



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

December 24, 2013

Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship

Sermon Text: [Isaiah 9:2-7](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 96](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 2:1-20](#)

### **Promises Kept! A Light Shines in Darkness!**

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

It doesn't really matter who is holding political office. It doesn't really matter which party they're from. There is always a group of people that think the world is going to come to an end soon because that person is our governor, our president, or whatever the case may be, right? We think things can't possibly get any worse at times when we look around or we see some of the decisions politicians make, and we just wring our hands. You probably know people that are doing that a lot, wringing their hands and saying the world is going to come to an end.

If you can even begin to imagine that or relate to that, you're understanding a little bit the times that Isaiah was living in when he speaks these words about the people walking in darkness. The darkness he was talking about the people could relate to because they could picture it in the king they had. I don't think that's where he wanted them to stop thinking though. But he was starting from a point they could understand and he was taking them to a bigger picture, which is what God often does through his prophets.

When Isaiah speaks these words from Chapter 9, the king is King Ahaz. We talked about him last Sunday morning in the early service. He was the king, a descendant of David, but he was nothing like David. He was spineless and a spiritual shipwreck. He worshiped false gods. He sacrificed his own children in the fire. He didn't really want much of anything to do with the Lord. Isaiah had come and told him that God would deliver him from Aram and from Israel that was threatening him, but Ahaz didn't put any trust in God. Instead, he went and made a treaty with the Assyrians, one of the most wicked people of the day. He gave them the gold from God's temple to cement this alliance. Time and time again those who were believers in God and his promises had to look at Ahaz, wring their hands and say, "Can it really get any worse than this?"

So in that setting, here comes Isaiah, and he says to the people, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light." They could understand spiritual darkness all around them. They saw it in Ahaz every day. But this great light that he was talking about had to intrigue them. Especially when he talked about the warrior's boots being destined for fuel for the fire and their blood splattered clothes being rolled up and burned because the Assyrians brought them all kinds of problems. They lost a lot of their loved ones because of Ahaz despising God and his promises.

In that setting, God tells Isaiah to speak these words to lift them from where they could understand that part of things and take them to something bigger and to something more important. The darkness that God was most concerned about wasn't just the darkness of Ahaz, it was the darkness that every single one of us lives in. When we are born in this world, we are darkness. We are separated from God. We are sinners from birth. A lot of times I'll talk with people and they'll say, "Oh, we're basically good." The things I always ask these people is, did you ever have to be taught by mom and dad when you were a kid, if you had siblings, to share? Of course everyone says yeah, they had to be taught to share. If you ever had siblings when you were growing up, did mom and dad ever have to sit you down and say, "This is how I want you to argue with your sibling. This is how I want you to throw a tantrum. This is how I want you to fight with your siblings"? Any of you ever have a parent sit down and teach you that? We don't have to be taught that, right? We know that. That's what we are. At our core we are selfish little beasts. We are as bad as Ahaz when it comes right down to it. We are darkness.

But God sent his light into the darkness of a world that had fallen into sin and a world that was born corrupt and will always be corrupt. He shines this light. And this light is not just a king that is going to deliver you from Assyrians or deliver you from whatever it is that is the flavor of the day that you think is the problem with where you are living. It's going to deliver you through God becoming flesh.

When it says to us, "To us a child is born," and then it gives us these titles, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, he's telling us this is something bigger than a human. This is divine. And he is coming to establish and uphold a kingdom that is built on justice and righteousness. God demands of you and me justice and righteousness. You and I have as much of a chance of offering it to God on our own as King Ahaz did.

We can pat ourselves on the back that we haven't sacrificed any of our children in the fire, but here's the problem. There have been times when you thought about stoking the fire when you're kids have annoyed you, hasn't there? There are times when you and I have these sinful thoughts. There are times when you and I speak in our sin and our anger, and we're just as sinful as Ahaz. But God shined his light into the world for Ahaz, for you, for me and for everyone.

He sent Christ into this world to be born and establish a kingdom with righteousness and justice to give what you and I could never give to God. He would do it in our place. He would obey perfectly at all times. He would love perfectly at all times. Can you imagine that? At all times, Jesus never failed to love.

This last week, have you failed to love any of the drivers you've been around as you've been driving around in the snow? We can't love people that are just going by us and making us slow down a little bit. Here's Jesus, he loves us, and we caused him to have to leave heaven and be born and put in a stable and then live in our place and die in our place. And he still loves us perfectly at each and every moment of his life.

He establishes a kingdom of justice and righteousness. He is the light that is shone in the darkness. And here's the thing... he continues to shine in your life and my life every day. Every day we still fail him. We love him. He's given us the gift of faith to believe that he is our Savior. It's the greatest thing we've got. It's the greatest gift we'll ever get. But we still fail him. He keeps shining. He keeps shining through our fellow Christians who point us to the truth that we know and that we constantly need to be reminded of. He gives us fellow Christians to remind us that God loves us no matter what we are going through. God will be with us. The God who loved us enough to give us his Son loves us enough to be with us as we go through hard things in this world. It's still darkness that we live in in a sense that it's a world that is ruined by sin. So there's heartache and hardship. Then there is the heartache and the hardship that we bring on ourselves because we fail our God even when we want to serve him, and we still fail him.

He comes with his Word. He comes with his Sacrament. He comes with these reminders from our fellow believers to tell us God loves you. He took away your sins in Christ. He opened heaven to you. He opened heaven to those you love that have faith living in their heart. That gives us this calm and this peace. It doesn't take away all our problems.

God promises the Savior, but the Israelites still had to endure the kingship of Ahaz. God has given us a Savior and given us faith, but we still have to endure life in this world. But now we do so with the confidence that no matter what happens, I'm going to go to be with my Lord forever. That's the truth of what Jesus accomplished.

It took the zeal of the Lord Almighty, because you and I could never do it. But the zeal of the Lord Almighty accomplished this, and the zeal of the Lord Almighty keeps shining this light into our hearts and into our lives day after day after day. The most amazing thing of all is that he uses people like you and me to reflect that light into the life of others. What a glorious task our God has given us - to point each other to the greatest gift we've ever received... forgiveness and salvation through the life and death of Jesus. It's ours tonight, tomorrow and every day of our lives because God kept his promise. That light shone in the darkness and that light continues to shine in the darkness. It brings to light for us this evening the joy that truly passes all understanding. Amen.