

The Provision of God (and our helplessness)

Dec.16, 2018

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Joy to the World

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship.)

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing (2x)
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found (2x)
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods,
Rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy (2x)
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love (2x)
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

Icebreaker

Name a song you wish you could sing perfectly and why?

Text for Discussion: Isaiah 7:10-14;9:1-7

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

During this advent season we are studying the words of the prophet and poet Isaiah. In previous weeks, we have looked at the majesty of God (and our smallness) as well as the holiness of God (and our uncleanness). This week, we are considering the provision of God (and our helplessness). We see this in the story of King Ahaz and the choices he made in the midst of terrible circumstances.

Ahaz ruled Jerusalem at a time when his people were threatened by several larger, stronger enemies. He agonized over whether to fight them or to submit. Isaiah comes to him, pleading for him to trust the Lord through these dark times, rather than to give up his kingdom. Instead, Ahaz decides to trust a king other than God for his salvation, befriending his biggest enemy. He submits; a choice meant to assure he could keep some of what he loved... which would ultimately have disastrous consequences for his people.

Are we all that different in when faced with hardship? Each of us experiences moments when our obedience to God clashes with our worldly instincts – when yielding to Jesus can feel nearly impossible. We know what God is calling us to do, but it's too scary to trust. We would rather stay in control than surrender to a God whose will and ways we cannot know for certain. And so, like Ahaz, we take our fear and insecurity and sin... and we lay them at the feet of something other than our loving Father. Something inferior. Something worldly and finite. In making these decisions, we demonstrate what we trust... not realize that what we trust is what we ultimately worship.

What does Jesus say about how we should react to such adversity? *“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you”* (Matt 6:31-33).

Jesus calls us to seek and act according to the will of God, to ally ourselves entirely with His purpose. This call to discipleship means that lesser (though legitimate) concerns must give way to the pursuit of our Father. We are told that by putting the first thing first, God will take care of the rest. In Biblical times, the sea was seen as a place of chaos and disorder. But God knows our fears and the turbulent areas of our lives, and He will calm those waters. We know this because our good Father gave us a Redeemer. Though our journey through this world may be tumultuous, we know it will end in victory because the victory has already been won. “For to us a child is born.”

Jesus, our Wonderful Counselor... our Mighty God... our Everlasting Father... our Prince of Peace. May we in this time of advent seek His wisdom and His will, that we might wholeheartedly depend on Him for our provision, worship Him as our Mighty God, resting in Him as our Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

What is the significance of each name used for the Son that was to be given: Wonderful Counselor – Mighty God – Everlasting Father – Prince of Peace?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- What does the Lord invite Ahaz to do and how does Ahaz respond to the invitation?
 - What is Ahaz revealing about himself by his response?
 - What Ahaz moments (when you are tempted to trust yourself more than God) occur in your heart most often?
- What sign did the Lord give to Ahaz?
 - Who is this sign for? How do we know?
 - Where is this mentioned in the New Testament?
- What is the significance of each name used for the Son that was to be given: Wonderful Counselor – Mighty God – Everlasting Father – Prince of Peace?
 - What do each of these names mean to you and your life personally?
- Discuss how our love for Jesus, Immanuel (and his love for us) affects how we process insecurity, comfort, power, and expectations.
- What encourages you in this passage? What challenges you?

Prayer

As you prepare your heart for this advent season, pray that you would experience Jesus as your Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace and all that each name means. Pray that you would rest in and trust Him more.

Experiment of the week

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

Step away from social media for the rest of the season and step toward family and Jesus, who was born ruler of all. By grace and by choice, live in specific ways that reflect the Lord's will, ways, counsel, might, love, and peace.