

Isaiah 9

New Life Version

Birth and Rule of the Prince of Peace

9 But there will be no more heavy hearts for those who were suffering. In the past God allowed the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali to be put to shame. In the future He will honor Galilee where those who are not Jews live and where the road to the sea is. It is on the other side of the Jordan. ² The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. The light will shine on those living in the land of dark shadows. ³ You will make the nation great. You will give them great joy. They will be glad before You, as with the joy of gathering time, and as men have joy when they divide the riches taken after a battle. ⁴ For You will break the heavy load from their neck and shoulders. You will break the power of those who made it hard for them, as at the battle of Midian. ⁵ For every shoe of the soldiers in the battle, and every coat rolled in blood, will be burned in the fire. ⁶ For to us a Child will be born. To us a Son will be given. And the rule of the nations will be on His shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful, Teacher, Powerful God, Father Who Lives Forever, Prince of Peace. ⁷ There will be no end to His rule and His peace, upon the throne of David and over his nation. He will build it to last and keep it strong with what is right and fair and good from that time and forever. The work of the Lord of All will do this.

John 8

New Life Version

Jesus Speaks to the Teachers of the Law and the Proud Religious Law-Keeper

¹² Jesus spoke to all the people, saying, “I am the Light of the world. Anyone who follows Me will not walk in darkness. He will have the Light of Life.”

Sermon; Words that have meaning

I stand in front of you as a Christian today because I was broken. Even though I was broken, I knew my young children needed to know God.

I was in a marriage that had collapsed, had a job that required me to work crazy hours, and travel incessantly.

I was attempting to be the main parent for my kids, and **“balance”** the necessity of keeping a job that was made to ensure that this was nearly impossible.

But the truth; I was lying to myself, **it was me that needed Christ desperately, in my broken life.**

So, on a Sunday morning I took my children to St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Millard. While they attended Sunday School, I attended the service.

Within a few minutes of reciting the liturgy, listening to hymns I remembered, but hadn't sung for almost 20 years; I found myself quietly sobbing. I knew that I was feeling **God's presence**.

I realized at that moment that I could depend on God, even when nothing else in my life felt dependable, including me.

That was my starting point on my journey back to Christ, and I admit it was a long journey.

Some of you may have found this an easy journey, one in which you never strayed away or had to be found; God bless you!

Most people, who I have known in my life, however, didn't have that kind of experience.

Some moment in their life was the **"Road to Damascus" kind of experience**, without all the flashing lights and a visible Christ speaking. In a moment of doubt and fear, tears and sadness; he comforted us. Maybe it was overwhelming guilt, and a **desire for** forgiveness, and an opportunity to change. Maybe it was a need to grant forgiveness and put away anger and hate.

In our lesson today, we hear of the prophecy of Isaiah, and I ask you a question; did these prophecies influence you in your Road to Damascus experience?

I can't speak for you, I can only speak for me, and for me they had absolutely no influence; **it was what Christ said to us while he was here amongst us**. It was the promise of his love and his Grace that brought me back to him. It was because in a moment of darkness, just as John 8 reminds us; Christ is ***"the Light of the world. (so that) Anyone who follows (him) will not walk in darkness. (they) will have the Light of Life."***

In our world there are so many people who are obviously broken, there are so many more who are not visibly broken but might be internally.

I always believed that my grandmother Johnson had been a devout Christian all her life; I thought her journey was simply to wake up and be that Christian.

It wasn't till quite a bit later in life, that it occurred just how complex that story must have really been.

Still in her twenties she lost a child who was 2 years old; her brother had come home from World War 1 with damaged lungs from mustard gas and eventually died from it.

Growing up, her older siblings had lost their mother in a car accident, within a few hundred feet of the home I live in today.

We are all human, and we all at some point in our lives are probably broken. In a secular world where there is nothing more powerful than our broken selves; it is hard to see a glimmer of hope.

There is however Christ, for those of us who choose him, and he is waiting just as the hymn Softly and Tenderly reminds us:

*Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,
Calling for you and for me;
See, on the portals He's waiting and watching,
Watching for you and for me.*

Here within this church however, we are thought to have already heard Christ and have followed him. Yet we still have a responsibility, and that is to also be a light for others. We can never be the light that Christ shines for us all, but we can guide them to that light of his love and Grace.

It is important for you to remember that **you SHOULD** tell others that you are a Christian. That you hopefully can tell your story of your journey to others, so that they might travel this road as well.

In doing so you may light a candle, so that others unseal their eyes to Christ, and open their ears to the voice of his unremittent love and forgiveness.

The message of Isaiah's verse today, is to remind us that Christ was born a man for all of us. That he would tell us of his promise of salvation, and his new commandment; to love one another.

As we celebrate two thousand and twenty-five years since his birth; remember that in your heart and voice there is a candle for others to see, and that you can be a means finding that bright light of Christ's love.

Ending Prayer

Dear Father,

Let us always remember your words:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

We know that you are always with us, and we praise your name for your love and forgiveness. Let us be true servants of your will; let us be candles for your message to be seen by others.

We thank you for every gift you give us each day.

In your holy name we pray!

Amen