

# CHRISTMAS DAY

December 25, 2010

Isaiah 9:2-7

When the words of this lesson were first written, the people of Israel were anxiously waiting for the coming of the Messiah. Many of them believed that he would come in their lifetime. Very few of them, if any, had the slightest idea that these words of the Lord given through the prophet Isaiah would not be fully fulfilled for another 700 years.

Today, you and I have come together in this place to not only remember these words of Isaiah but also to celebrate their full fulfillment in the birth of Jesus Christ. And, in that, the birth of Christ is more than just a past event, it's also a very present reality as this same Christ is reborn in us once again this day by grace through faith.

Many have and, I'm sure, many will continue to celebrate this day as if Christ was never born, as if the words of Isaiah were never really fulfilled, as if the Messiah had never come. It's like the sign that hung in a large department store window in San Francisco that read, "What is Christmas? Christmas is – wide-eyed children, fairy-land magic, age-old music and good will in the hearts of men." It's as if Christ had never been born. Or it's like two women who had stopped in front of another store window to view a small nativity scene in the midst of all the merchandise the store was trying to sell, when one said to the other, "What do you think of that? Even the church is trying to horn in on Christmas!" It's as if Christ had never been born. Or it's like the man who was heard to say, "Most of the Christmas songs are just too darn religious, if you ask me." It's as if Christ had never been born. How sad that there are so many who seek to celebrate Christmas, not to mention to live and die, as if Christ had never been born.

But the real reason you and I have come together in this place today is not to criticize how others may or may not be celebrating Christmas but rather so that we might celebrate it in a God-pleasing way. You and I are here today not only to remember and celebrate that Christ was born but also to remember and celebrate why he was born. And it's really in that why that he can and will be reborn in us again today by grace through faith.

Isaiah said the Messiah would be born to bring light into man's darkness, joy into man's sorrow, hope into man's hopelessness, and comfort into man's suffering. Trusting that God would accomplish all this through the Savior really caused that Savior to be born by the power of the Spirit into the hearts and lives of those who believed what Isaiah wrote even though they lived hundreds of years before that Savior was born into the flesh. And trusting that God not only accomplished all that He promised through the person and work of that Savior two thousand years ago but also trusting that He can and will accomplish all that He promised in our lives again today, is how that Savior can and will be reborn again this Christmas by grace through faith.

God, through the power of His Spirit active in His Word, would have us discover once again what a “wonderful counselor” Jesus really is – wonderful in his birth, death and resurrection, wonderful as he still lives for us today, and counselor as He guides us through this world through His Word and Sacraments into the world to come. He would have us discover what a “mighty God” Jesus really is – mighty in all his doings and God as he can and does keep all his promises. He would have us discover what an “everlasting Father” Jesus really is – everlasting, the alpha and omega, and Father as he tenderly cares for us as his children. He would have us discover what a “Prince of Peace” Jesus really is – because only with Christ in our hearts and lives can we truly have the peace of which the angels sang on that first Christmas, for he and he alone is the author of true peace, the one who has reconciled the world to himself once and for all through the forgiveness of sins which he earned for us on the cross of Calvary and which he gives to all who welcome him into their hearts and lives of their personal Lord and Savior by grace through faith.

The coming of this wonderful counselor, this mighty God, this everlasting Father, this Prince of Peace, is what Christmas is really all about. But only when he comes into the hearts and lives of people like you and me does Christmas become what God intends for it to be – a very present reality.

When that happens, when Christmas is not just a past event but a very present reality, then we who were in darkness will see the great light too and rejoice, not as those who have no hope, no peace, no light, no Savior, as the world does – but rather rejoice as those whether before the birth of Christ, at the birth of Christ or since the birth of Christ, who have seen the salvation of the world in his birth.

When that happens, Christmas is not limited to just a day or even to a season. Rather, it fills every day and every season. Oh sure, the outward celebration may come and go but the inward celebration goes on throughout this life and even into the life to come. And all because God kept His Word spoken through the prophet Isaiah – “for unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government will be on his shoulder and his name will be called ‘wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace’” – even Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!

May God bless us all with such a Christmas today and always for Christ’s name’s sake. Amen.