

Message Series: **'The Arrival'**
Message Title: **'The Promise'**
Scripture Source: **Isaiah 9:1-7**
Speaker: John Garner
Date: December 8, 2013

Promises, Promises...

Promises are weighty things. A promise kept is satisfying. A promise violated is disenchanting.

Promises touch every area of life, relational, ethical, physical, moral, financial and even spiritual. Can you think of a promise kept...or broken that has deeply affected you?

God makes promises too. This is amazing. God actually makes specific promises to real people like you and me. Promises that can infuse our hearts with hope. Consider just 2 such promises: Hebrews 13:5-6 and 1 John 1:9 Promises of God's presence, provision, and forgiveness. Promises that require our active cooperation with God along the way.

The Christmas season reminds us...including you of some of the most important promises God has ever made to humanity. Advent is a season rich with promise. Promises wrapped up in the Arrival of God's gift, Jesus. That's what we will explore and hopefully experience in very real ways this Christmas season.

What could the message of the Arrival of Jesus mean to you this Christmas? What does your soul hunger for? Can you be specific? This morning we want to reflect upon the 'why' behind the 'what' of God's promise. Next week we will look more closely at the Purpose of the Arrival.

Hope Shines in a Dark Place: Isaiah 8:11-9:7

The mood of 8:11-22 is bleak and dark. The air is heavy with hopelessness. God's people, the Jewish nation is in turmoil. The punishment of God is weighing upon them because of their recurring disobedience and faithlessness. The imagery of darkness is used to paint a somber picture of sin, despair, and breakdown. Spiritual confusion is rampant. People are angry and filled with fear, even at times blaming God for their self-inflicted woes. This picture actually was experienced in the 8th century in the land of Palestine. And it still is experienced in the 21st century...by people like you and me.

And then, one of the most grace-filled words: "Nevertheless..." In the midst of the gloom, the language of hope asserts itself. This is amazing. "Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress." What? God speaks a two-fold word of promise to people. A word for the original audience, a word that reassured them that captivity in a foreign land would not be forever, that liberation and return to the Promised Land would be experienced. AND...the greater and more far reaching promise was that of the birth of the Saviour who would make possible spiritual salvation.

A Closer Look at Hope: Isaiah 9:2

God provides 'light'...the infusion of truth, grace, and love that intersects with human frailty and potential. This darkness dispelling source of light is a Person...it's not more religion, or activities. No, it's a Person who will show them how to relate to God, to others, and in wise

and healthy ways in the flow of life. More on the Purpose of the Arrival next week! But let's look a little closer at the Person.

Vss.6-7 "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given..." This is amazing...to us, to you and me, in the midst of our darkness and confusion, God gave us the gift of His Son, Jesus.

What is He like and what will He accomplish? "He will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Jesus brings the potent and restoring mix of wisdom, tenderness, power, peace and leadership to...people like you and me, throughout the generations, crossing culture and customs. His Arrival was not mainly about starting in a certain place, but rather about transforming people, one at a time.

Quote:

Hope's Heartbeat

Why would God make such a promise? What was behind the gift of a Saviour?

Visionary love. John 3:16-17

God cares deeply about people, their plight and potential. He is passionate about people, including you.

Vs. 7 is highly instructive: "The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this." The word 'zeal' pulses with passion. God is emotionally engaged in this 'search and rescue mission.' Nothing or no one will stop him from providing a Saviour. Christmas is a celebration of God's passionate, powerful and purposeful mission.

Response: Yes, Maybe, No...What will it be today?

But, here is a huge question...are you open to God accomplishing His liberating mission in your right here, right now life? Are you wanting God's Promise to affect your life? Are you open to receiving and responding to God's gift of hope? Let Him know you are...even when it means bringing your doubts, questions, disappointments, and fears to the table. He is zealous for a relationship with you.

If we can help you understand more clearly, we are here. You may be a just a conversation short of a whole new understanding of God. Which reminds me...remember the 6 word exercise? Your 6 words to describe God...words or adjectives that express how you 'see' God currently. I encourage you to engage in this exercise as we reflect upon...the Arrival.

Between Sundays: Further Study, Reflection & Response
The Arrival – Week 1: The Promise—Isaiah 9:1-7
Sunday, December 8, 2013

Promises Matter

1. Is there a promise of God that has meant the world to you recently? Why is that?
2. Why are God's promises so important? How can they affect our daily living? Read 2 Peter 1:3-11
3. What are some of the conditions we need to meet to experience the fulfillment of God's promises? For example, what condition is laid out in 1 John 1:9?

Dark Places...Bright Hope

4. Read through Isaiah 8:11-22. What adjectives would you use to describe what is happening? According to God, why have things gone 'haywire' for the Jewish nation?
5. Don't you love the word, 'nevertheless' in Isaiah 9:1? What does that word signify and mean to you?
6. What is at the heart of God's promise in vss.1-3? Read also John 1:1-14, John 8:12
7. Why is the imagery of 'light' so prevalent in Scripture? Can you locate other Scriptures that speak of spiritual light?

What's In A Name?

8. Isaiah 9:6. Re read this verse and ask yourself, what Name given to Jesus do I need to experience more fully, now? And...why?
9. What is behind the promise of God with the gift of Jesus? Isaiah 9:7

I like the phrase...'visionary and passionate love.' God loves you and His power can make a transforming difference in your life.

In what area(s) of your current life do you need to experience his love and power? Be as specific as you can be!

A Tip: Use a good Study Bible in your personal 'between Sundays' engagement. If we can help you pick one, please talk with us!