

This Sunday, we continued with our series 700BC, and Dusty shared a message from Isaiah 9:1-7: *Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations (different tribes), by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan— The people walking in darkness have seen a great light (Jesus); on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned (Jesus has come). You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder (end war). For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor (Jesus frees). Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire (peace). 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. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.*

Isaiah was excited about a future Prince of Peace - a Mighty Deliverer - that was to come. We should be excited that He HAS come! We often still live like Isaiah with a promise of Him to come, but this promised Jesus has already come for us. This is the declaration over us today:

- Our Light has come
- Joy has come
- The true Ruler has come
- True Peace has come
- Security, Hope, everlasting life...

What people were hoping for in Isaiah's time is here, now! But in some ways we've missed it and are still living in "Isaiah days".

Isaiah makes three declarations in this passage of scripture (9:1-7):

### 1. Jesus, the Great Light, Has Come

*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.* Isaiah 9:2.

We all tend to cling to earthly things for stability. But how can we trust God to take us to work in our lives when the darkness paralyses us because we can't see? When the Light comes to shine on the sin in our lives, the devil condemns us and convinces us to fear the Light. So we try to avoid the Light. But Jesus didn't come to condemn us. As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." (Romans 10:11). He came to set us free: *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Who-*

*ever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* John 8:12.

We may experience a moment of insecurity or embarrassment when our sin is brought into the light, but what little is that compared to a lifetime of freedom! Isaiah said, for those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned... That light is Jesus.

Dusty used two images to illustrate a point: one of sunflowers blooming in the sunlight and another of mould growing in the darkness. The mould is representative of life in the darkness, of sin... the sunflowers represent life with Jesus in the light. Have we allowed the light to shine in our lives? In every area of it? Are there some mouldy parts in your life and the deep, dark crevices of your heart?

### 2. Jesus, the Ultimate Ruler, Has Come

*... and the government will be on His shoulders...* Isaiah 9:6.

Paul had this to say about Jesus in Ephesians 1:15-23: *For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he used when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

This is not a small Jesus. Isaiah says "Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end". Paul emphasises that His rulership will be forever, it will have no end: not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

When we give our hearts to Him, when His light shines in us, we live under His rulership. He contends on our behalf. He never leaves us, and He wins EVERY battle. *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through*

him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— Colossians 1:15-22

Isaiah talks of living in the “enemies of God” state, but now our Light has come! When we comprehend His rulership and power, we understand that all sickness, addiction, oppression, hurt, our brokenness, our struggles, our future, our plans, our dreams and desires... all sit under the rulership of Jesus, and He has conquered them all! Once we understand this, what battle can we lose?

### 3. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, Has Come

*And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* Isaiah 9:6. The reason we need peace is because we have a reality of hardship. Jesus experienced peace and hardship. We read in Matthew 3:16-17: *As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” Imagine the joy that went through Jesus’ mind at that point! Wouldn’t we all like that kind of affirmation? The truth is that God affirms us at the moment of our salvation.*

Directly after this moment, Jesus is led into the desert where he faced hardship and temptation: *Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”* Matthew 4:1-3.

This is similar to Moses leading the Israelites into the desert after they are freed from slavery in Egypt. Let's compare the two situations:

#### Israelites:

They came out of Egypt excited, safe and at peace. They were then led into the wilderness where they were chased by Pharaoh. The Israelites complained when Pharaoh changed his mind and started chasing them, so God performed a miracle by parting the Red Sea. They then complained of hunger and God provides

bread and quail daily for them (another miracle). They complain they have not water and so God tells Moses to strike a rock and water flows forth (again, a miracle). Moses goes up into the mountains, and the Israelites make statues to worship... and so this pattern goes on. Eventually, the Israelites spend 40 years in the dessert!

#### Jesus:

Following His baptism, Jesus is led into the wilderness. He fasts for 40 days and 40 nights. He is tempted four times yet remains faithful. He never complains, never gossips, never grumbles... *After the 40 days and nights are over, angels came and attended to him* (Matthew 4:11).

How often do you feel like God has left you in the wilderness? The Bible says that Jesus was “led” into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. God “led” Moses and the Israelites into the desert. God didn't leave you in the wilderness - He led you into it! Our behaviour in the wilderness will determine how long the experience will be and whether or not we will have the peace of God in us. The wilderness is good for us; it strengthens us.

If we complain, blame, gossip and are never content, we won't have peace, and we will extend the hardship.

The Prince of Peace has come, but He doesn't force peace on us! Paul knew the secret to peace: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.* Philippians 4:4-13

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you from this Sunday's service?
2. Isaiah 9:4-5 speaks about the promise of freedom and independence. Describe a time when a promise meant a lot to you.
3. Do you get anxious or worry? Is your anxiety related to forgetting the promises of God? What does Philippians 4:6-7 teach us?
4. In John 8:12, Jesus speaks about having the 'light of life.' What areas have of your heart or life have become a little mouldy? Where does the light of life (Jesus) needs to shine in?
5. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. What difference does that make in our lives?