

Title: For to us!
Text: Isaiah 9.6a
Theme: The amazing promise of salvation
Series: Advent 2024 1 of 3
Prop Stmt: God has given us indisputable evidence as to why we must trust Him alone in this uncertain and dangerous world.

We love little life hacks that help us accomplish tasks or accomplish them easier than before. God's Word lays out the greatest life hack there. We live in an unstable and dangerous world. We do not have a hack or a formula that can change the world and make it stable and safe. However, God has given us indisputable evidence as to why we must trust Him alone in this uncertain and dangerous world. He alone is our certainty and our safety. In these 3 Sundays before Advent, I want to drill down on one of the amazing promises of the coming of Christ.

Read Text:

Isaiah was a prophet of God to the southern kingdom of Judah during the reigns of 4 kings (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah). His writings reflect the rise and fall of empires and kingdoms as the world was changing before his eyes in fulfillment of things that other prophets like Joel, Amos and Hosea had preached and written about. By the time we get to chapter 7, the southern kingdom of Judah is in the middle of a crisis. The drumbeat of war is pounding on the horizon. Judah's neighbor to the north was Israel. Israel had joined forces with Syria and they were threatening to invade Judah in order to force Judah to join forces with them in order to stop the monstrous Assyrian empire from swallowing them whole, like it had done to many others. This world is unstable and dangerous. It has been this way for thousands of years and will be this way until the return and reign of Christ. Throughout the centuries of time, the world has always been marked by controversy over Israel and the Jews. The reason for that is clear. In fact, there are a couple of reasons.

1) God used Judah (southern kingdom) as an illustration of his relationship with this world.

God focuses the spotlight of history on Judah so we can learn about the nature of God, and his plans for not only Judah, but the entire world. The OT is like a microscope that focuses in on them, while the NT is like a wide-angle camera that opens up and reveals that God relates with all people. In spite of all that God does for Judah, most of the people reject his authority. The fact is there is only a minority of true believers who are part of the children of Israel. As Paul said in Romans, "*not all Israel is Israel.*" That is so true today. Genuine Christianity is not the majority. We are the minority. The true gospel is offensive and is therefore rejected by many who pride themselves on being religious. So, as we look at God's relationship with Judah, we see patterns that are born out and explained in the NT. Sprinkled throughout the OT, there are hints of this. One is in 9.1, where Isaiah refers to the region of Galilee as "*Galilee of the nations*" and he says this in a hopeful way. It is a rather amazing statement because the nations that

were in Galilee at the moment, were the enemies of the people of God. Obviously, God had something else planned.

2) **Behind Judah's circumstantial crisis was her spiritual crisis.**

Judah was facing a crisis from which there was no escape. Military and political events occupy the history books. In reality, these are just surface issues. God's Word mentions military and political issues from time to time, but the weight of God's Word is on the hearts of the people. Underneath the circumstances are the real issues. God ordains pressure in circumstances to get our attention about the real issues of our hearts. But that is so difficult for us to grasp. We want relief from the pressure of the circumstances and God wants you to trust him.

Some of you are facing some very serious pressures and you are crying out to God for rescue. Your pressures are real and the consequences of them are in some cases overwhelming, but there is a greater need that you need to realize. Your spiritual need is infinitely more serious than any circumstantial need. It is kind of God to allow us to experience pressure that we may lean harder upon him.

Ahaz is king of Judah. He is facing a threat from the north. In chapter 7, God offers King Ahaz a way out, but he is so proud and so blind that he will not take it. He would rather face destruction than trust in God. This pitiful excuse for a king, whose spineless, heartless, witless and godless form slinks and squats on the throne of Judah is a massive insult to the name of David, whose blood, inexplicably flows in his veins. But infinitely worse than that is the fact that Ahaz is a despicable offense to God. His unwillingness to humble himself before God has resulted in policies that will doom his people. It is sad enough to watch someone's life self-destruct, but when that person is in a position of leadership in a home, a church, a company, or a government it is even more distressing as the collateral damage can wipe out so many others who are caught up in the rippling demise.

Ahaz is a preview of much of the world in Revelation 16. The judgments of God against rebellion are designed to bring repentance, but while heat can soften butter, it hardens clay. Three times in that chapter the nations are described as refusing to repent in spite of judgment they experience. This was Ahaz and part of Judah in Isaiah's day. At the end of Isaiah 8, Ahaz is deliberately leading the people of Judah into distress, darkness and the gloom of anguish. In spite of the consequences, like being hungry and vulnerable, many of the people will not respond with humility, confession and repentance, but will be enraged at God to the point where 8.22 says, that *"they will be thrust into thick darkness."* Here is the reality, the historical, personal and pitiful reality of attempting to live life without regard for God. But, while this part of the story is dark, and the violence and destruction is real, it is not the final chapter. Into this darkness, into this hopelessness, into this crisis of pathetic, boastful and incompetent leaders, into this confusion and chaos, God comes! God interrupts history! Up to this point every leader has been a let down. Every plan has been a disappointment. Every promise of man has failed. Hearts are hard, spirits are calloused, attitudes are cynical. Everyone, it seems is in it for himself. The darkness of life is so thick, you can feel it. It weighs upon you. It is like a dampness that

makes your bones cold and your heart shiver. It is stifling and suffocating. It chokes out hope. It crushes the optimistic. This darkness is relentless and there is no way out. But those people who walked in darkness, who have gone their own way, made up their own rules, cursed their own lives, refused counsel, refused wisdom, on them, on these undeserving, unappreciative, desperately needy people, a light has dawned! This darkness, this cycle of tragedy, of sin and consequence, of rebellion and judgment, of greed and demise is a room without doors and windows and appears to be without any escape. But, into this darkness a light, a Great Light shines! Isaiah 9.2a. *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.”*

1. **God’s promises are intriguing and certain.** (1-2)

A. **Intriguing** (1)

“Galilee of the nations” When Isaiah made this prophecy, the region of Galilee (the region immediately west of the Sea of Galilee) was in the Northern Kingdom. Galilee of the nations would have made no sense, but here in v.1 Isaiah uses this phrase as part of a promise of hope. How could Galilee becoming international in his orientation be a positive thing for Israel? It is not until Matthew 4 do we realize the significance of this. Jesus uses Galilee (Capernaum in particular) as the base of his ministry and he is the one the is responsible for the message of the gospel going into all the world and bringing good news to Jews and Gentiles.

We are going to spend eternity discovering over and over how God accomplishes his plan in ways that amaze us and, in the moment confound us. God is in the details. The arrest of John the Baptist was the occasion for Jesus to withdraw from Judea and go into Galilee. God uses all events, even the hard ones, to fulfill his promises. That means that for the follower of Christ, there is no such things as meaningless suffering.

B. **Certain** (2)

God’s promises are so certain, you can view them as if they have already come about. Look at the verb tense in this verse. The people who walked (past) have seen (perfect) a great light; those who dwelt (past) ...on them has light shined (perfect). From Isaiah’s perspective this event is in the future, but he writes of the future in the perfect tense. That is, he writes of the future with such certainty that it is as if these future events have already happened. It is that certain. As dark as the darkness is (and it is dark) the advent of the light, the dawning of the light, the coming of the light is certain!

Romans 8.28-30 example

At the end of chapter 8 Ahaz and the people were going to fortune tellers trying to determine what was going to happen. Look at 8.19, and notice how “revelations” of the mediums and necromancers are described. They (what?) “chirp and mutter.” It sounds mysterious. It sounds impressive. It is unintelligible. What does God do? In 8.1 God tells Isaiah to write down God’s

promise on a billboard using common characters. Make it big! Make it easy to read! Make it so they cannot miss it! That is what God does. He goes on record over and over to tell you what is going to happen. Only God can guarantee the future and He does! God not only guarantees the future, but this promise reveals that God guarantees that he has a rescue plan. Only God can provide the way out. The result of this will be joy for those who believe. (3)

The next 3 verses (4, 5, 6) begin with “for.” There are 3 reasons why your joy in God is guaranteed and why your joy is only safe in God. This first one is in verse 4 which tells us that only God can defeat your enemy. He can and he will. The second one is in verse 5 that says that only God can stop all war and he will. Verse 5 describes a time when all of the boots and uniforms for soldiers are rounded up and used as fuel for fire because they will no longer be needed. We are going to look at the 3rd reason why your joy and security is safe in God and only safe in God. Throughout this text, Isaiah is piling promises onto this growing mountain of evidence that proves that God and God alone is worth trusting in. God has given us indisputable evidence as to why we must trust Him alone in this uncertain and dangerous world.

2. God is for us. (6a1)

The gift is to us. The promised gift of a child is set forth as proof that God is for us and that we can trust him to make good on his promise to make things right. Notice how the text says, “For TO US a child is born, and then again, TO US a son is given. When the angel appeared to the shepherds in the field outside of the Bethlehem on the night that Christ was born, the angel echoed this idea when he said, *“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.”*

God never abandoned his promises to his people. Even though Ahaz was an abysmal failure as king and was dragging Judah into a terrible place, God was going to carry out his plan. While he judged Ahaz for his rebellion and it probably seemed to the people that God had abandoned them, it was not the case. God was going to make good on his promise to rescue his people because God is for us. This promise in Isaiah 9.6 is fulfilled in Christ in a way that should remove all doubt. Isaiah says that this child, this son is given to us. The angel fills in the blanks by saying that this child who is born is Savior. This king is Savior. Your God is Savior. Your God who is for you, has come to save.

Let’s pull off to the side of the road and think about this for a bit. Have you ever had someone talk to you for a half an hour or longer and all they do is talk about themselves? They have no idea how self-focused they are. They go on and on about themselves and when the conversation is over, they think that you guys are really good friends. But they don’t know you and they really don’t care to know you and maybe they really don’t know how to be a friend. That defines what many relationships are like in this world. Do what the other people want you to do for them, but do not expect them to care about you or help you. Helping you is inconvenient to them, but you helping them is convenient for them. They only call when they want something. You are a utility friend. They want you as a friend because you have something

they want or need. Friendships like this lack depth and security because the glue of self-promotion is not very sticky.

Think about this. You have nothing that God needs. You don't have a cabin up north that God would like to borrow, or a truck that he needs to move some furniture, or a snow blower that he needs to clean his driveway, or a timeshare that he would like to borrow for a family vacation. You don't have a company where he needs a job, or connections that he needs to expand his business. He does not need your brains, your brawn, or your good looks to make him look better than what he is. God does not need us. God has no holes that he is looking to us to fill. God does not need cheap labor. God is all glorious and is perfectly satisfied as God. The fact that God is for us is exactly and purely that. Pure gold is 24karat gold. 9karat gold is nine parts gold to fifteen parts other metals mixed in. 18k gold contains 75% gold and 25% other metals, but 24k gold is pure gold. God is pure goodness. He is for you for the simple fact that God has chosen to place his love upon you. One of the proofs of that is that God came to us as one of us.

3. **God comes as one of us.** (6a2)

When you doubt God, what does that sound like in your soul? What are the accusations that your internal prosecuting attorney is charging in the courtroom of your heart? We tend to accuse God of 3 overlapping faults. 1) He is not really good. 2) He doesn't understand what I need. 3) He messed up and fell asleep at the switch.

This text goes after each of those. Point 2 already addressed how good God is. He is for us. God promised that one would come for us and Christ did that. The second accusation, that God doesn't really understand what I need or what my life is like is now addressed by the how God came to us. He came to us as a child. He came to us a son. This is fascinating. Only God can stop the enemy (v.4) and only God can stop all war (v.5), but here, the God who is for us and comes to rescue is comes as a child. In fact, he comes as a son. This can only mean that God comes to us as one of us. The implications of this are massive even as they are amazing. The fact that God took upon himself our humanity and actually lived our life means that he completely understands our needs. Jesus knows all about your struggles. He experienced your humanity completely. At the same time, since it was the first human, Adam who sinned and in rebelling against God as our representative, we have all lived with the consequences of his rebellion. It was the human race that sinned and has continued to sin. Therefore, the human race has to bear the consequence and pay for the sin. But how? We need a Savior who is outside of us because we are too sinful to save ourselves while at the same time we need a Savior who is one of us so that the human race could pay the penalty it had incurred. God came as a child, and a son. Notice how that second line ends. *"to us a son is given."* God gave his Son to you and for you. What other evidence do you need to trust him? Finally,

4. **God saves us, but not as we imagine.** (6a3)

God is not committed to rescuing you by changing your circumstances. God's rescue starts with your heart. He does not rescue like we imagine. He has never been like that. It is a pattern that goes all through the story line of the Bible.

God picked Moses, who could not speak without stammering, to confront the most powerful leader in the Ancient Near East and to free a nation of slaves. God picked David, the runt of his family, while his own father and brothers reacted with disbelief. It was one of those "you've got to be kidding me" moments. Him? You're not serious are you? Then this little runt shows up in a battle confronting Goliath, the giant and champion of the Philistines, and David takes him out! On and on this pattern goes. God shows his strength through our own weakness. Isaiah summarizes this in chapter 55 when he says that God's ways are not our ways. Just trust Him, because you are not going to get it any other way. It does not make sense to us. Our text is another example of that. Judah needs a King! Judah needs a Warrior! Judah needs a leader! Judah needs a Man to grab the reigns and lead the charge – right? So what does God do? He sends a child (6)! What is Isaiah tempted to say? We don't need a child. We need a man! Later on in chapter 53 we find out that this child is actually a servant. He is a servant who doesn't look like much. He is a servant who is despised and rejected. He is a servant who suffers and even a servant who dies. How, is that going to help us?

It only helps us, if we realize that he is for us because all of us need him. A few years ago I had the opportunity to defend the teachings of Christ in a local mosque. One of the audience members seemed to be particularly affected by the gospel asked me in front of everyone: Can you tell me how I can be forgive of my sin? ...