

I know I haven't seen very many Christmases in my life, but I don't ever remember one quite like this one. This seems to be a Christmas unlike any other. A time filled, unfortunately, with uncertainty. A time filled with even fear. Because after all, we have a government out there who's telling us over and over again that we shouldn't even meet for Christmas. They've been telling us that since Thanksgiving. And we have businesses that advertise these days about precautions that they are taking, as if [it was] a way to make us feel a little bit more at ease. But because it's everywhere around us, it seems like it just increases our uncertainty. And the world, of course, is full of uncertainty. The world is running in a panic, just worried completely sick because of what might happen. And it's very easy, unfortunately, in the midst of that environment for us even as Christians to give in to the same kind of fear.

But Christians, God comes to us this evening with a message of hope, a message of peace even in the midst of this uncertainty. And we hear that message the clearest in one of our readings from Isaiah chapter 9, where God says that to us a child is born, and to us a son is given. And some of the names by which he will be called include the Prince of Peace. He gives us peace. He gives us hope even in the midst of uncertainty.

Because this passage was originally written in a time also of great uncertainty, a time also of great fear. If you remember from the previous reading in Isaiah chapter 7, King Ahaz was afraid. He was afraid because he was facing a military alliance that was going to invade his kingdom. The northern kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Syria banded together, and they were threatening to invade the southern kingdom where Ahaz was. And Ahaz was wondering, "What's gonna happen? How could I possibly stand up against two different armies? It seems like the future is hopeless. Where am I supposed to turn for help in the midst of all of this?"

But you have to understand something here. Isaiah 9 was not written to comfort Ahaz. Ahaz was a godless man. He only really trusted in himself. He was really only looking out for himself. He wanted to find a solution all on his own. Isaiah chapter 9 was written to comfort a different group of people, people who were caught up in the midst of all of it. People who really didn't have any power whatsoever. The people who lived in the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the land of Galilee where Jesus would later live. This was the borderland in between the two countries. It was in this place that the war would be fought. It was in this place that they would see the most destruction. It was in this place, above all, that they felt the most hopeless, because what were they going to do with an army invading and with war being fought in their backyard? The future seemed so uncertain. They couldn't see hope in the midst of their fear.

Christians, do we also struggle with that same kind of thinking? That giving into this kind of fear, this uncertainty about what the future might hold? Because there's so much of it, unfortunately, that seems to be out of our hands, doesn't it? We seem to be losing our jobs. We seem to be suffering whatever the government tells us to do. And there doesn't ever seem to be an end to it. That's got to be the worst part of it. If it was something where it ended and we knew what it was going to end, maybe we could figure out how to deal with it. But because it seems like it's gonna go on and on and on and well into 2021 as well, it's very easy to feel uncertain, to wonder when is this all going to end.

But Christians, God spoke these words in Isaiah chapter 9 exactly for people wondering when things were going to come to an end. Because it says in Isaiah chapter 9 that "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shone. You have multiplied the nation. You have increased its joy." They could find hope. They could find joy because the Lord was going to bring an end to all of these things. The Lord was going to bring an end to the war. He was going to bring an end to the destruction. And so complete would be that end that they would never need weapons again. They wouldn't need armor. They wouldn't need to prepare for war, so they might as well just burn it in the fire. God was going to give them hope and peace in the midst of their troubles, so that no matter what happened the following day or in the next year, God would be with them always. And he was gonna take care of them too. And the promise that he made to them was that a child would be born. A Son would be given to them. And the government would be upon his shoulder. He would be the King of Kings, the king that they needed. Not Ahaz. Ahaz was just a man. But this king would go by many names: "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." And Christians, this king goes by another name too: Jesus Christ.

And so as we face our own uncertain futures, as we face our own fears, trying to figure out what's going to happen, we don't have to be afraid. We don't have to wonder, because God is our King. And no matter what happens to us in this life, God will be with us always. He is the one who brings us peace. He is the one who brings us joy. He is the one who is going to take care of us. And so no matter what happens, "To us a child has been born, to us a son has been given. And the government is upon his shoulder. And he shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." He is the one who is our peace even in the midst of these uncertain times. So even if we were to lose everything, absolutely everything in this life, we still have Jesus, and that's the most important thing of all. So let all these troubles come! It doesn't matter. God is our King. God lives, and because he lives, he will be with us always.

To him be the glory, now and forever. Amen.