

[Please note these are unedited preaching notes and are not for publication. They are made available here to aid the deaf community in Christ Church and to be a reference for anyone who found the sermons useful.]

Introduction

ISAIAH 9:2 *"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light ; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."*

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem the known world was in crisis. The prophet Isaiah described it as walking in darkness. The Roman occupation of Israel was a brutal occupation which cost many Jewish lives. The people were looking for a messianic figure who would save them from their situation and re-establish the Kingdom of David.

Many centuries have passed and the world is still in crisis. If ever we needed super-human intervention it is now. This generation is faced with some of the most perplexing and intractable problems our planet has ever seen. Unlike the problems our forebears faced the problems our world is faces today threaten our very existence and the future of the planet we call home.

The most outstanding of these problems are:

- **Loss of the sanctity of Human Life**, Genocide, euthanasia, abortion, human trafficking, the arms industry.

WORLDWIDE

Number of abortions per year: Approximately 42 Million

Number of abortions per day: Approximately 115,000

(The Alan Guttmacher Institute. www.agi-usa.org)

We know from historical records that members of the Jewish community used to rescue gentile children who had been discarded on the rubbish dumps of cities because they believed in the sanctity of life.

"One strategy has been for the European Union to make aid money contingent upon adoption of abortion Protocols in Africa." There are now over 85 000 abortions taking place per year in South Africa. (*Cape Argus*, 9 March 2007)

"A positive choice has to be made by society in favour of protecting the interests of its vulnerable members even if this means limiting the freedom of others to determine their end"

- **World Hunger** The World Food Programme estimates that there are 400 million children who go hungry for lack of food. There is an urgent need for agricultural advances that will increase efficiency in farming. Food distribution has become a highly politicized activity
- **Global Warming** - the problem goes hand-in-hand with **pollution**, but can also be held separate because it involves one area of pollution, green-house gases - solutions might include the discovery or invention of cleaner energy sources - increased recycling programs and better recycling methods
- **Education** - the information age is driving society to learn but children in the third world countries lack the opportunities for

an education and continually fall behind the progress of the so called developed world

- **Poverty** – the poverty cycle is a very difficult situation to break out of. Many communities in our own country are still locked in poverty which has implications for us all.
- **Energy Crisis** - production of energy-efficient appliances, vehicles, electronic devices, and so on can help us reduce the amount of energy we waste every day. This energy shortage has become so pronounced that our urgent action is essential.
- **Health Care** - a method for reducing health costs for everyone across the world must be found - is there really a reason that health care needs to cost as much as it does? or do we need to find more efficient and better ways for providing health care?

NOTHING HAS REALLY CHANGED

The history of the human race has been one convulsive groan of agony after another. The world is sick; it is filled with anger, brutality, despair, prejudice, crime and doubt. Sorrow and suffering are the daily routine of many who appear on our T.V. screens and many more who don't. What do you make of it? As you read your newspaper and watch television remember this one fact;

- the only reasonable explanation for this state of affairs is given in God's Word the Bible.

The suffering and evil around us is not an invention of modern society. It has been magnified in our lifetime but it is not new. Basically, fundamentally we face the same challenges, temptations and troubles our ancestors faced. These things have always confronted humankind. Right now you, along with most other people are plagued by these problems.

The Bible tells us that the cause of our problems is our separation from God. God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all (**1 JOHN 1:5**). However we are described by God's Word as walking and living in darkness. In other words we are separated from God to such an extent that our experience is darkness. In the first chapter of the letter to the Romans the awful condition produced by our separation from God is described.

Three key words form the framework of this description: first **depravity**, second **sorrow** and third **death**. Depravity fills our jails and makes our society unsafe, sorrow fills our hearts and cheats us of true happiness, and death fills our cemeteries and sets us on a course of fear which is aimed at avoiding it at all costs.

We all know how radically the world has changed in the 21st century. Even in the last decade we have seen a technological and social revolution on a global scale at a pace that takes our breath away. But with all our progress it seems that humankind has failed to make any impression on the three basic problems of the human race. These same basic problems have plagued the human race for thousands of years and are now plaguing it at this very moment.

[1] DEPRAVITY HAS NOT CHANGED.

We have tried to give it other names but putting another label on a bottle of poison doesn't change the contents. We have tried to clean up the depraved nature of humankind but new names for present day evils in an attempt to salve our consciences has not changed the nature of sin. We are still sinners, and the results of our sin are all too plain to see - disease, injustice, suffering, despair, disillusionment and hell.

The Bible says that " ... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."; it says that "...the wages of sin is death." You are a sinner by choice and by practice (**Ezekiel 18:4**). You will never find peace and light until your sin is dealt with.

[2] SORROW HAS NOT CHANGED

When Adam and Eve looked with broken hearts at the lifeless body of their son Abel had been killed by Cain, a crushing sorrow that grips human hearts began. Sorrow is the universal language of the world today. Everyone of us knows this sorrow. Job, in the Old Testament, says, "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." But the Bible records Jesus as saying, "Come to Me all who are weary and weighed down and I will give you rest." **MATT 11:28**.

[3] DEATH HAS NOT CHANGED

No matter how hard we seek after eternal youth and avoid the issue of death it remains a hard and cruel reality. Changing its name does not affect its course. You are going to die. The Bible says, "..It is

appointed for people once to die and after this the judgement. (**HEB 9:27**)

These three problems make up humankind's history. Our past is filled with the depravity of sin, our present is overrun with the sorrow and depression of hopelessness and our the unknown certainty of death faces us in the future.

To the average person this is a hopeless picture. What does this have to do with the celebration of Christmas you are asking. The answer is everything. God also sees this as a terrible situation. So much so that He describes it as the opposite of Himself - darkness.

LIGHT ENTERS THE DARKNESS

Looking forward to the coming of Christ the prophet Isaiah describes people in darkness and the shadow of death as seeing a great light.

Both the gospels of Matt and Luke quote this verse from Isaiah in reference to the coming of Christ. Christmas is the celebration of the fact that God did not abandon us to our darkness, but entered it to make light accessible to us once again.

ENTERING THE LIGHT.

How do you appropriate this message of Christmas? Millions of people all over the world and through the centuries have proved that Jesus Christ can meet the problems and needs of life. There is a verse in the Bible which reads, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever." (HEB 13:8) The word "yesterday" refers to the past, when He was on earth in the flesh. The word "today" refers to the present and the word "forever" refers to His return as Ruler and Judge. Yesterday, the past, when He was on earth, He died for your sin to pay the price for your darkness. Jesus Christ died for your sins. When He died He died physically and spiritually in your place. That is why he is able to take care of your past sin and reconcile you to God. Today, now in the presence of God He is an Advocate interceding on behalf of those who place their trust in Him. Right now, this Christmas He is ready to forgive your sin, lift your sorrow and to give you hope as He prepares a place for you with Him in eternity.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO DO?

The Bible teaches that there are three things that we have to do to move from darkness to light and to know Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

[1] REPENT - Acknowledge that you are a sinner and turn from your sin to Christ. Jesus said, "Unless you repent you will also perish."(LUKE 13:3) Repentance simply means turning from sin.

[2] BELIEVE - Believe that Christ died for you and that He paid the price for your sins. Believing means trusting. Entrusting yourself to God who loves you. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life." JOHN 3:36

[3] RECEIVE - We receive Christ into our lives by inviting Him to live within us. REV 3:20