

**Sermon Title: "Anticipation: A Child is Born. To Us!" Series: "Advent: -> Prince of Peace"**

**November 30, 2014 Pastor Dave Sattler Text: Isaiah 9:1-7 Sources:** NIV Life Application & Ryrie Study Bible; Sermon by Martin Luther (1531); Elwell; Dr John A Beck; Article by Grace Song (Regent); Commentaries: Oswalt & Youngblood.

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**Introduction <Slide>:**

- Good morning everyone, I'm Dave Sattler one of the pastors here at NSAC.
- ILL - And today we turn our attention to Advent:
  - This afternoon, our family will hop in our van and head out to the Fraser Valley in search of a fine green specimen to chop down for our annual Christmas tree.
  - And tonight or tomorrow, we'll decorate that tree ... and I'll probably pull out the ladder and those old gaudy snowflake Christmas lights and hang them on our house.
  - Then, in 25 days on Christmas morning we'll have cinnamon tea-ring & orange juice for breakfast, for brunch we'll have waffles, and for dinner? Of course, turkey & all the fixings!
  - All ... much-anticipated.
- ILL - I remember as a young boy sneaking out of bed late on a Christmas Eve ...
  - To the gift I had long been waiting for.
  - When I pulled back the wrapping paper, its 4ft by 6ft red-metal posts shimmered in the light and the sweet aroma of its white meshing filled the living room ...
  - The gift I'd hoped for was finally mine: a brand new hockey net!
- **<Slide>** Anticipation is amazing ... looking forward to something can make us giddy - like small children; it can buoy us up and keep us going - even carry us through dark times:
  - The anticipation of an exciting trip, an upcoming visit with a loved one, a big pay-off, a great victory (in sports, in school, in business) ... these all can push us on - give us hope.
- And hope is such a powerful thing, isn't it?
- Right now, I'd like you to take a minute or two with 1-2 people sitting around you and discuss this question, DQ: "What's something you've looked forward to with great anticipation?"
- ILL - I want to tell an amazing Sattler family story now - one I realize could be painful for some of you who've maybe been in the same boat we were in, but not gotten your desired result. I am sensitive to that even as I share it ...
  - When Joanne agreed to marry me, she first made me promise to "four kids and a dog." I married her anyway thinking secretly I could change her mind. Clearly, that didn't work.
  - First came the wonderful gift of Kyla, our oldest ... 2 years into our marriage.
  - Wanting more kids, after that we went through a particularly dark time:
    - We were able to get pregnant but not carry to term and Joanne had several miscarries over a difficult period of 3 1/2 years.
  - After trying different medications and making many trips to doctors and specialists, we were told there was no hope we'd ever have any more children naturally.
  - So, we began to look into adoption, we acquired a dog as a companion for our daughter, and prayed to the Lord for a miracle. **<Slide>** And you all know what happened next!
  - On a cold, wet, dark morning in Surrey, BC ... Mitchell David Sattler was born to us on November 28, 1996 ... 18 yrs and 2 days ago! And ... what a day that was!
  - [And miraculously, there were to be a couple more days just like it in our near future!]
  - Long-awaited, much-anticipated ... hope wonderfully realized in the face of deep darkness.
- This is the occasion for the prophecy in Isaiah Ch 9. I invite you to turn there now on your electronic device or find pg.1072 in the blue Bibles in the seat rack in front of you. **<Series Slide>**
- It's important to note that **anticipation of Messiah** has carried the Jewish people through countless set-backs and defeats over 1000s of years of history. They are a resilient bunch.
- The nation of Israel has clung to Abraham [who himself had child-bearing issues] and held onto God's promises through Abraham: "I will make you into a great nation" (Genesis 12:1.)
- Centuries later, God anointed David - fearless warrior, revered King of Israel, & builder of Jerusalem.
- After David died, the Jewish people began to hope again for another leader like him who would maintain the power and prestige of the country ... but all they got were divided kingdoms, many bad kings, gloom & distress, invasion & captivity, confusion & darkness.



- Their faint hope was now projected far into the future. So, we come to Isaiah 9:1-2 & 6-7.
- <READ/PRAY>: "God, please control me by Your Spirit & move me out of the way."

## Text Outline:

### 1. <Slide> From Gloom to Glory (9:1-2)

- During the time of Isaiah, "Zebulun" & "Naphtali" (1) were the 'cursed' tribal lands through which a dreaded enemy gained a foothold in ... to threaten peoples' lives and plunge Israel into a national identity crisis.
- Israel was now under the oppressive yoke of Assyria and it was all the fault of Zebulun & Naphtali.
- As a result, they became a 'laughingstock' to future generations of Jewish people.
- Darkness hung over this region like a thick blanket.
- Situated in the far north of Israel, "gloom" (1) up there in Zebulun & Naphtali is also reflected in the geography: this area, around Galilee is known for its dark-hued **black & gray stones**. I've seen them.
- Ironically, Jesus' hometown would be located there too: the remote, insignificant 'backwater' town of Nazareth. That is why, when he met Jesus Nathaniel famously questioned, Q: "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (John 1:46) The Romans even got in on the act fastening this mocking sign for everyone to read above Him on the cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" (John 19:19).
- One commentator says, Q: "Isaiah announced that while the tribal territories of Zebulun & Naphtali felt the deep pain of the Assyrian invasion, those same territories would personally experience the coming of the Kingdom of God - when Messiah Himself would come to Galilee." - Beck, p 166.
- 700 years later, Jesus' move here would bring fresh hope to a portion of the Promised Land that so desperately needed it: "To those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned" (2).
- <Slide> One of the most incredible things about life with God is this: the future is always more important than the past, the view through the windshield renders the rear view irrelevant.
- 1 Peter 1:3 reminds: Q: "In [God's] great mercy He has given us a new birth into a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." From gloom to glory.
- And this "living hope" found in Christ is such a powerful thing.
- With Jesus in the picture, there's always a better day ahead.

### 2. <Slide> A Child For Us (9:6a)

- History's 'game-changer': "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given" (6). As with most biblical prophecies, this one likely had a more immediate fulfillment as well as some far-reaching ones.
- ILL - History records that a new prince was born in Isaiah's time ...
  - King Hezekiah would eventually take the throne and save Jerusalem in 8th Century BC.
  - How'd he do it? He had a waterway cut under the city through solid rock. Discovered again just last century, 'Hezekiah's Tunnel' runs 30m underground and more than 500m long.
  - What was its purpose? To allow fresh water to flow from the Gihon Spring under Jerusalem to save Israel with vital drinking water inside its walls during the Assyrian siege.
- Of course, in the farther future another child would be born as the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy: Jesus, the Christ ... which means 'Messiah.' And, how did Jesus save the people?
- He came to die to set people free and make all things new again!
- Romans 8:1-2 asserts: "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit of life has set [us] free from the law of sin and death[!]"
- For those who put their faith in Jesus, sin no longer has mastery over them anymore!
- <Slide> ILL - The great reformer Martin Luther aptly delivered this sermon nearly 500 years ago ...
  - Q: "For whom was [Jesus] conceived and born? For whom did he suffer and die? **For us, for us, for us!** That is why Isaiah says, 'To us a child is born, to us a son is given.' It is like when women approach a baby's cradle and say, 'Oh, a baby! What is it?' And I answer, 'It's a boy - and he's ours!' How proud and honoured we are that he is our son, that he belongs to us. But it is not enough that he is 'born' to us; he is also 'given' to us. [Jesus] is a pure gift, a present. There is nothing I have to give or pay in return." - ML, December 15, 1531.



- My guess is that most in this room believe Jesus came to earth.
- But, do you believe that Jesus came to earth for you?!
- Again, most of us believe that God is faithful - it's part of God's character.
- But, do you believe that God is faithful to you?!
- That's a concept much closer to home and harder to fathom or embrace.
- Some of us have 'written ourselves out of the script' believing lies like, "I must be off God's radar - He's surely too busy to care about me," "God could never forgive a scoundrel like me," "I'm not very loveable," "I've got nothing to offer."
- Perhaps these are just our subtle ways of keeping God at bay.
- And so I say, Jesus was "born" (6) for you. Believe it!
- And I say, Jesus has been "given" (6) to you. A Free Gift! Receive Him today!

### 3. <Slide> On His Shoulders (9:6b)

- "And the government will be on his shoulders" (6).
- ILL - As a kid I remember looking forward to visits from my Australian grandparents.
  - When they came we got to go on lots of day-trips and eat meals out with them.
  - That's when I first learned a new saying I have come to appreciate.
  - When we'd arrive at the ticket window or we'd finished the meal and the bill came, my grandpa would fend off cash, credit cards, or the offer of a donation, and declare:
    - Q: "This one's ... on me!" Beautiful words, those. "It's on me."
- God's answer to the world's brokenness & hostility?
- God becomes our "Emmanuel, God with us." Takes it on Himself.
- By taking on Himself our sin and all the tragedy of this world - saying in effect, "It's on me!", Jesus is able now to give back to us ... forgiveness and freedom, newness and hope!
- <Slide> Martin Luther continues his sermon, Q: "[Oh] that I could say this: 'I know no other comfort than to rest on the shoulder[s] of [Jesus]'" - ML, December 15, 1531.
- Our 'comfort' must not be in ourselves - in our power, our hard work, our beauty, our wealth, our brilliance ... the gains we make resting on these are tenuous at best.
- The BQ: Have we 'made room' in our hearts for Him? Have we allowed Jesus to take over the "government" (7) of our lives?
- It's only then that we can anticipate the true benefits of the hope Christ offers.
- John's prophetic vision in Revelation reminds us God came to be more than just a sacrifice, He also came to govern and lead, both now and forever! Revelation 7:17 says,
  - Q: "For [Jesus] the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."
- This Child born to us was also meant to carry us - to be our Shepherd.
- Problems abound when we attempt to carry ourselves - or worse yet, when we try to carry the Shepherd. Good sheep never try that; they know they'll collapse under the weight. Good sheep always let the shepherd carry them.
- So, have you 'hopped on' to Jesus' shoulders?
- He beckons, "All your guilt, all your dashed hopes & dreams, all your heavy burdens ... they're 'on me.' Let me carry them. And I'll carry you too. On my shoulders. Hop on," Jesus says.

### 4. <Slide> Passionately Pursuing Us (9:7b)

- "The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this" (7).
- This is what God does: like we sang earlier, Q: The "Light of the World [Jesus], steps down into darkness" ... and passionately pursues us ...
- ILL - After the death and resurrection of Jesus, His disciples 'headed for the hills.' Literally.
  - They ran 200km north to the dark lands of Zebulun & Naphtali - there, back to their old lives fishing on the Sea of Galilee, hiding in that 'comfortable darkness' licking their wounds.
  - Why? Probably there were many reasons, but I'd like to suggest 2:



- 1) Because at the critical hour they had denied their Lord ...
  - And shame weighed heavy on their hearts ... and they wanted to hide.
  - They knew they'd disappointed Jesus
  - And wondered if they'd ever get another chance.
- 2) Because Jesus hadn't exactly turned out to be who they'd wanted him to be ...
  - Or done what they'd wanted him to do. "What was the cross all about?"
  - They weren't sure if they could trust Him anymore.
  - It would take a huge emotional investment for them to go 'all in' again.
- What happened next I believe changed the course of history: Jesus appeared to them.
  - Right in the midst of their darkness.
  - He blessed them with a miracle catch of fish.
  - Cooked them breakfast, forgave them, and presented them with fresh hope:
    - Hope that He still loved them and hadn't given up on them.
- BQ: So, what has you lurking in darkness these days?
  - A sin you're not proud of but just can't seem to shake.
  - A past that continues to haunt you with pain in the present.
  - A hurt by God or others that makes you want to hide from everybody.
  - A need for something you've tried everything to fill but you just can't fix.
- **<Slide>** Truth is: Jesus is not afraid of your darkness.
- This is God's passion. With zeal for you, He steps right in.
- Sheds light on your darkness ... as you open your heart to Him.
- My prayer is that God by His Spirit would pour out His hope on those feeling hopeless and living in darkness - that God would inject His "living hope" into your deep pain today. Whatever that is.
- This is Jesus. This is the Gospel - the one thing that gives humanity hope.
- We mustn't miss it; Christmas proclaims the much-anticipated:
  - "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (6) Jesus Messiah.
  - Hope is here. Right here. Your Saviour has come. And, He will be coming again! Amen.

