

Title: Only One!
Text: Isaiah 9.2-7
Theme: God is Savior
Series: Isaiah #12
Prop Stmt: Our God Saves, but not like we think
Aim: I aim to call my people to trust only in Christ

Read Text:

Isaiah's vision of God seated in glory (chapter 6) is an overwhelming and awesome encounter with the Sovereign Creator of the universe. But Isaiah does not stay there. In chapter 7 Isaiah is in the middle of a crisis in his nation of Judah. War has come to the land. Blood has been shed, the armies of Judah's enemies are preparing for a major offensive, the people are in a panic and the king is idolatrous, incompetent and arrogant. In spite of this, God offers King Ahaz a way out, but he is so proud and so blind that he will not take it. 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.

Our text last Sunday was marked by darkness. Ahaz was 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 leaderlessness, of 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 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!

Before we plow through this text, I want to point out 4 things that will help you understand the implication of this text for you (us).

a. God uses Judah as an illustration of his relationship with this world.

God focuses the spotlight of history on these people so that we can learn about the nature of God, and his plans for not only Judah, but the entire world. The OT lens is drawn in on them, while the NT widens 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. There is only a remnant of faithful in this world. We are 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 are going to 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 that 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.

b. Underneath Judah’s circumstantial crisis was her spiritual crisis.

Judah was facing a crisis from which there was no escape. The military and political crisis occupies the history books, but in reality, these are just surface issues. God’s Word mentions the military and political issues from time to time, but the real focus of God 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.

c. Judah thought she needed a king who could save her, when in reality she needed a Savior who would be her King.

Because we have great difficulty in seeing the true nature of our problem we have great difficulty in seeing the true nature of our solution as well. We think that we know what we need but we don’t because we do not realize the depth of our problem. But that is beauty of this! When you finally begin to come to grips with how serious of a problem your sin is, then you begin to realize how glorious your Savior is!

d. God saves, but not like you think.

God is not committed to rescuing you by changing your circumstances. God's rescue starts with your heart. He does not rescue like we think. 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 when we get to chapter 53 we are going to 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?

Don't you love it when God carries out his plan in ways that no one would have ever imagined but in ways that put his glory on display? This holds true for us. Our text reveals that God is going to build a worldwide kingdom for this child, whom we know is Christ. We find out in the NT that God does this through us. Talk about one of those "you gotta be kidding me" moments. This takes it – right? Look at us. We are not impressive. We have no heads of state, no major players as far as the world thinks. We are just average people. And that is the point! God is sufficient, we are not. Trust him. Trust only him. Follow him. Listen to him. Obey him. This text gives us five reasons why we must.

1. There is only One who can guarantee the future. (2)

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!

Do you remember what was going on in 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 is 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! By the way, this issue comes up again and again in this book. Isaiah gets to the point where he mocks the idols. He calls them out and challenges them to go public with their predictions of what is going to happen. Put up or shut up!

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. V.3 speaks of the effect of this plan.

2. **There is only One who can guarantee joy.** (3)

God guarantees the joy of those he rescues because he alone is the source of it. Only God is joy. Only God is real joy giver. Everything else comes up short. God’s rescue of his people is done in such a way that it guarantees and expands the joy of his people. God is glorified in the gladness of his people. God is glorified in our joy. God has guaranteed our joy. Note the connection between verse 2 and verse 3. Only after the dawning of the light, is there joy. The light comes, and when the light is accepted, there is joy. Do you realize what this means? This means that you are called to have joy! If you do not have joy, you are dishonoring God. If you have joy, you are trusting God’s promise. Do you want to have an impact for the gospel this week? You do not have to go on a missions trip to have an impact for the gospel. Try this. Smile at people! Rest in God’s promises and have joy! Some will not know what to do with you. But some will ask – why?

The next three verses begin with “for”. They are 3 reasons why your joy in God is guaranteed and why your joy is only safe in God.

3. **There is only One who can defeat your enemy.** (4)

This verse shows us that Isaiah is speaking of a victory that is greater than the battle that Judah was facing. It is true that Judah was facing a problem that she could not solve. It is true that the victory spoken of here has an application to circumstances, but it is more than that. By the way, the Assyrians were not only vicious warriors, they were cruel and oppressive masters. History records that they loved to boast about how heavy and crushing the yokes were that they placed upon their prisoners. This bondage was real, but we have a bondage to sin that is even heavier and more crushing from which there is no hope of escape on our part. Here Isaiah tells us about the One who can defeat your enemy, who when he came spoke about his yoke being easy and his burden being light.

Notice the last phrase of v.4. The nature of the victory will be consistent with how Midian was defeated. Do you remember that? How was Midian defeated? Israel's army of 32,000 was reduced to 300. And these 300 men, armed with trumpets and torches did nothing but blow their trumpets and hold up their torches, while God brought about an overwhelming victory.

4. **There is only One who can stop all war.** (5)

The depiction of this verse is vivid. For as long as there have been armies, the sound of marching has been used to intimidate the enemy. The history of our world has shown that there is only peace through power. Oppression is usually overthrown and replaced by more oppression. But the One who is coming, will gather the boots of all soldiers, and collect all of the uniforms and will use them, not for his own army, but as fuel for burning. There is coming a day when we won't be needing those anymore. We are not there yet, but that day is coming. But, that day is not made possible by our governments or our policies. Our countries, governments, programs are all doomed. Some of them are better than others, but in the end, there is no one among us who can govern perfectly. There is only One King! And now we come to the very heart of the story line of the entire Bible!

5. **There is only One who reigns forever.** (6-7)

Now here is our challenge. Many of us have heard these verses for so many years, that they do not have the impact that they should. So, let me point out a couple of things that you may not have thought about. One, the Hebrews did not write and talk about their kings like this. There are four, two-word titles trumpeted on this divine-regal birth announcement all of which proclaim to the universe that this child-Savior, this baby-deliverer is God! The only One who can break the darkness, who can bring joy, who can defeat your enemy and stop war is going to be born. That means that he is human. But this one who will be born is God. So, while the 7.14 prophecy had an immediate fulfillment in the birth of Isaiah's son, this prophecy takes the promise to an entirely different level. God is going to do something amazing!

A. Wonderful Counselor

We have already witnessed the repeated failures of human counselors when facing times of crisis. Isaiah's time is no different than ours in this respect. People who try to discern what to do apart from God are clueless and therefore hopeless. If you refuse to trust God, who is wisdom and truth, you will trust the most ridiculous. In contrast to the incompetent counselors of this world, whose foreign policy and economic strategies only compound problems, is Christ. When he came and taught the people were amazed. They never heard anyone like this before. He is the wonderful counselor. He is a wonder in that his counsel is perfect. But here is your challenge. Will you follow this wonderful counsel? To say that you believe that Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor is meaningless if you fail to follow his counsel. He calls

you to trust him. He calls you trust him with your life. Trust him with your kids. Trust him with your finances. Trust him with your future. Trust him with your fears.

B. Mighty God

This one who is born may look like a little baby. He may look vulnerable and needy. But that is all part of his wonderful counsel. His ways are not our ways. He shows strength through weakness and his birth is a portrait of that. He is nothing less than God. This child-deliverer is the Mighty God, that is he has power so great that he can absorb all of the evil that is thrown at him. There is no force that can topple him. There is no power that can take him down, nor is there any enemy who can stand in his way. As the mighty God, his will prevails. He wills his will to be accomplished. He carries out his designs. His purposes are accomplished, his plans are guaranteed to happen. His designs are wonderful AND he has the power to make them happen. This is why he can guarantee that all war will be stopped by his reign. He not only possesses the power to force this, but he accomplishes this, not the way we think. His way is not our way. We think that the only way for violence in the city to stop is for the police to be free from corruption, to be ever present and all-powerful. In this way they can force their will upon the bad people. While that may be true, that is not how God does it. Instead of demanding conformity through external threats, he, by virtue of his life and death, changes the heart of the sinner! This Mighty God is so Mighty that he is able to take upon himself all of our evil and all of our wrath and pay our debt and in so doing break the neck of death and destroy the scepter of Satan. That is our Mighty God!

C. Everlasting Father

It was (and in some cases today) customary to address a monarch by saying, "O king, live forever." It may be customary, but it is meaningless in that the king won't and not matter how much you say it, no king will. No king, that is but this King! Think of this. This King will forever be the perfect father who gives of himself in love for the people of his kingdom.

D. Prince of Peace

What an amazing title! This King is peace. He embodies peace. He is the only source of peace. He is the only means of peace. He is the only guarantee of peace because only He is able to bring peace between God and man. This King is the only hope to reconciling you're the broken relationship that you have with God. Until we are at peace with God we cannot be at peace with each other. But, the peace that he offers is a complete and therefore, eternal peace. It is a peace that marks his reign (v.7). It is a peace of which there is no end! He not only reigns forever, but because he is so amazing, his reign only gets better and better and better. All other kings, all other gods, all other ways will fail you. God, and God alone saves. Our God saves!

This child, this son, this One is "to us". Why would you ever trust another?