

2014\_12\_10 Advent Midweek 2  
Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL  
Pastor David Pfeiffer

Midweek Advent Series:  
**WHAT CHILD IS THIS?**

*Isaiah Foretells A King*

1. A King Who Is "God with Us" – Isaiah 7:14 (12/3)
2. A King Who Rules with Justice – Isaiah 9:6-7 (12/10)
3. A King Who Is Righteous – Isaiah 11:5 (12/17)
4. A King Who Accomplishes Peace – Isaiah 11:6-16 (12/25)

**2. A King Who Rules with Justice**

Isaiah 9:6-7

(for context, read 9:1-21)

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***Isaiah 9:6-7***

*For unto us a Child is born,  
Unto us a Son is given;  
And the government will be upon His shoulder.  
And His name will be called  
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Of the increase of His government and peace  
There will be no end,  
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,  
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice  
From that time forward, even forever.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.*

In the name at which every knee shall bow, dear fellow children of God,

What words would you use to describe a new born baby? I can remember the feeling. A feeling of pure joy that visits a mother and father as they hold that new life, that new creature, that new future in their arms for the first time. Well, let me throw some words out there and you think about whether they seem to fit the description: staunch, mighty;

impressive; threatening; self-sufficient; powerful; victorious ... For me, holding a new born baby more likely brings to mind words like these: vulnerable; weak; unthreatening; needy; dependent; lowly; poor...

What child is this? What child is this that Isaiah describes with such powerful imagery? What child is this that we should describe him as “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”? What child is this to whom will be given the throne of David; who will establish it in judgement and justice not just for a time, but for eternity? Again this Wednesday we see Christmas through the eyes of Isaiah. But in order to see what Isaiah sees, we must stop looking and listen. With Isaiah we see by hearing; with Mary and the Shepherds we look into the manger with our ears; only then will we find the proper words to describe this King – a King who comes to rule with justice. “This, this is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sin. Haste, Haste to bring Him laud, the babe, the Son of Mary!”

If we were to rely strictly on what we see with our eyes, we would never find the words to describe God’s kingdom. For all we can see with our eyes, there is anything but justice in the world, in our lives. It leaves us at a loss for words.

What words come to mind if you were to describe life in this world? Peaceful; orderly; just; fair; honest; satisfying; righteous; joyful? These were hardly the words being expressed by protesters this last month. Instead they spelled out on a t-shirts in different words. “I Can’t Breathe.” If you’ve been following the news lately, you know the anger, the pain being felt – in the last month issues of racism and abuse of authority have stirred up protesters from coast to coast. In the Eric Garner case, video footage shows a white police officer putting a chokehold on the 43 year old black man, Eric Garner. He was selling cigarettes illegally. Until now; now he lay motionless on the ground – father of six, dead from a heart attack. People want justice, they cry for vindication. When a grand jury decided not to indict the NYPD officer, cries of “justice for Eric Garner” went up. They spelled it out on t-shirts; t-shirt which celebrities like Chicago Bulls point guard Derek Rose wore during warm ups; they spelled it out with the words of Eric Garner: “I Can’t Breathe.”

What are the words you would use to describe life in this world? Perhaps life in this world would be better described with words like these: war; strife; discord; dishonesty; unfairness; pain; corruption; loss; abuse; sorrow. Certainly not words like just and righteous.

We could use much the same words to describe life in the kingdom of Judah in the days of Isaiah. A corrupt king. Bribes and tributes; alliances and betrayals; Judah and Israel,

they are supposed to be brothers, they are all sons of Abraham; but they are act as enemies. They are at war with each other. Israel has turned away from its brother to other nations for help; they've allied themselves with Syria to the north, turning against their brethren in Judah to the south. And Judah is no better. They've turned to other nations too. King Ahaz of Judah himself has traveled up to the far northern kingdom of Assyria; there he seeks help from the ruthless and powerful king, Tiglath-Pileser III. King Ahaz goes to his knees before this foreign king in an attempt to form an alliance, turning against his brethren in Israel. But no one turns to the Lord.

What words will describe life in this world? What words will describe the kingdoms of this world? What words will describe your life in this world?

We've spelled it out in our minds too. I can't breathe. When someone is wronged, or someone wrongs us, we want to speak out about it; we wear it known to everyone; we wear it on our t-shirts: "I Can't Breathe!" Anger; pain – we feel it; and we look for a bad guy? There needs to be a bad guy. As long as I have a bad guy, then I know who to be angry at; where my pain comes from; whoever it might be that is the bad guy in your life. There is always someone at fault: for the war, the strife, the discord, the dishonesty, the pain, the corruption, loss, abuse, sorrows that we experience.

We've spelled it out in our own minds; played it out in our own hearts. We have a code; a code of conduct, that we expect others to live up to. But we better be careful what words we use. Israel and Judah were brothers, sons of the same father; yet they found themselves at war with each other; seeking help in all the wrong places; trying to gang up against each other. How often don't we treat our brother the same way? Maybe its a family member – a brother, sister, a parent or child, a husband or wife – when my brother ruins my art project that I spent all afternoon on, what words come to mind? Maybe its a fellow Christian – when my sister in Christ has been underhanded, gossiped behind my back, made me look bad and people just go along with it, what words come to mind? Maybe its an authority figure – a teacher or parent who seems to always favor the other kid over me, what words come to mind?

Anger; pain – we feel it and we look for a bad guy. Who will it be? The parent; the spouse; the brother; the police officer; is it God? Am I now ready to go to war; get revenge? What enemies will I employ to make things right, to get back what I deserve? But all the while, I'm turning out to be the bad guy. At what point do I realize that my anger, my bitterness have angered God; I've hurt God, wronged him, ignored him, abandoned him, accused him of things he never did, blamed him for things I myself have done? Where is the t-shirt to spell it out – "God can't breathe" ... "Christ is crucified" ... "Jesus has died at my own hands!"

It would bring darkness on the land. Ahaz led Judah in the north into darkness; King Pekah led Israel in the south into darkness. The kings of Judah and Israel have failed their people. They both reject the Messianic promise that God would be their Savior. As a result God would use the Assyrians and later the Babylonians against both; laying both kingdoms to ruin and bringing an end to the house of David's reign in Judah. No longer would a Judean king sit on the throne in Jerusalem. Isaiah writes of how they will pass through hard pressed and hungry to the point that they will be curse their own God. The coming centuries would be a time of trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish for Israel and Judah. Isaiah predicts how they would be driven into darkness.

God needs a new king. He needs justice to be carried out. He will tear the royal throne out of the hands of men and place a new king on the throne of David. And His justice will be unlike anything we've ever known. It will come in the places we least expect it. It will leave us at a loss for words.

*By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, In Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined. ... You have broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. (Isaiah 9:1–2,4).*

The day of Midian was a day where the darkness was smashed and light brought victory. And God did it without ever lifting a sword. He did it with pots and torches and just 300 men. They sneak through dark morning hours, under cover of darkness, they approach the valley where the Midianites have set up camp. The Midianites have joined forces with the Amalekites and were camped in the Valley of Jezreel. The book of Judges says they are as locust in the valley and their camels were as the sand on the seashore.

But the darkness would be smashed. In the dark morning hours, Gideon and his mighty men approached. Just 300. The Lord would allow no more. For this victory would be by God's power and not by numbers. Gideon instructs his men to cover their torches with clay jars. "Arise," He says, "for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hands." They crept over the hillside with nothing more than a trumpet and a torch in their hands. The Midianites are awoken to the sound of trumpets being blown and pots being smashed – and with a trumpet blast and jars smashed, the hill was illumined with the light of God's victory and they cried, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon." The Midianites were so alarmed and confused, that they began turning on one another, killing their own men in the darkness and the Israelites scattered them and drove them out. The day of Midian was a day where the

darkness was smashed and the light of God brought victory without ever lifting a sword.

This is God's kingdom. The darkness would be smashed with the light of God's victory. And Christ would do it without ever lifting a sword. God's justice would come without anyone lifting a sign of protest. Without ever lifting a sword God would smash the darkness and a light would dawn in the most unexpected of places. "By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, In Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined." (Isaiah 9:1-2).

God's justice is not like ours. His is hidden. His does not operate strictly on the basis of the law or riches or might; we do not know his kingdom by force or numbers or a great impression. Hidden in Galilee – a mixed country of foreign people, unbelievers and outcasts – as Nathaniel says, "Can anything good come out of Galilee. The same area occupied by Syria, ruled by other kings, forsaken by God himself, will become first dawn of God's rule in Christ Jesus. When it comes we are at a loss for words; we can only describe it as we would a baby – vulnerable; unthreatening; needy; dependent; lowly... For there God's kingdom is found, in a child. A child laid to rest in vulnerable flesh, unthreatening strips of cloth, a nursing mouth, a dependent future, a lowly feed trough. But in Him, God's justice appears.

*Nails, spear shall pierce Him through;*

*The cross He'll bear for me, for me, for you.*

*Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe the Son of Mary. WS 712:2*

God's justice is seen only in the cross, the resurrection, and the ascension. There the Son of God dies, and the Son of David becomes King. There we find God's kingdom; The king which Judah never had; the leader we've never had; the righteous servant which we've never been; the one who would give himself into our judgment and so free us from our injustices, our oppression to sin, our guilt.

Isaiah pictures it in its fullness. He sees Christmas not just in Bethlehem; but in Jerusalem; in the New Jerusalem; He sees it all – the kingdom which comes in Jesus Christ – an everlasting kingdom where Jesus will right every wrong and set His throne, the throne of David in our midst. He sees the new creation, God's zeal completed, a new world, with a new government – a place where there are no choke holds, where there are no protests, there are no arguments and discord, there are no lawbreakers, there is no death. This is the kingdom in which we put our trust; this is what we are waiting for.

Again this Wednesday we see Christmas through the eyes of Isaiah. But in order to see what Isaiah sees, we must stop looking and listen. We see it with our ears – “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” – This Jesus whom you’ve crucified, God has made both Lord and Christ. And he ascended into heaven, so that from that time forward; He would order and establish His kingdom with judgment and justice; from that time forward, even forevermore. He smashed the darkness and the hills of Judea were illumined with the light of God’s victory. And He did it without ever lifting a sword. “As in the day of Midan.”

And in seeing this, we finally find the words to describe Him; we know it not by force or might or numbers; but by the word which Jesus preaches and the promises He fulfills. So God’s justice is not known by what we see in the news or find in ourselves, but it is known by what we see with the ears and what we find in the manger. There God brings justice, by proclaiming the sinner not guilty; by justifying the ungodly and counting you a part of His eternal kingdom for the sake of His King; now you can breathe; now you can endure injustice; knowing that God’s kingdom comes when you believe. Now you have the words to describe this baby:

***Isaiah 9:6–7***

*For unto us a Child is born,  
Unto us a Son is given;  
And the government will be upon His shoulder.  
And His name will be called  
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Of the increase of His government and peace  
There will be no end,  
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,  
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice  
From that time forward, even forever.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.*