

Does it get any better than this?

Isaiah 9:2-9

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 2017

Does it get any better than this? Christmas has always been a favorite worship service for the church. Here we are Candlelight service for Christmas eve 2018. The 19th week after Pentecost doesn't have the same allure that the Christmas Eve Candlelight worship service has. The ambiance of the candlelight, the cool evening air, the familiar hymns that may have lullabies for us, it has a real romance to this service that makes it something special and beautiful. And then best of all, there is the message of Christmas. Jesus Christ is born. An angel told Joseph what the birth of Mary's firstborn son would mean for them. The angel told Joseph to name that child Jesus because he will save the people from their sins. The Angels told the shepherd what it meant as they were tending their flocks outside of Bethlehem, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people, today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you he is Christ the Lord, This will be a sign to you, You will find the bay wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. And then many more sang out Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests. Love, peace, joy for all people does it get any better than this?

Isaiah, 700 years before Christ was looking forward to Christmas. It was revealed to him by God how great and wonderful the birth of the Savior would be. Our section from Isaiah tonight starts of with a list of comparisons to the joy that someone gets from Christmas.

A people walking in the darkness have seen a great light.

If you have ever driven all night to get somewhere, and everyone else in the car has fallen asleep but you, or you are by yourself and you keep rolling down the windows to stay awake, and you are just doing your best to just keep going, and after a long dark night of staring at the dashboard lights, you watch the black sky turn blue, then gray, then that morning sun slowly lights up the sky, and gives you just a boost of wonderful energy. That little boost is joy. The night has gone, the day is here.

Imagine a people living in the darkness- a deep darkness. Not just a few hours, but Living in that, and now having A light in the middle of that darkness after a long time would certainly cause some joy.

Isaiah continues giving examples:

A nation who is celebrating its growth and power. Great Joy!

A farmer after the season of hard work is now counting the literal fruits of his labor!

Warriors dividing up the plunder

The contrast is what brings joy isn't it? No longer in the darkness, now we are in the light. The farmer isn't working the fields from dawn to dusk, now enjoying the fruit. No longer a warrior at war. Fighting, risking losing everything including your life. Now being victorious he is the one counting the spoils of it.

No longer slaves burdened and oppressed by a rod, but freed.

It's over. The struggle is over. The pain is over. The hardship and oppression, the grind, the suffering, it is all over. And the successor isn't nothing, it's joy. It's peace. It's happiness. It's freedom from all concern, worry, fear, shame, guilt, evil. It's perfection. It's so perfect that you aren't even worried about going back to anything imperfect.

Every warrior's boot used in battle
and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning,
will be fuel for the fire.

We no longer preparing for more battles, Burning our gear for war, because we have no need for it. Your coping mechanisms, your defenses against this world. Destined for burning. Why? Because of Christmas.

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.

That's Christmas. That's Jesus. That's why this day is so great. Because God's son was given to us. He was given to this world. And everything rests on him. He is in control of everything. The government will be on his shoulders. There is no power or authority that can claim sovereignty apart from Jesus. How great is it? How powerful is your God? How powerful is this little baby Jesus.

⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.

There is no end to his greatness. He isn't pretty great. He isn't exceedingly great. His greatness is without limit. His peace is more peaceful than any peace. And it will last forever.

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.

Joy and peace are promised to be yours forever.

Does it get better than this? It better. I love the Christmas eve service. I love the season of Advent. I love being reminded of the amazing love that God had for me. I look forward to talking about the life of Jesus. I am already looking forward to Easter when I get to proclaim to you how Jesus defeated death and the devil. And all of that is on the horizon for us during Christmas. The greatness and celebration of Jesus' life here on earth is all a part of this holiday.

If Jesus' name was Brian and he was born in some manger in Bethlehem and just lived an odd life being tormented by Romans, we wouldn't celebrate him year after year.

But because Jesus was the son of God. Christmas is worth celebrating. Look at everything he did. That's what Christmas helps us do. Look at everything that Jesus did for you. Look at how great his love is for you. Look at how God fulfilled his promise to send a Savior into the world. Look at Jesus. Look at what he was willing to do for you. He was willing to leave heaven and come down to this world and solve the problem of sin. Look at what God did for you. Hear about what God did for you.

Does it get better than this? It better. Because it's not perfect yet. There are still promises left unfulfilled. We still have use for those boots and garments of war. There is still a whole lot of darkness in this world. There are still a whole lot of people that have not yet seen the light of dawn and they are just living in the darkness.

There are still many nations on edge about war. Political tensions with countries wielding weapons of destruction unlike any age has ever seen. One nation increasing its power doesn't bring joy to the next.

Draughts and then wildfires. The events of this last year I am sure is leaving many Californian farmers wondering how they are going to keep the business going the next year, rather than rejoicing as they count the harvest from the last.

See if it doesn't get better than this. We are in trouble. It's nice to sing hymns. It's nice to be with family. It's nice to hear how God has kept promises in the past. But what makes

Christmas the best is knowing that God will never stop keeping his promises made to you. That all who believe in him will have ever lasting life. What makes Christmas the best isn't creating one perfect night of distraction from everything terrible going on in the world. It is being reminded. that it is going to get better than this. The promises that God makes to you is it is going to be better than this. We live in a world of sin, pain, disappointment, fear, war, evil. That's not what God intended and that's not the way it is going to stay. it is going to get better. It is going to happen when Jesus comes back and takes you and me and all believers to live with him forever in heaven.

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 will accomplish this.

When Christ returns, he will establish his kingdom forever. Forever. Without end. When it gets that good, we will never go back to this good, or good enough again. We will never leave perfection. We will be with Jesus and all believers forever. And do you know why that will happen. Because the zeal of the almighty Lord will accomplish this. That's what isaiah says. That's what the Holy Spirit says. That's what your God says to you.

I love Christmas and I hope you do to. the decorations and the cookies are good, and the traditions are great. I love the candles are wonderful , I love the hymns are beautiful, the community and family is great. But the best part about Christmas is the message that remind us how God always keeps his promises. How God always gives to us love that we don't deserve. How he showed that love through his son Jesus who was born in a stable many years ago. The best part about Christmas is this Christ child. Who lived a perfect life for you. Who sacrificed his life to give you an eternal one. Christ who still watches over you until the day when you are with him forever in heaven. That is the best part about Christmas. This Christmas is good, but it's to get a whole lot better once we get to heaven. Until we get there, this is good too. Amen