

A Light has Dawned, Isaiah 9:1-7

The Light Before Christmas #2

◆ **Intro:** The theme song for the film *Cruella* tells us right up front that Ms. de Vil was "born to be bad." Estella Miller is a creative child with a talent for fashion but also a cruel streak, leading her mother Catherine to nickname her "Cruella." She lives a life of struggle between good and bad. In fact even her hair, was half black, and half white from birth. After a tragic series of circumstances Estella finds herself an orphan on the streets of London. She tries to be good, but when she begins working for fashion legend Baroness von Hellman, she embraces her wicked side and descends into the raucous and revenge-bent Cruella. The chorus to the theme song reads:

Call me crazy, call me insane/But you're stuck in the past

And I'm ahead of the game

A life lived in penance, it just seems a waste/ And the devil
has much better taste

And I tried to be sweet, I tried to be kind/ But I feel much
better now that I'm out of my mind

◆ Estella had experienced great darkness. And so her counter part, Cruella, struggles on with the choice between darkness and light. I wonder if you ever feel torn between the dark and the light. There are lots of kinds of darkness. Anxiety. Depression. Cancer. Recession. Market crashes. I'm guessing everyone here could name some kind of "darkness" if asked.

◆ **1. But the worst kind of darkness is the darkness inside of us.** Fredrick Buechner comments on darkness.

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"If darkness is meant to suggest a world where nobody can see very well -either themselves or each other, or where they are heading or even where they are standing at the moment; if darkness is meant to convey a sense of uncertainty, or being lost, or of being afraid; if darkness suggests conflict, conflict between races, between nations, between individuals each pretty much out for themselves when you come right down to it; -then we live in a world that knows much about darkness. Darkness is what our newspapers are about. Darkness is what most of our best contemporary literature is about. Darkness fills the skies over our town. If we are people who pray, darkness is apt to be what our prayers are about. If we are people who do not pray, it is apt to be darkness that has stopped our mouths."

◆He's right you know. Our shows are mostly about darkness. Can you imagine a show called "How to Get Away with Mercy"? Can you imagine your news app filled up with stories of kind things people in Washington have said about other people in Washington?

◆Cruella had an inner darkness, just as Israel had a darkness in Isaiah's day.

◆v2 Her darkness was not just the nation of Assyria invading her, but that it was on account of her own sin, that they were coming. They were about to be invaded, and yet Isaiah speaks of a "great light".

◆The story of Advent is that a **light** has dawning, actually stepped down *into* darkness and begun to do something about it. Our

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theme this Advent is light, as you may recall. Last week we saw that the Apostle John uses the term to mean God's creative power, as well as his moral authority in life. Today we'll look at another image represented by light: deliverance. It's a hopeful image. We say things like, "He stepped out of the shadows and into the light". Or "Shed some light on the subject." meaning "solve or deliver us from the problem."

◆**2. Advent signals that God's light has dawned!** It is no small thing for a Hebrew prophet to tell of a coming ruler who would be "Almighty God". That's not the way a Hebrew would ever talk so it had to sound a bit strange. Every Hebrew knew that humans were not God. That there was only one God, the maker of all things. Yet this coming child would be called Almighty God, and Everlasting Father (v6)? How weird is that? Isaiah said this man-God would establish a peace without end, and reign forever (v7). This is no ordinary person of whom Isaiah speaks. To reign forever one must first be able to live forever. Advent proclaims that the Savior coming was no ordinary man and that is our hope.

◆ The "child" was to inherit David's throne, but he was clearly more than an ordinary human. This is eternally significant, you know. The New Testament makes clear that Isaiah was speaking of Jesus. In the book of Luke, an Angel tells the virgin Mary that she would bear a son, who would be named Jesus, God will give

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him David's throne, it will last forever, and he will be the Son of God. (Lk.1:30-35). Consider the significance!

◆Jesus, fully man, can take our place because he is one of us.

Romans 8:3-4 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us.

◆And Jesus, fully God as well, has the power to regain life after the death punishment our sin gave him. No other creature will do to make us right in the sight of God. No other religion is needed. No other project needs doing. If you are Christ's your destiny is secure. Your future is set. Your hope is eternal. The light has dawned. The dark has been pierced.

◆C. Maybe there are times you wonder if there's really any hope for you at all. Your guilt convinces you that you're hopeless. That there's really no point in trying. For example, If you are like me, you may know a truth and in part believe it, or at least think you believe it. Say, the command to not take revenge and leave that in God's hands. And to not repay evil for evil. (Rom.12:17-19). But then someone fouls you in the game, and it really ticks you off. So you watch for the chance to get even. And when you do you feel a rush of deep satisfaction with yourself. You *like* that feeling! You see? At that moment do NOT believe God's way. And so, you are torn between black on one side and white on the

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other. You want them both but they are inconsistent. For another scenario, let's imagine that we know that God says to honor the marriage bed, that all sex outside the marriage of one man to one woman is forbidden and destructive to mankind. You may very well acknowledge that God says this, and *want* to follow God, but at the same time you desperately disagree with him over sexual freedom! And so it follows that you do NOT believe God in this instance. And you are positive the other way is better. What do these examples show us except what Isaiah says in another place; we are nowhere near as righteous as we think. For all our good intentions we cannot be what we must.

◆ *Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

◆ Advent proclaims hope to you! There is a Prince, and the government *will be* on his shoulders. And we can get in on that! The good news is that you and I don't not *have* to forever carry the guilt of vacillating back and forth between black and white, between darkness and light, between obedience and failure because God is not fair; he's forgiving! It can now never be too late to start over. A light has dawned with the birth of Christ. As Peter put it:

◆ *The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might*

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give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. Acts 5:30-31

◆ Notice he called him Prince, as in Prince of Peace maybe? When your conscience accuses you again of failing and of choosing the wrong path, you have a solution. You can repent, and God will forgive you because of Christ. A light has dawned and it will never go out.

◆ "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace. Micah 5:2-5

◆ You cannot be your own peace. But he can.

◆**3. In Christ the Light has dawned, but just you wait until high noon!** Christians, like the nation of Israel before them, are essentially people in waiting. Jesus has already brought his Kingdom, but it is not yet complete.

◆A. Isaiah's vision was that what was started would also come to fruition. God gives Isaiah a glimpse into the future and he sees...
v2 *a light has dawned.* That's the beginning of a day, right?

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That's sunrise. But it's not high noon yet, is it? The whole day has yet to pass. Paul says the same kind of thing to the Christians of the First Century:

◆*"The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light."* Romans 13:11, 12, NIV.

◆What can he mean? I thought the Day had come with Jesus' birth! Is the Day still on the way? Good question. Hold that thought.

◆v6 *for to us a child is born.* That's the beginning of a life, right? But there's still more coming, isn't there? A child must still grow up before he takes a job, or a throne. But this Child will, says Isaiah. He will. He sees into the future that Jesus' Kingdom is already, but not yet. Let me explain.

◆*When* Isaiah sees his vision, Israel is not out of the woods. They are still to suffer at the hand of Assyria for their rebellion against God. And then they'd go into exile after that. And the land of Israel would change hands next to the Persians, and then Babylonians, and then the Greeks, and finally the Romans who in the first century would eradicate the nation of Israel completely. But Isaiah had seen the future. A child was to be born that will change everything. Someday the nation will finally not change hands yet again. World powers would not trade places any

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longer. Darkness would be driven out of human life altogether.

This was where world history was headed.

◆**B.** But what the prophets couldn't know was that the Prince of Peace would come a second time, not to pay for sins, but to finish establishing his Kingdom.

◆*Hebrews 9:28. so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

◆In fact, every book of the New Testament refers to the second coming of Christ (what advent is really about) except for the two short notes we call 2 John and 3 John.

◆**C.** Ok, what does this all mean for us? In a way we live between two monumental Days: the two comings of Christ. It's like those who lived and died between D-Day and V-Day during WW2. In June 1944 the Allied forces landed on the beaches of Normandy, France. That was D-Day. At great cost they knocked a hole in Hitler's "Atlantic Wall" and began the march to Berlin. On that day the outcome of the war was decided. And yet, the war lasted another eleven months. During those months the people of Europe that lived in Nazi-occupied territory suffered more than ever before. But on May 5, 1945 those left were free. That was V-Day. Victory Day.

◆Well friends, the first Advent, the world was invaded by the Son of God. That was D-Day. God had come to the beaches

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of humanity and established a foothold like never before. Demons could not stand up to him. Death was not his overcomer. Leprosy left when he touched you and blind eyes saw light at his spoken word. He knocked a hole in the grave. Now human history is marching toward V-Day. We are in the 11 months! You need to ask yourself, "Which army will you fight on?"

◆**Conclusion:** Do you feel darkness in your world? Do you feel it in yourself? Are you sometimes disappointed in yourself, that you can't seem to do the right thing? Do you sometimes wonder if you are Estella or Cruella? Are you longing for light? Take heart my friend, Advent reminds us V-Day is on the way. And when it comes it will be worth every moment, every tear, every renewed effort, every loss, every question, every renewed repentance. All cooperation with the enemy is a losing battle. Surrender and switch sides if you must! And then keep fighting. Keep cooperating with the winning kingdom. Keep repenting and starting over. This Prince forgives! The knowledge of Christ's first coming is your energy to wait and work toward the second. There is a Prince of Peace. He has come and the Kingdom is here. And he will come again to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.