

Pastor Daniel Waldschmidt – Isaiah 9:2-7 – Christmas Eve 2016

One of the best things about Christmas is the lights. The lights on your Christmas tree light up your living room. You drive around town and see all the Christmas lights. Later in the service tonight we'll sing hymns by the light of candles. One of the best things about Christmas is the lights. But the brightest light of Christmas is the one shining in the manger. The little baby Jesus is the **Brightest Christmas Light**.

We needed this light because this world is a dark place. Isaiah talks about **"the people walking in darkness"** and **"those living in the land of deep darkness."** This world is a dark place. And, sadly, we have contributed to that darkness. How many relationships have I damaged this year? How many people have I hurt with my words and with my actions? This world is a dark place and the reason it is a dark place is that we have turned our backs on God. The Bible says "God is light" and so when we turn our backs on him then we are in darkness. But God did not leave us sitting in darkness. He shined a great light. **"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light." (Isaiah 9:2)** This brightest Christmas light is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, **"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)**

Jesus is the brightest Christmas light and his birth gives us great joy. Isaiah says, **"You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest." (Isaiah 9:3)** Isn't it great when you give your kids a Christmas present and their eyes light up? Well, God wanted to see our eyes light up and so he gave us a gift. **"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).** At Christmas God gave us his Son and by giving us his Son he gave us eternal life. This brightest Christmas light makes our eyes light up with joy.

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given," (Isaiah 9:6). Think of the great joy that parents have when a child is born. They joyfully announce: "It's a boy!" or "It's a girl!" Well today we joyfully announce: "It's a boy." **"To us a child is born, to us a son is given," (Isaiah 9:6).** The birth of a regular baby gives people great joy, but the birth of this baby gives us even more joy because this is a miraculous baby. This baby is the brightest Christmas light because this baby is also God. Isaiah says, **"And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God" (Isaiah 9:6).** This is the mystery of Christmas. This little baby is also the Mighty God.

I have a little two-month old son James and I was holding him the other night and it just struck me that God became a baby. Think of all the things God could have appeared as. He could have appeared as an enormous ball of fire. He could have appeared as an invincible warrior. But of all the things God could have appeared as, he appeared as a tender baby. That tells us something about the way God feels about us. It tells us that he is tender toward us.

Instead of appearing in a fearsome way, God appears to us in a tender way. And that's really good news for us. Because our relationship with God was not just strained, it was severed. The Bible says that we were alienated from God. But by appearing to us as a tender little baby God is extending an olive branch of peace to us. You know how if you have a really bad fight with a friend or a family member, the next time you see that person, you are a little bit nervous about how they are going to act toward you. Are they going to lash out at you in anger? Are they going to ignore you and give you the cold shoulder? But if you see them and they have a look of peace on their face, then you know it is going to be ok. Well, at Christmas, God appears to us not in anger but as a little baby. And he didn't just appear as a little baby he actually became a little baby. By becoming a tender little baby, God is extending an olive branch of peace to us. "Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled." **"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given."** (Isaiah 9:6) When you look into the manger tonight, see God extending an olive branch of peace *to you*.

But even though he is a tender little baby, he is also the Mighty God who fights for us. That's what makes this baby such a mystery. He is weak and yet he is invincibly strong. This little baby is the Mighty God and he has come to fight for us. He defeated sin for us. He took away our sins when he died on the cross. He defeated death for us. He rose from the dead and whoever believes in him will live forever and ever. Jesus is such a bright, shining Christmas light because all the descriptions about this child in this passage are things that this child does for you. **"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given. And the government will be on his shoulders"** (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus governs the entire universe working out all things for your good. **"And he will be called Wonderful Counselor."** Are you looking for advice for your life? Jesus gives you the best advice. He does so in his word which is preached here every Sunday. **Everlasting Father:** As a father cares for his children so Jesus cares for you. **Prince of Peace:** Jesus brought about peace between you and God. There can be peace on earth because God in heaven is at peace with us. Jesus accomplished that peace between us and God when he died on the cross and satisfied the

justice of God for all of our sins. Because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross the penalty for our sins has been paid and there is complete and total peace between us and God.

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. Everybody loves Christmas vacation and we all wish that Christmas vacation would never end. But sadly Christmas vacation always ends and we have to go back to our regular lives and jobs. But the peace that Jesus brings will never end. Jesus is the brightest Christmas light because the peace that he brings will never end. Through faith in Jesus we have an eternity in heaven waiting for us where we won't have to worry about a thing. We will have complete and total peace forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. What is the one thing in life that you most want to accomplish? Maybe you want to accomplish success in your job. That drive for success consumes you. That burning desire for success is called zeal. Whatever consumes you, that's what you have zeal for. What does God have zeal for? What does God most want to accomplish? What God most wants to accomplish is saving you and bringing you to heaven to be with him forever. That zeal so consumed him that he came here to earth to accomplish that salvation by dying on a cross and rising from the dead. When you look in the manger tonight what you see shining forth is the burning zeal of the LORD Almighty.

When you look into the manger you see the brightest Christmas light: the LORD Jesus Christ who has come down to earth to save you. Every time you see a display of lights this Christmas, think of the brightest Christmas Light: the LORD Jesus Christ. May that brightest Christmas light give you an unconquerable joy and peace this Christmas. Amen.

