

Emmanuel: God Came Near – A Long Awaited Hope

12.19.2021

Turn to Isaiah 9 (page 472)

I need to get a feel

Of where we are this morning

Show of hands:

How many of you are completely finished Christmas shopping?

How many of you have been completely finished for a couple weeks?

How many of you are not finished, but you're over halfway?

How many of you haven't started yet?

My people

I recently saw this post going around FaceBook

Maybe you can relate

I want you to know that I'm here to help

So for you last minute shoppers

I've done the hard work

Research, really

To help you get out of this

Hole that you've dug for yourself

So I found a website

With the top 25 Christmas presents for 2021

I won't go through all of them, of course

But I'll give you a few to help you out

Some of them were just what you would expect

You know, upgrades over previous models

And then we get the every year presents

The massagers and the organizers

Have you noticed how every year at Christmas

The stores break out hundreds of different massagers

People literally stressing out in the aisle

Trying to find the perfect stress reliever

It's amazing

But I also found a couple cool items

If you're looking for something last minute

Like this coffee mug

It's rechargeable

And you can control the exact temperature from an app on your phone

That's pretty cool

It's also \$119

Which is why the world hates us

Then I found some quirky gifts

Which make it more personable

Like this kit where they can make their own hot sauce

And try different levels and amounts and such

Or, for the astronomy lover in your life

A necklace that you can put different constellations on

That's pretty cool

Or for kids – they're dealing with a lot the last few years

So there's this pretty ingenious little beany baby deal

They can turn it inside out to let you know if they're happy or sad

That's probably a good self-expression deal

Apparently this is all the rage on tiktok

I'm not on tiktok

But that's what the advertisement says

That its... all the rage... you know, on tiktk

And then I got skeptical

You know that a lot of these lists

Have people buy their way on, right?

Where some company pays this website a lot of money

To say they have one of the best items of the year
So I got a little skeptical

When #3 on Goodhousekeeping's Top 25 items

#3 – ahead of the coffee mug, and the earrings, and the hotsauce creation kit

At #3

On the 25 best items you can buy

Is this

Now remember, this is the top 25

The article starts by saying

"The 25 Most Popular Christmas Gifts You Can Buy Your Friends and Family in 2021 - Surprise them with trending presents and best-sellers they're sure to love."

Is this trending?

Is this a best-seller they're sure to love?

I thought, maybe there's some special feature

Like it tracks your heart rate or breathing or something?

Nope – just a \$9 sweatshirt from Hanes

So I'm a little skeptical

Listen a minute

Let me save you a lot of looking

You're never going to find a present that fully satisfies

You won't find one that fully satisfies your children

You won't find one that fully satisfies your spouse

You won't find one that fully satisfies you

Am I saying that presents are bad? No

Give presents

Enjoy your family

Live it up

What I am saying is that nothing in this life

Will fully satisfy you like a relationship with God can

The perfect present won't

The perfect experience won't

The perfect trip... won't

Nothing will full satisfy you like a relationship with God

If you'll listen to me

I just saved you a lot of money

And pointed you towards something

Of eternal value

Let me show you:

Read Isaiah 9:2

You can look at this later

But Isaiah is comparing the light that comes from God

In our lives

Here in verse 2

With the light that people look for

From the world

You see that in previous verses

That's the context

And you'll see

Over these next couple verses

That God addresses very specific ways

That people have always looked to the world for light

And they've always been disappointed

Isaiah 8:19b-21a (NLT) - But shouldn't people ask God for guidance?... Look to God's instructions and teachings! People who contradict His Word are completely in the dark. They will go from one place to another, weary and hungry.

Now listen to me

If you don't catch what I'm saying here

You're not going to get the full picture later

People look to the world

For deliverance

Instead of looking to God

People have always done it

Some of us are doing it now

Let me show you - look at verse 3:

Read Isaiah 9:3

God is describing

A society that is affluent

Do you see that there?

They are rejoicing at the harvest

Their warriors are rejoicing when dividing plunder

People look to find the light

By chasing affluence

By chasing money

By chasing the things that money can buy

Some of us

Are going to wake up in January

With credit card bills

That make it hard to live in peace

That make it hard to be generous

That cause fights and turmoil in your homes

And it came because we thought that more would satisfy

Verse 4:

Read Isaiah 9:4

Isaiah is referring to Midian's defeat

What's he talking about – "Midian's defeat"?

Midian's army was defeated by Gideon

Let me bring everybody up to speed on that story

Gideon was leading an army of 32,000 men

That's huge

But he was coming against an army of 135,000 men

Roughly 4-to-1

So God and Gideon are talking strategy before hand

Gideon was a follower of God

And it's easy to see the conclusion right?

There's too many men

135,000 against 32,000

There's too many men

God agrees

Judges 7:2a – "The Lord said to Gideon, 'You have too many men.'"

He says, if you defeat Midian with 32,000 men

The people will all think those 32,000 men are superheroes

And they'll think Gideon is the biggest superhero of all

And they'll worship the wrong deliverer

So thru a series of reductions

God had Gideon *shrink* his army

From 32,000 men down to 300 men

Recently, archaeologists have uncovered an ancient photo of Gideon

And his 300 men

It should be a movie

So look at what God did

Judges 7:7a - The Lord said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men... / will save you and give the Midianites into your hands.

And He did... *God* did

In a miraculous scene

God used 300 brave men

To defeat a massive army

Judges 7:22a - When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the Lord caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords.

So God used 300 men to overcome 135,000 men

Powerful – miraculous!

NOTE: That was chapter 7 verse 22

Do you see that?

Chapter 7 verse 22

Now, when the battle was over

Chapter 8 verse 22

Just one chapter later

Look what the people said

The Israelites said to Gideon, “Rule over us—you, your son and your grandson—because *you* have saved us from the hand of Midian.” But Gideon told them, “I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The Lord will rule over you.” – Judges 8:22-23

God knew the people would worship the wrong deliverer!

With that in mind

Look back at Isaiah

Read Isaiah 9:4

People in Isaiah’s day looked

For affluence

And people in Isaiah’s day looked

For a political savior

And today

Almost 3,000 years later

People today look for affluence

And they look for a political savior

Verse 5:

Read Isaiah 9:5

So in **verse 3** – God describes a nation that is **overflowing with affluence**

In **verse 4** – God describes a nation with a **strong political leader**

Verse 5 – God is describing a people without conflict

Which is rare, historically

And all these years later

Political leaders tell us

That they are going to save us

By giving us affluence

And by giving us peace

Now don't misunderstand

I want peace

I don't want a military invasion

I don't want riots on the streets in Spring Hill

I don't want anything bad to happen to my family

I want peace

But

That can't be the ultimate goal

I think a lot of us were really troubled

Rightly so

By the arrest of a Williamson County teacher

Who had abused his position with children

We were rightly troubled

Confused

Angry

Anxious that it could happen to more kids

By more adults we trust

But I have to say

Listening to some of the conversations

Online and in person

Make it clear

That when that veneer of peace gets shattered

In horrific fashion

We lose all perspective

Every teacher is bad

Every administrator should be fired

Everybody is trying to hurt our kids

I'm not justifying sinful behavior

Or lessening a crime committed against innocent children

By no means

Don't miss my point

But our collective reaction

Makes it clear that some of us

Are looking to the absence of conflict

For our peace

For our salvation

You'll never find it there

Historically

People assume that the secret to life

Is found in:

Affluence

Strong political leaders

And the absence of conflict

God provides a different solution

Read Isaiah 9:6-7

And the Jews who heard these words

Thought that the Messiah would

Be just that

He would lead in raw power

He would shower himself with riches

And they would catch the crumbs

Falling off the table

And He would be so ruthless that

That no opposition would dare

Ever raise a hand

And then God did the unthinkable:

Luke 2:1-20 - In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place

while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a Son. She wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.

This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest Heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into Heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the Baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen Him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this Child,

and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

And for maybe the first time in history

A group of people celebrated

Because they had found something

That *fully* satisfied

They didn't find it in affluence

The shepherds had seen a baby born to peasants

So poor that they couldn't even find a guest room

To sleep in and deliver their baby

They didn't find it in political power

People all over Bethlehem went about their lives

No awareness that the Savior had been born

They didn't find it in safety

Matthew records that:

After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up! Flee to Egypt with the Child and His mother," the angel said. "Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the Child to kill Him." – Matthew 2:13 (NLT)

And for all that has changed

Some things stay the same

We won't find true satisfaction in promotions, salaries or technology

We won't find it in political leaders of either party

We won't find if all conflict and pain was magically taken out of our lives

We will find it

The same place those random shepherds found it

We will find it in a child that's been born

A Son that was given

He's a Wonderful Counselor

Mighty God

Prince of Peace

And if you don't know Him

He's the secret to happiness

He's the secret to contentment

And like the townspeople

Busily celebrating that they were

In the line of King David

The Messiah would come through their family

Don't be like the townspeople

Who celebrated an arrival

That they missed

This year

Many of us

Will celebrate an arrival

And miss it in the process

For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. – Isaiah 9:6