

Daily Devotional, December 1, 2021 From Our Darkness to His Great Light

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. 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. 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. Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. 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. Isaiah 9:2-6 (NIV)

This scripture is one we always associate with Advent. It's a prophecy of the birth of the Messiah. But as we read it, it's not really all that festive. We see a number of not very Christmassy references to battle, and the joyful division of plunder taken after a battle. We see the boots and garments of the vanquished used as fuel for a fire—not exactly a pine-scented candle on the fireplace mantle, is it? We think of the preparation for Christmas with lots of hustle and bustle and fun and carols and celebration, eggnog, and mistletoe. But here we read of people who live in deep darkness, waiting to see the light. We experience people shedding themselves of an oppressor and celebrating that oppressor's defeat. So what on earth does all of this have to do with Advent, we ask?

Most years, I notice that soon after Thanksgiving, people start calling me and other pastors I know, for time to talk. Around the Thanksgiving season, they come to the realization that this year is going to be hard. My family is not in a good place this year. We are grieving, or there's an illness, or a lost job, or a broken relationship. Things are not right; we are not in a very "Christmassy place" this year.

This brings me back to think of those people in the land of darkness, waiting to see the light. Advent is for people who are in trouble and in need of a Savior, people living in shadows and in trouble who are looking with deep longing for the Light of Salvation to shine. The good news is that the Light of Jesus is coming, no matter how broken or hurt we are. It doesn't matter that this is not the Advent we may have been hoping for in 2021. Nothing that wounds or darkens our lives will stop Jesus, our Messiah, our Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace from coming to us. Jesus understands darkness and has overcome it, both then and now. No matter the who or what the enemy is that is set out against us, no matter the grief, no matter the battles we've had to fight, Jesus our Light is coming to us. He was born to free the people in darkness.

I pray that you will keep walking in this hope and know that Jesus is coming to light our darkness, no matter how bleak it might seem.

Prayer: Blessed Lord, we pray that You will come to us as we are in darkness and under stress. Come to us, be our perfect king, our prince of peace. Come and pour Your light on all our sorrow, brokenness, joylessness and darkness. Thank you for coming to people like us, people who are in deep need. Help us to find true joy in You, joy that has nothing to do with superficial or manufactured festivity. We pray in glad anticipation, watching for the joy of Your light. Come Lord Jesus, Amen.