

Promise
Light in the Darkness • Message 5
Mark Taylor
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Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

- **Thank God for bringing light into every dark place in your life.**
- **Ask God to let His light shine through you to others.**
- **Pray that Brookwood is a place of hope for those walking in darkness.**

Scripture Reading:

Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. You will enlarge the nation of Israel, and its people will rejoice. They will rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest and like warriors dividing the plunder. For you will break the yoke of their slavery and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders. You will break the oppressor's rod, just as you did when you destroyed the army of Midian. The boots of the warrior and the uniforms bloodstained by war will all be burned. They will be fuel for the fire. For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:1-6 (NLT)

A. Introduction

Mark, one of the pastors here.

TODAY IS AN INVITATION TO HOPE

- We could sure use some hope right now.
- People are arguing over everything. (story about AI / ChatGPT)
- Much less the violence, shootings.

WHEN WE WERE PLANNING THIS SERIES

- Sitting on the back porch with Kathy and Ali, what would be a good Christmas series?
- What would you like to know more about?
- “How Jesus fulfilled prophecies from the Old Testament.”

THAT’S HOW THIS SERIES WAS BORN

1. God made promises. (prophecy)
2. Fulfilled in Jesus.
3. Ultimately and completely fulfilled when he returns.

PROMISE WE’LL FOCUS ON TODAY:

God’s promise of light in the midst of darkness.

Begin with this idea:

NO MATTER HOW DARK THE DARKNESS, THE LIGHT OF CHRIST SHINES BRIGHTER

In order to see why this promise of light is so beautiful and needed, we have to
START WITH THE DARKNESS.

WALK THROUGH A PASSAGE IN ISAIAH

- Try to get a feel for what they were going through...
- Why the Israelites were so desperate for light.
- Make connections between what they were going through and some of your own life.
- **Disclaimer:** We’re going to walk through some dark places before we get to light.
They don’t call it a light at the end of the tunnel for no reason.

Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which

lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory.

Isaiah 9:1 (NLT)

DARKNESS AND DESPAIR

- Nation had been invaded and taken over for about 200 years.
- Experiencing grief, abandonment, isolation, trauma, depression, despair.
- Have you ever been in a dark season you thought would never end?

ZEBULUN AND NAPHTALI

- These were 2 of the 12 tribes of Israel.
- Possibly the most despised/ considered worst of the worst.
- Seen as the cause of the downfall of the nation.
- Ultimate scene of defeat, displacement, and national shame.
- Ever had friends who always got you into trouble? I was that guy. (story about yearbook.)

GALILEE OF THE GENTILES

- This would one day be the region where Jesus would launch his ministry.
- But at the time, it was enemy-occupied territory.
- By naming these tribes and regions, Isaiah was saying that God would be coming to the most unlikely place to save the most unlikely people.

QUICK HISTORY LESSON, TO SHOW YOU WHAT THEY WERE EXPERIENCING.

This is the land of 12 tribes... (these are photos)

SLIDE #1: 12 tribes

- The Israelites thought an earthly king would solve all their problems.
- Saul, David, Solomon.
- So much infighting, so as to limit the corruption, God...

SLIDE #2: Divided kingdom

- Of 39 kings, 31 did evil and led people away from God.
- 23 of the books in the Old Testament speak of this rebellion.
- READ PORTIONS of 2 Kings 17.
- So in 722.

SLIDE #3: Assyria invasion

- Southern tribes didn't learn from what happened to the north.
- So in 586.

SLIDE #4: Babylonian invasion

- Lasted almost 400 years.
- **EXILE** = a word that means you can't go home.

*You will enlarge the nation of Israel,
and its people will rejoice.
They will rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest
and like warriors dividing the plunder.*

Isaiah 9:3 (NLT)

- They had a loss of identity, so this promise would have been outrageous.
- No land, so rejoicing at harvest was unthinkable.
- Lost war, so dividing plunder was an outrageous thought.

*For you will break the yoke of their slavery
and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders.
You will break the oppressor's rod,
just as you did when you destroyed the army of Midian.
The boots of the warrior
and the uniforms bloodstained by war
will all be burned.
They will be fuel for the fire.*

Isaiah 9:4-5 (NLT)

- Life was a heavy burden.
- They had been through war.

I KNOW IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE A PLACE LIKE THAT...

- Nations at war.
- Land filled with greed, injustice, violence.

Isaiah ministered more than 2,500 years ago, but things are not really much different than what we experience today.

B. Light in the Darkness

The first big idea is that...

1. **DARKNESS** hits all of us.

(Isaiah 9:1-5. C/R: Psalm 53:2-3; Romans 5:12-14; 1 John 5:19)

- No escaping it.
- The darkness is not only out there, also in here. (in us)
- On a national level, but also personal.

IF I WERE TO TAKE A LIGHT METER OVER YOUR LIFE... SOME DARK TIMES.

Here are some words and phrases that describe...

Darkness in Isaiah 9:1-5

Hardship

Exhaustion

Fear

Without hope

Guilt and Shame

Always fighting a battle

Horrified at the injustice and violence in the world

Where is God?

Disbelief

Struggle

Regret

Given up

Heavy burden
I'm too far gone

Can you name one or two you relate with most?

EVER WONDERED... WHY THERE'S SO MUCH DARKNESS?

Why would God allow this?

Don't have time to unwrap these, but here are categories to give us some perspective with:

- What's happening in the world.
- Parts of the Bible.
- Your own life.

Why the Darkness?

1. General Brokenness

- a. Things are the way they're supposed to be.
- b. When Adam and Eve were removed from the garden, we're born in sin, and the ground was cursed.
- c. Babies born prematurely.
- d. Cancer.
- e. Natural disasters.
- f. **Romans 8**, all creation is groaning until the day of redemption.

2. Demonic Forces

- a. Revelation 12:9- Satan, who leads the whole world astray.
- b. Ephesians 2:2- Prince of the power of the air, spiritual forces of evil.
- c. For a time, Satan has been given limited power to rule.
- d. If you're new to Spiritual Warfare... might want to take some time.

Why wouldn't God stop this? Why did he allow Satan to fall and Adam and Eve to sin?

TRUE LOVE DEMANDS FREEDOM.

GOD WON'T MAKE YOU LOVE HIM.

THESE LAST 2 ARE REALLY THE 2 ISRAEL FACED.

3. Our choices

- a. So much of the darkness in this world is self-inflicted.
- b. Read Genesis 6:5-8.
- c. We want our free will but don't want to live with the consequences of our choices.

4. God

- a. It seems he brings just enough light, just enough darkness to remind us of our need for him and draw us to him.
- b. Stop the darkness.
- c. Yes, there are many barbaric stories in the Bible, hard to understand.
- d. But what I do know...
- e. If my daughter were in a dark alley approached by a gang, I would want God to intervene with justice.

Ultimately, nothing I say will take away the ache you feel.

This was the longing of the Israelites.

Why they were desperate for a promise of hope.

This ache is actually a good thing, as it draws us closer to God, reminds us we were made for another place.

I don't know why my dad died of alcoholism at age 58.

He had a lot of shame, always felt like he failed.

But God used his brokenness as a central part of my salvation story.

And for the past 30 years, I've been standing on stages like this, helping other people find hope and healing and purpose.

Starting to feel like you need a savior?

God is always orchestrating a rescue.

In comes Jesus.

(Isaiah 9:6) For unto us a child is born.

Darkness hits all of us, but...

The good news is that...

2. LIGHT is available to everyone.

(Matthew 4:13-16. C/R: Isaiah 60:1-7; Micah 4:1-5; John 8:12)

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 (NIV)

- What if Christmas is true?
- What if Jesus came to lift the burden?
- To set us free?
- To shine light in this **dark world** and
- In the **darkest places** of our lives.

After about 400 years of silence between the Old Testament and New Testament...

Listen to how Matthew describes the coming of Jesus...

(should sound familiar!)

He went first to Nazareth, then left there and moved to Capernaum, beside the Sea of Galilee, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. This fulfilled what God said through the prophet Isaiah:

*“In the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali,
beside the sea, beyond the Jordan River,
in Galilee where so many Gentiles live,
the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light.*

*And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow,
a light has shined.”*

Matthew 4:13-16 (NLT)

Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise made in Isaiah.

- He came to enemy-occupied territory.
- He came to the most unlikely place to save the most unlikely people.
- He came to save you and me.

What if your brokenness isn't a barrier, but a doorway.

- What if the darkness you see in the world
- And the darkness you see in yourself
- Are the exact places God wants to shine his light to bring healing and hope.

In the late 1800s, a pastor named George MacDonald said

Faith is the courage to let God hold you in the dark.

- George MacDonald

If you haven't received the elements, raise your hand.

Scripture most often connects communion with death and life.

Also connects the death of Christ with us walking in the light.

Ephesians 5:2, 8

Christ gave himself up for us... Now we are light in the Lord.

- It doesn't matter where you've been or what you've done.
- God invites you to this table.

INVITATION...

- If you've never had a personal encounter with God, today could be the day that your darkness gives way to light.
 - Take communion as an act of surrender and trust in Jesus.
- If you've surrendered your life to Christ and want to be renewed and strengthened in your faith, this table is for you.
- If you've done things this past week, trying to keep hidden in the dark, hoping no one ever finds out, this table is for you.
- If you know someone who is far away from God, who's been walking in darkness, this table is a message of hope that no one is too far away from the hand of God.

- If you are horrified by the injustice in this world, this table is a declaration that darkness does not have the last word.

Don't be fooled by this little piece of bread and tiny plastic cup; this represents the Invasion of light into a world of darkness.

1. As Jesus sat at the table, he took some bread and said, *Do this in remembrance of me.*
 - a. (remember Jesus, not me)
 - b. A serious moment, but when Jesus enters your life, there's a lightness and joy you won't find anywhere else.
2. Then he took the bread, he said, *This is my body, broken for you.*
3. Then he took the cup, and he said, *This is my blood poured out for the sins of many.*

(Darkness hits all of us)

Light is available to everyone

3. **One day, LIGHT is all we'll see.**

(Isaiah 60:1-5, 18-20. C/R: Colossians 1:13-14, Revelation 22:3-5)

Later in the book, Isaiah gives us a picture of ultimate redemption, what it will be like when we pass or when Jesus returns...

"Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.
See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the Lord rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.

No longer will violence be heard in your land,
nor ruin or destruction within your borders,
but you will call your walls Salvation
and your gates Praise.

The sun will no more be your light by day,
nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you,

for the Lord will be your everlasting light,
and your days of sorrow will end.

Isaiah 60 (NIV)

What if 2026 could be a year of light?

(now for what everyone really came here for this morning)

HELIOTROPISM

Looks like this. (picture)

- You know how plants lean toward the sun.
- Do whatever you can to bend toward the light.
- Stay with him longer.
- Allow the light to expose the dark places so you can find freedom and forgiveness.
- Find one other person who is bending toward the light so you can bend together.

No matter how dark the darkness, the light of Christ shines brighter.

If you want to talk with someone, or have someone pray for you

CARE VOLUNTEERS (HERE AND CARE CONNECTION ROOM)

PRAYER