



Luther on Isaiah:

In the kingdom of Christ there is grace, comfort, forgiveness of sins, joy, peace. He does not deal with the transgressor in sternness, but as a father. The forgiveness of sins is justification, and peace follows justification. This peace is not only peace of mind but also plenty and soundness of mind and good health of the body. Such is the reign of Christ: It is extended by killing; it is fertilized by the blood of the believers; and the more distress there is, the more peace grows in the heart.

—Luther's Works, Vol. 16; 101.

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Around the Word Bible Study Advent, 2015

Isaiah on Christmas Isaiah 9:2-7

Introduction: The entire Old Testament is waiting for the Child promised to Adam and Eve, the Seed who would crush the head of the serpent (see Genesis 3:15). In Isaiah 7 we were promised the virgin *conception* of the Messiah. In chapter 9 we are given the great news of that Child's birth. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given" (Isaiah 9:6). His birth is the gift of light, joy, and peace.

Opening: Psalm 96:7-13

⁷Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the | peoples,*
ascribe to the LORD glo- | ry and
strength!

⁸**Ascribe to the LORD the glory | due his
name;*
bring an offering, and come in- | to
his courts!**

⁹Worship the LORD in the splendor of | holiness,*
tremble before him, | all the earth!

¹⁰**Say among the nations, "The LORD
reigns! Yes, the world is established; it
shall nev- | er be moved;*
he will judge the peoples with |
equity."**

¹¹Let the heavens be glad, and let the | earth rejoice,*
let the sea roar, and all that fills it; ¹²let the
field exult, and every- | thing in it!

**Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for
joy ¹³before the LORD, | for he comes,*
for he comes to | judge the earth.**

He will judge the world in | righteousness,*
and the peoples in his | faithfulness.

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;
as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

Read Isaiah 9:2-7.

What images do you see? What contrasts (light/darkness; war/peace) do you notice in the text?

Read Matthew 4:12-17. How does St. Matthew understand the prophecy of Isaiah? How is it fulfilled?

**v. 2, "The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light..."**

The contrast of light and darkness runs throughout the Scriptures.

Luther, "So then the people of the whole world, Jews as well as Gentiles, were in darkness, that is, in error, unrighteousness, notions, a false understanding of the Law, etc. Light is the Gospel, the gift of the Holy Spirit." (LW 16:97)

See John 1:5. Who is the light who comes into the world?

v. 3, "the harvest... the spoil"

Isaiah uses the pictures of harvest field and the battle field to capture the joy and rejoicing of the day of the Messiah's birth.

See Psalm 4:7 for a similar use of the joy of harvest.

v. 4, "yoke... staff... rod"

The Lord is breaking all the instruments of slavery and oppression.

Luther: "Yoke means death, staff means a prod, sin. Rod is the Law, "the power of sin" (1 Cor. 15:56). This description is certainly contrary to all experience, since all laws ought to be the power and motivation of righteousness. But without the Law sin is dead and weaponless. The Law brings it about that there is sin, that it has power, and that it acts (Rom. 7:8). What does it accomplish? Death. There are therefore three strong tyrants: the Law, sin, and death." (LW 16:98)

Compare the yoke in this verse to the yoke Jesus talks about in Matthew 11:30. What's the difference?

Compare the rod and staff in this verse to the rod and staff taught in Psalm 23:4. What's the difference?

v. 5, "...burned as fuel for fire"

The instruments of war will not be needed. Jesus brings peace. See Isaiah 2:4 for the famous

image of the people changing their swords and spears into farming instruments.

v. 6, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...”

Christmas in Isaiah! This verse is why the Lord’s Church reads this text at the Christmas Midnight service. The first thing to notice in this verse is the “to us.” This Child is born for us. Compare this to the angel’s preaching to the shepherds in Luke 2:11, “For unto you is born...” How does the “to us” of this verse comfort us?

“the government shall be on his shoulders.”

See Matthew 28:19–20. How do these two verses relate?

“His name shall be called...”

Here we have five beautiful names given to the Son of God.

“Wonderful”

The wonder of Jesus is His kindness and grace.

Luther: “The kingdom of Christ is beyond grasp, reason, and experience. Here the flesh must be put to death with all its wisdom and judgment, and it must be grasped only by faith. We must believe that Christ’s righteousness is ours. Reason wants to lean only on its own righteousness, not on someone else’s. We *believe* life, glory, righteousness, and peace but on the contrary *feel* death, shame, sin, and trouble.” (LW 16,100–101)

How is Jesus’ name “Wonderful” connected to faith?

“Counselor”

Jesus preaches. He gives us His Word, and this is a word of comfort. See John 6:68–69. What is the result of Jesus’ words and council to us?

“Mighty God”

This title teaches that Jesus will be both a man “unto us a child is given” and God. Jesus is true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and true man, born of the virgin Mary. What a wonderful text to rejoice in the second great mystery of our faith, the incarnation of the Son of God.

There are those who deny that Jesus is God. How would you use this verse to prove that He is, in fact, God and man?

“Everlasting Father”

Luther: “This, then, indicates the work and business of this King, not His Person. This name fits no one else. He always increases His reign, He always begets children and rules over them, He

always remains the Father, He does not assume the role of tyrant, His children are always His beloved. This is beyond question the most delightful kingdom.” (LW 16, 101)

According to Luther, how is Jesus the everlasting Father? How does this give us comfort and peace?

“Prince of Peace”

Jesus is the prince of peace because He died for our sins. See Romans 5:1. How do we have peace with God? How did the Prince of Peace win this peace for us?

v. 7, “the throne of David”

God promised David that his descendant would be the Messiah (See 2 Samuel 7:11–16, Psalm 9:1–4, Matthew 22:41–42) and that the Messiah would sit of David’s throne forever. Read Acts 2:30–32. How did Jesus keep the promise that He would sit on David’s throne forever?

How is this a comfort to us? (See Ephesians 1:16–23)

Closing Hymn & Prayer: Savior of the Nations, Come

4. From the Father forth He came
And returneth to the same,
Captive leading death and hell--
High the song of triumph swell!



5. Thou, the Father's only Son,
Hast o'er sin the victory won.
Boundless shall Thy kingdom be;
When shall we its glories see?

6. Brightly doth Thy manger shine,
Glorious is its light divine.
Let not sin o'ercloud this light;
Ever be our faith thus bright.
—*The Lutheran Hymnal*, 95; st. 4–6

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