me, you just draw near to me, you put your trust in me.”

When I picture what I fear, I don't put God in the picture. It's just me and the scary thing. This offends God. He is *always* in the picture, and not only *in* the picture but he's *the most important part* of that picture. God warned Isaiah not to forget this.

God told Ahaz and Isaiah much same thing. God told Ahaz, “Be careful to keep calm, and don't be afraid. Do not lose heart. If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.” God told Isaiah, “Do not fear what they fear, do not dread. The Lord Almighty shall be your fear.”

Treasure This Warning! – Isa 8:16

God ends that section in 8:16: *Bind up this testimony of warning and seal up God's instruction among my disciples.* “Bind it up” and “seal it” means, “guard this warning and this instruction, treasure it, keep it and never lose it, take good care of this warning and this instruction.

This warning began with God's strong hand on Isaiah. It ends with God telling Isaiah to guard it, treasure it, keep it, never lose it.

Isaiah's Right Choice – Isa 8:17

Here is Isaiah's choice: *I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the descendants of Jacob. I will put my trust in him.*

Ahaz made the wrong choice, he would not rest in God's hands. Isaiah made the right choice. *I will wait for the Lord, even when he hides his face, I will put my trust in him.* That's what it looks like when we decide that the Lord Almighty shall be our fear.

In Isaiah 9, the child that is born, the son that is given, is for people like Isaiah, not for people like Ahaz. That's where this is going. Did you notice God talk about "my disciples"? *Bind up this testimony of warning and seal up God's instruction among my disciples.* The child is for that group, those who treasure this warning and instruction. And that's us!

God Warns Again: 8:20

This is God speaking to us: *Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.*

There are going to be dark times for everyone, those who trust in God and those who do not. For the people who inquire of God, for the people who listen to God's instructions, for those who are God's disciples, there will be morning, there will be the light of dawn, a great light will shine. For the others, no dawn and no morning.

Light Dawns in the Darkness. 9:2

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. And what is the Light?

The Light is a Baby! – 9:6-7

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. Try to feel Isaiah's own surprise that the answer to the deep darkness would be a baby. God's dawn and great light would be a baby boy! Isaiah and all God's disciples are trusting in God and waiting, even though God as far as they were concerned, God was hiding his face from Judah. But when the light came, it would be a baby boy! A child is born to us, a son is given to us.

"To us," it says twice. Who is that? It is the people who when they are afraid, they put their trust in God. We do this. We put our trust in God, because he knows about the things that frighten us, and he cares about us. We believe, as God told Ahaz, that God knows what's scaring us, and he's taking care of things. That makes us God's disciples. The child is born to us.

The Government will be on His Shoulders

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Here are the two government lines: *For a child is born to us, a son is given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders.... Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom.*

This baby will become the ultimate world ruler. He will be the best, and it will last forever. Remember that this sequence began with the failure of Ahaz, the failure of the house of David, the line of David. That is, the failure of government, even in the people of God, even in God's chosen line of kings. God responds by giving us a baby boy.

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace

Wonderful Counselor means supernatural counselor, miraculous advisor. When we wonder what to do, would it not be good to have an advisor who *always* gave us the best possible advice? God gave Solomon the gift of wisdom, so Solomon had supernatural wisdom.

In Matthew 12, Jesus said that the queen of the south will condemn the Jews, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and someone greater than Solomon was there. Wonderful Counselor.

Mighty God. "Mighty God" means the Mighty God against the nations is no contest. Later in Isaiah we read that to God, the nations all together are like a drop in a bucket. If this Prince decides to rule the nations, that's how it will be. Government will not be a problem, because he's Mighty God himself.

Everlasting Father. I had a good father. He was gentle, and he followed God. He listened to us, and talked to us. He was faithful, and he took care of us. The trouble with good fathers is that they don't last forever. Unless we die young, we will say goodbye to them, and they will be taken from us.

This baby will become a good Father who lasts forever. He will do all the things that ideal fathers would do, but we will never say goodbye, and he will never be taken from us. Everlasting Father.

Prince of Peace. In our language use, "peace" means calm, tranquil, no conflict, quiet, serene. In the Old Testament it is a little different. In Hebrew, "peace" means complete and full and healthy, it means everything is going well, it can mean successful and prosperous, but mostly just complete and full and good. The New Testament means "peace" the same way.

So "Prince of Peace" does mean there will no be conflict, but mostly it means full and complete. Life under this Prince of Peace will probably be lively and full and sometimes noisy. But everything will be going the way it's supposed to, and that's what Prince of Peace means.

This child is for us who treasure God's warnings and instructions. We are resolved not to panic at the stories that frighten people around us. We will not view those warnings of danger as the Great Danger. We will understand that the only Great Danger, when we are frightened, is to ignore God and turn away from God. That we must not do.

We will never picture the danger without putting God right in the middle of the picture. We will turn our frightened eyes toward God, to trust him and wait for him, to obey him and serve him, because he's the most important One in every frightening picture.

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on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.
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And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. Amen.*

PRAYER:

Today, Lord Almighty, we remember the day the child was born, the day the son was given. We remember the day that the light dawned, the day a great light began to shine on people walking in darkness. Thank you, and thank you. You kept an old promise. We are among those who were walking in deep darkness, and now we have seen the light. We praise you for the child that was born, the son that was given. And we long for the zeal of the Lord Almighty to finish this up! Amen.

BENEDICTION:

Now to you, O God, who are able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to your power that is at work within us, to you be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever, Amen. Go in God's peace to love and serve the Lord.