
Good morning I am Josh Burnham and I'm the lead pastor here at Bethel. For all of our guests, those watching online, and all our covenant members, welcome! Why are days like today so important? Because we stand in the tradition of the Lord's community who have gathered regularly to worship for thousands of years. So, our gathering is a sacred gathering.

What would happen if you had a **vision right now**, and the Lord commanded you to take a pen and write these words: pillage hastens and looting speeds. And to reaffirm this Word from God, you are going to name your next son pillage hastens and looting speeds. **And you ask, why Lord?**

Because the nation has so sinned, that the Lord is sending His holy judgment. Many will wonder through the land hungry and dejected. There will be such a lack of hope that people will look up and curse their leadership and their God. They will see only darkness because of their sin. I ask you, could this not happen today? This was the story of Isaiah and king Ahaz over 2700 years ago.

I believe today many are walking and searching. They are searching for hope and for any source of light that they can find. Many are shouting curses at God; however, they are really asking, "God can you hear, God can you save?" Isaiah's answer: the kingdom of God is utterly unexpected.

"An Unexpected Kingdom" (Isaiah 9:1-6)

An Unexpected Light (9:1-2) Have you ever been at a place in your life where the darkness was so dark, that you didn't feel like you had a way out? Maybe you are looking at your world, at our world, and saying, "Father, all I see is gloom, hurt, pain, and sorrow" and there is no end!

You are not alone. The people of **Zebulun and Naphtali** were the northern most tribes in Jordan. These were the first people attacked and harmed when any northern invaders would pass through Israel on their way to attack Egypt. This includes Babylon, Assyria, the Persians, and later the Romans. Have you ever felt like Zebulun? **It's Murphy's law, if something is going to happen it is going to happen to me first.**

What you might not know is that Zebulun (**lower Galilee**) and Naphtali (**upper Galilee**). Why is this important? Because this is precisely the location of Jesus' ministry. It's quite amazing and unexpected that those places that **were first dark**, were the very ones who first **saw the light** of Jesus Christ and His ministry. **This is the unexpected light of the Gospel.** God knows how and where to shine his light into your life so that you can sing that He is the Messiah. This is the profound mystery and power of the Gospel. Jesus does not take the good parts of your life and make them better. He takes the darkest parts and makes them light. Some of you have not yet followed Christ because you believe you are not good enough. Zebulun, Naphtali, he will bring honor if you seek Him. **So what dark area needs His merciful illumination today?**

Walking (1:2) means “living out their lives.” The people of God must decide by what experiences we will live by. Will we look at our darkness, our hopelessness, our shattered dreams and conclude that God has forgotten? **Or will we live triumphantly in the Light of the world?**

An Unexpected Joy (9:1-2). Brothers and sisters listen to Isaiah, the unexpected kingdom of God ushered into our lives brings and increases our joy. What a beautiful picture of the Lord’s grace upon his covenant people. Jesus Christ does not **decrease** your joy or **maintain** your joy; the gospel increases your joy.

When the heart is full of joy, it always allows its joy to escape. It is like the fountain in the marketplace; whenever it is full it runs away in streams, and so soon as it ceases to overflow, you may be quite sure that it has ceased to be full. The only full heart is the overflowing heart. –Spurgeon

To rejoice in God, to rejoice in the Savior is the highest form of joy; indeed, it is the only true rejoicing. The Scriptures warn us that **a side effect of following Jesus will be increased joy.**

Zech. 2:10 – “Daughter Zion, shout for joy and be glad, for I am coming to dwell among you”—this is the LORD’s declaration.

Matt. 2:10 When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy.

Luke 2:10 But the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”

When was the last time someone looked at your life and thought, “wow, what joy?” May the Lord increase your joy so that you will live an unexpected life.

An Unexpected Peace (9:4). Isaiah turns the attention of the people toward two remarkable historical events. The words yoke, rod, shoulders, and staff recall the extreme bondage of Egypt. **God wants his people to remember their bondage.** Remember the **curse**. Remember the **oppression**, the **addictions**, and **sins**, the **habits**, and the **hang-ups**. This is what the Lord Jesus does to your overwhelming oppression: Remember **he shatters it.**

Wow what an unexpected peace. **What in your life needs shattering today?** What sin tortures you? What generational curse is flooding over you like a tidal wave? This is why the Messiah is called the “prince of peace.” Jesus is the one who brings peace. Our souls are at war against God and the Messiah is the one who brings reconciliation. He can break the yoke!

Next, Isaiah reminds the people of Midian. Remember Gideon in Judges 6-8? Gideon was a leader of men in Israel who began with 32,000 troops and God said “you have too many men.” Through a series of events the Lord left Gideon with only 300 men against the Midianites who had 120,000. And when the battle began, the enemy of Yahweh was routed. **Isaiah is asking us to think about a battle that you have no chance to win with human hands.** God can win the battle. It’s not a

human war, it's a spiritual battle! Wow what an unexpected peace. Christian, live with unexpected peace!

Ultimately, the peace of Jesus is so profound that one day every boot and every war garment will be burned as firewood. **Since 1400 AD over 3,000 wars have been catalogued and estimated 200 mil to 1 billion have died in battle alone.** Most ordinary soldiers would be barefoot and only the Calvary would have boots. I don't know about you but I long for this day. When you see wars and rumors of war, fall on your knees to the only One who can bring eternal peace. **Wow what unexpected Peace.** This is the power of Jesus Christ.

An Unexpected Savior (9:6) So who is this warrior king that will bring such peace? Isaiah tell us: for unto us a ... child. **Say what?** Obviously, Isaiah was mistaken. Maybe a general, a president, a king, a shrewd businessman? Surely the Lord would not use the most vulnerable to bring about this unexpected Kingdom. And yet, unto us a child will be born. This child:

The virgin birth demonstrates that there is no contradiction in the idea that God can take on human nature. **God became like us that in Jesus we might find our way back to Him.** God sent his Son as a child, the most vulnerable state, to demonstrate His love towards us. To show us that knows who you are, how you feel. **Heb. 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness.** There is something about a young baby that welcomes and draws you close. Let us approach this child with boldness!

Demonstrates that he is not so transcendent as to be "wholly other and utterly knowable or incapable of contact with his creatures. **Not only does this unexpected child remind that He knows you, this child shows us that we can know Him.** Our God is a revealing God. He desires that you know him personally. **This is the unexpected Savior.**

An Unexpected God (9:6) He reigns in unexpected glory.

He is unexpectedly wonderful. The word is **[Pala] which means wonderful, marvelous, amazing, extraordinary and hard to understand.** Why would Holy Scripture describe the coming Child as wonderful? The Messiah is named wonderful because in Him we find our **sense of wonder.** *Our Savior is Wonderful and amazing because I cannot comprehend the love and mercy he has towards sinners such as I.* He is wonderful because I do not understand why He extend mercy to people living in rebellion. **This wonderful Jesus is the answer to spiritual boredom.** Oh, today that we would declare to **satisfy** our lives in Christ in such a way as to **never lose my sense of wonder** in his Word and daily ordinary graces. Reclaim your wonder today in this Child.

He is exceedingly mighty. *We see in the mighty name of God a designation of strength. Often this word is used for a mighty warrior or the strength of the Lord. You see, the Christian life, the **Messiah Himself was not a weak savior.** Rather He defeated the greatest enemies the world has ever known. In one moment He defeated death, wiped away your sin, and was raised to life*

because of His righteous Might. Why do we act as if we are powerless before our cravings, addictions, sins, relationships, and enemies? If Christ is with you who can be against you? If you are born again in **Christ you are born in unexpected strength.**

He is eternally Father. Why father? Because our God is personal. He is not abstract. He is not made of stone. He is our Father because a father has Sons and Daughters. In Christ we are adopted as Heirs of salvation. **Do you relate to God as Father or as an impersonal deity?** Oh do not miss the joy of drawing near your heavenly Father.

He is eternal Father because there is nothing that can break the bonds of his fatherly love. In Christ, not even my rebellion or backsliding can break His Fatherhood. Child return to the father today!

He is eternal Father that challenges every earthly father to model to their families the fatherhood of Christ.

Remember: No one is greater than your eternal Dad.

So what? Jesus did not unexpectedly enter the world for us to do nothing.

Among these Jews there suddenly turns up a man who goes about talking as if He was God. He claims to forgive sins. He says He has always existed. He says He is coming to judge the world at the end of time. Now let us get this clear. Among Pantheists, like the Indians, anyone might say that he was a part of God, or one with God: there would be nothing very odd about it. But this man, since He was a Jew, could not mean that kind of God. God, in their language, meant the Being outside the world, who had made it and was infinitely different from anything else. **And when you have grasped that, you will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking [unexpected] thing that has ever been uttered by human lips...**

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. **Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God.** But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. (C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity).

This is the power of an unexpected Gospel. What will you do today with this unexpected Kingdom?

Isaiah shows us that God is our eternal Father. Only a son can call upon his father. Are you His child? Jesus died to restore our broken relationship. Believe—repent—trust—confess (mouth and baptism)

Do you need light? Will you let the unexpected light of Jesus shine in your life today?

Do you need peace? He is the prince of peace.

Do you need a Savior? He is.

Have you lost your wonder? He is wonderful counselor.

Are you weak? He is mighty!
Are you abandoned? He is your Father.

Live in the glory and grace of the unexpected Kingdom today.

Notes

Is. 9:1 Nevertheless, the gloom of the distressed land will not be like that of the former times when he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. But in the future he will bring honor to the way of the sea, to the land east of the Jordan, and to Galilee of the nations.

With no verbs stated, the words express a fact rather than a prediction (Motyer, 99). The eye of faith looks at all this but affirms that, real though it is, it is not the real reality. The people of God must decide what reading of their experiences they will live by. Are they to look at the darkness, the hopelessness, the dreams shattered and conclude that god has forgotten them?

Isaiah insists here that hope is a present reality, part of the constitution of the now.

These lands were the first to fall to Assyria.

Zebulun and Naphtali, the two north-eastern tribes of the land west of the Jordan (later known as upper and lower Galilee).

Its amazing that those places that were first dark, found light first as Jesus spent significant ministry in Galilee.

2 The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
a light has dawned
on those living in the land of darkness.

Walking means living out their lives. The remnant have been walking in darkness, enduring the hiding of the Lord's face (Motyer, 100).

Darkness is used here as a metaphor for political oppression and injustice, and light is the contrasting metaphor for political release from such oppression (Roberts, 149).

The people walking in darkness are members of the covenant community conducting their lives in circumstances of extreme distress and despair (Mackay, 237).

When the prophet wrote, they had not yet seen this light, but its occurrence was so certain and vivid to Isaiah's mind that he described it as though it had already dawned (Young, 325).

The last term was traditionally rendered 'the shadow of death' as in Psalm 23:4.

3 You have enlarged the nation
 and increased its joy.
 The people have rejoiced before you
 as they rejoice at harvest time
 and as they rejoice when dividing spoils.

Joy- the triumph of grace guarantees bringing many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10).

To rejoice in God is the highest form of rejoicing, indeed, it is the only true rejoicing (Young, 326).

4 For you have shattered their oppressive yoke
 and the rod on their shoulders,
 the staff of their oppressor,
 just as you did on the day of Midian.

There are two sets of historical references in this verse. First vocabulary is used which recalls Egypt (yoke, burdens, shoulders, and oppressor).

Secondly, the defeat of Midian recorded in Judges 6-8 is remembered. This is apt, for Gideon was in particular the deliverer of Ashher, Zebulun and Naphtali.

The unexpected rout of the enemy by a much smaller force proved that divine intervention was the key factor in their success (Mackay, 239).

The present victory was similar, for it was won against a foe over whom human hands could have no power, and it was won by God alone. It was a spiritual battle, won because a Child would be born (Young, 327).

5 For every trampling boot of battle
 and the bloodied garments of war

will be burned as fuel for the fire.

Most of the ordinary soldiers would be barefoot. It was the cavalry and the officers who would have boots. The reference to a 'cloak rolled in blood' shows that there has been intense hand to hand fighting, so that the garment is now fit only to be burned (Mackay, 240).

Since 1400 AD over 3,000 wars have been catalogued and estimates range from 200 mil- 1 billions deaths.

God wants light, joy, abundance, liberty, and cessation of hostility—not only for his own people but for all people.

6 For a child will be born for us,
a son will be given to us,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
He will be named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

Child

The weakness of a child indicates the radically innovative approach that God adopts to dispel the darkness that shrouds his people and to provide them with salvation (MacKay, 246).

The emphasis falls not on what the child will do when grown up but on the mere fact of his birth. In his coming all that results from his coming is at once secured (Motyer, 101).

His shoulders are a symbol of 'bearing rule'. Note how their shoulders are released from burdens when he shoulders the burden of their rule.

Father is not current in the OT as a title of the kings. Used of the Lord, it points to his concern for the helpless, care or disciple of his people and their loyal, reverential Davidic King.

On a personal level, peace means fulfillment; to 'die in peace' is to have lived a fulfilled life, to have achieved all God planned. Peace is well-being and freedom from anxiety. In relationships, it is goodwill and harmony (Motyer, 103).

Wonderful

Pele- indicates that which transcends human understanding and experience.

Mighty God- like a heroic soldier, and so will be able to implement his policies for the defence and well-being of his people.

Eternal Father

Prince of Peace- designates the Princes as the one whose whole administration nurtures his people and provides them with all that they require for their well-being.

Illustrations

Ponder his names: Wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Each is worth a lifetime of meditation. –John Piper

Application

Tony Snow, former press secretary for President George W. Bush, has been battling cancer, off and on, since