

The Coming King: Patient Peace
Sermon 12-9-18
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Isaiah 9:1-7

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. ²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. ³You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. ⁴For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. ⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. ⁶For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Message:

What is this? (Google "[Advent Calendar](#)") The word "Advent" is derived from a latin word that translates as "coming." The coming of the true and greatest King. The Advent Calendar was originally created in the mid-19th century. Lines were drawn on a chalk board to create boxes with the days of December inside it leading up to December 25. It was a way for teachers and parents to help children patiently and hopefully await the coming of Jesus. The first printed Advent Calendar was created in 1908 in Germany. These calendars were produced with little doors that would open to pictures. A little later it became popular to open these little doors to scripture verses. By World War II 30 different designs of this printed Advent Calendar were created. Unfortunately, it discontinued for a while because cardboard needed to be rationed in Germany during the war and calendars with pictures were forbidden. According to vox.com, "In a chilling development, when Nazi Germany attempted to change Christmas from a religious holiday to an occasion to praise the fatherland (Jesus's Jewish origins being troublesome for the Nazis' ideology), it latched onto the Advent calendar as a way of inculcating

loyalty into children. In 1943, a full-color calendar was produced by the Third Reich for distribution to German mothers; it included, among other things, designs that incorporated swastikas and other Nazi symbols. On one day, it has pictures that appear to tell the traditional Christmas story — Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus in the manger — but the story that accompanies the images is about a woodcutter, a soldier, and a king who get lost in the woods and encounter a woman with a baby who has wise words for them.” After World War II when the cardboard was no longer rationed, the advent calendar started to gain popularity around the globe. By 1958, the calendar was filled with chocolate. It’s popularity is said to have soared in the United States when President Dwight Eisenhower was on camera opening an advent calendar with his grandchildren. This tradition that many of you may have shared with your children is a tradition that instills patience in a child, or at least it’s intended to do so. Children are notorious for not being patient. It’s a life skill and virtue that we have to be taught and learn. It’s not something innate. As we saw last week in Adam and Eve, it is far from innate. Again, this tradition creates expectation and anticipation, but also positively reinforces the behavior of waiting with the little chocolate treat rewarded each day. Maybe we should all own an advent calendar in this season so we can all be taught a little patience.

Before I jump into the heart of our passage, let me set the historical context. This passage is believed to be written in the era of the Divided Kingdom. If you recall, the Kingdom of Israel is the Northern Kingdom of the Israelites and the Kingdom of Judah is the Southern Kingdom of the Israelites. Just for reference, Jerusalem resides in Judah. More specifically, this passage is believed to be written during the Syro-Ephraimite War. Syro, representing a Syrian faction or also named, Aram, who joined the Northern Kingdom in this war against Judah and the Assyrians. Ephraimite, represents the Kingdom of Israel or Northern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom and these Syrian factions wanted to conquer the southern Kingdom, Judah. You have to understand that King Ahaz of Judah is not a righteous king. 2 Chronicles 28:1-3 describes him as “He did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord, as his ancestor David had done, but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even made cast images for the Baals...” The Northern Kingdom defeats Judah killing as many as 120,000 soldiers in one day. Isaiah, the prophet, hears from the Lord that that he is to go to Ahaz and reassure him that this defeat will not stand. To ensure that this is so, Isaiah encourages Ahaz to request for a sign from the Lord. Ahaz refuses saying in Isaiah 7:12, “I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.” Well...Isaiah asks the Lord for a sign anyways. In 7:14 the prophecy goes, “¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows

how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings [the divided kingdom] you are in dread will be deserted.” What does Immanuel mean? “God with us.” Instead of Ahaz asking for the sign and trusting in the Lord, Ahaz grows impatient and asks the Assyrians for help in defeating the Northern Kingdom and Aram. In 2 Chronicles 2:19-20 it says, “For the Lord brought Judah low because of King Ahaz of Israel, for he had behaved without RESTRAINT in Judah and had been faithless to the Lord. So King Tilgath-pilneser of Assyria came against him, and oppressed him instead of strengthening him.” The Assyrian King refuses to help King Ahaz and Judah. Instead he decides to attack Israel, the Northern Kingdom.

In Isaiah chapter 8, Isaiah gives another child prophecy, but this one is Isaiah’s child. The child’s name shall be “Maher-shalal-hash-baz” which literally means, “Hurry to the spoils!” or “He has made haste to the plunder!” The first sign with the child of Ahaz, Immanuel, is God’s work among the people. The second sign with Isaiah’s child is a sign of things to come because of King Ahaz’s impatience. What does the Lord speak through the sign of the second child to Isaiah? “...the Lord is bringing up against it the mighty flood waters of the River, the king of Assyria and all his glory; it will rise above all its channels and overflow all its banks; it will sweep on into Judah as a flood, and pouring over, it will reach up to the neck; and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.” Because Ahaz did not wait on the Lord and his child, later known as Hezekiah, the Lord allows the Assyrians to not only attack and chase the Northern Kingdom out of Judah, but the Assyrians utterly destroy the Northern Kingdom and take-over control of the Northern Kingdom. Ahaz’s impatience causes the destruction of the brother nation, Israel, the Northern Kingdom.

After the Assyrians conquered and plundered the Northern Kingdom, Ahaz was allowed to remain at his post in Judah as King. 2 Chronicles tells us that King Ahaz continued to remain unfaithful to the Lord worshipping other gods and idols. To the point where the Temple was closed up. And this is where Isaiah’s words come in with even more meaning and weight, “¹⁶Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples. (in other words, let’s preserve all of God’s teaching among us until better days. Keep it away from King Ahaz.) ¹⁷**I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him** [This is a declaration of behavior, character and faithfulness. Isaiah is doing what Ahaz could not]. ¹⁸See, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion. ¹⁹Now if people say to you, ‘Consult the ghosts and the familiar spirits that chirp and mutter; should not a people consult their gods, the dead on behalf of the living, ²⁰for teaching and for instruction?’ Surely, those who speak like this will

have no dawn! [Isaiah is speaking against the worship of other gods] ²¹They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry; when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will curse their king and their gods. They will turn their faces upward, ²²or they will look to the earth, but will see only distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness.” What I believe Isaiah is saying to the people of Judah is that these Assyrians will defeat the Northern Kingdom and Ahaz will encourage you to worship the Assyrian gods, but don’t do as they do. They are not God’s people. They do not have Immanuel. If you move with haste out of impatience, you will be met with darkness and emptiness. You will be met with the void, nothingness. If you move into the next thing without God, we will be left feeling alone. We have to be careful as we interpret this passage to not apply it to ourselves as punishment for poor behavior. That’s Old Covenant thinking. But more so as a warning or consequences of actions. If we can’t wait on the Lord and be with Him at God’s pace, then we will step into something that is not yet prepared or ready. We will be met with nothingness. So it’s like, seeing something that is on the horizon, like the birth of our coming King, and we try to rush to it, but it’s not ready or prepared for us to appreciate and enjoy. It’s like rushing to the manger or the inn, but it’s empty or it’s occupied by something else. The timing isn’t right. If we act like our contemporaries, especially those who are not Christian or get caught up in consumerism and can’t wait, we will miss out on the peace and joy of our coming King. It won’t bring the same meaning because we rushed it.

Now, I know that was a long backstory explanation, but I think you’ll appreciate our passage more because of understanding the context better. This may now make even more sense. Although Judah lives under the oppression of a King off-course, if they wait, deliverance will come from a King that is more righteous. “But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. ²The people who walked in darkness [those who had to endure King Ahaz and his worship of other gods] have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. ³You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. ⁴For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. ⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.” The people have been burdened by King Ahaz’s oppression. There has been a dark cloud that has blotted out the light because of King Ahaz’s impatience and worship of other gods. So Isaiah gives them this hope in this child that is to be born, Immanuel. “⁶For a

child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”

Let’s focus-in on verse 7, “⁷His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.” We live in a very fast-paced culture. Like I said last week, we too often want it NOW. There is no room for waiting. We want peace in our lives, but we don’t want to have to wait for it. We want good things for our lives, but we want the quick fix. We see the horrors of our world and we want answers quickly to the worlds most complex issues. What do we do about all these school shootings? What do we do about these terrorist acts? What should we do or not do about gun control? What should we do about tsunamis, hurricanes and other natural disasters? What does it all mean? In this time of unknown and a lack of solutions, its tempting to stop waiting on the Lord and to worship other gods or ill-fitted solutions. We might worship our government. They’ll figure it out. We might worship our businesses. They will automatically course-correct the world because it’s in their best interest for business, right? The almighty dollar will fix poverty in the world. If we just used more of our resources and money towards poverty in developing countries, that will fix it all. Money may help, but it’s an imperfect solution. When we forget that our ultimate hope is in Christ coming again, we can seek hope in the wrong places, like national identity or political victory. Even the way we celebrate Christmas can get caught up in our American cultural expression of the holiday and can become another means of placing our loyalty more in our country than in the community of God. Nationalism is another quick fix for the longing we have for victory, identity, and security. This season reminds us that we are waiting for something better. Like I talked about last week, too often we rush or try to get ahead of God and by doing so we cause ourselves pain. We move into emptiness, darkness and nothingness. But we have the light in our coming King. “...there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.” The birth of this coming King will reign on the throne of God in endless peace.

Alva McClain in his book *The Greatness of the Kingdom* says this, “What the world needs, as the prophets saw clearly, is not primarily a better philosophy of government or a more perfect system of legislation, but a *Person* who has the character, wisdom, and power needed to rule for God among men. This is the central theme of prophecy from first to last.” In this season of waiting we recognize that we need something better than what we can produce on this earth. The prophecies in Isaiah were originally intended for King Hezekiah who would,

eventually, reform Judah to worship the Lord again. But it has been a long tradition to appropriate these prophecies for the King that is to come among us in just a few short weeks. For the kind of king Isaiah speaks of is only fully represented and perfectly represented in Jesus. Not only do we need peacemakers and peace within our own hearts, but we need the true peacemaker. The one who can make all things right. God with us.

As Paul talks about in Philippians, if we want to have “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding...” or the “endless peace” Isaiah talks about, it requires us putting our trust in the Lord. If we want to experience the triumphant and joyous nature of the coming King, it requires us to wait. We may want the quick fixes or the short-term solutions, but these will not lead us to hearts of peace or the endless peace that our coming King will provide. I don’t know about you, but I don’t want to be like King Ahaz. Where I refuse the signs of God among us. Where I refuse to hear the prophecy. Where I choose to openly not wait on the Lord and choose my own path which leads to destruction. If we try to rush ahead we will be met with darkness, void, and nothingness. A while back I was studying the book of Exodus and I was really struck by this one passage as the Israelites left Egypt, “²¹The LORD went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. ²²Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.” What struck me was how God was the one leading them and preparing the way for them. And as I looked across the rest of the Old Testament, I started to see it over and over again. Deuteronomy 31:8 “⁸It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.” Isaiah 52:12, “¹²For you shall not go out in haste, and you shall not go in flight; for the LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.” To know that God goes before me gives me a great sense of peace. You might see waiting as the great hurdle, but I can promise you that if you put your faith and trust in the Lord, if you can trust that He will go before you and lead your path, our path, you will have peace in your heart. If we wait on the Lord, what will happen? “⁶For a child [will be] been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of PEACE.” Wait on the Lord and take rest in His peace. Amen.