

Christmas 2020 – The Lord has remembered His Promise

1. What a year 2020 has been!
 - a. I don't need to review all that this year has brought us because we've all lived it
 - i. What you've experienced may not be what I've experienced
 - ii. But, no matter who you are it was probably a very difficult year...a year of sorrow...a year of tears
 - iii. It's hard to feel Christmas joy at a time like this, if anything we're just hoping the year will end quietly and that will be joy enough.
 - b. But the readings of our yearly Christmas service are the story of how God restored real, lasting joy that gives us peace no matter what our years bring!
 - i. It is the narrative that links Scripture together
 - ii. This book comprised of 66 books between the OT and NT is all about one thing – God fulfilling His promise to save His creation
 - iii. That promise was given in Gen 3 which we heard in our first reading.
 - iv. The Lord said to the serpent, who had tempted Adam and Eve, **I will put enmity (hostility) between you and the woman, between her offspring and your offspring. He will bruise your head and you will bruise His heel.**
 - c. The rest of the book is an unfolding of that promise, following how God kept that promise alive.
 - i. The Old Testament traces the promise through the history of one people, the Israelites.
 - ii. The New Testament is about the Savior, who came from the Jewish people and fulfilled the promise for all people.
 - d. Our reading tonight from Isaiah 9 could describe a lot of us this year at Christmas, **people who walked in darkness...who dwelt in a land of deep darkness...(Isa 9:2)**
2. Yet, even as we remember the recent darkness of this year, lift up your heads and rejoice because the Lord has remembered His Promise - the light has dawned!
 - a. Not in the ending of the pandemic and all of the social discord – though we do want that!
 - i. But the real light, the light of God's promise to send a Savior
 - ii. The gift of Christmas is that in Jesus God became one of us, our champion, to restore us and open the kingdom of heaven that our sin had closed.
 - b. You see when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden there was a curse that came with their disobedience – death.
 - i. God said, **"You may eat from any tree in the Garden but not of the tree that's in the middle of the garden for the day you eat of it you will die."**
 - ii. Because they ate of that tree they were cut off from the source of life, God, and thus began the process of death

- iii. It affected the whole world so that suffering, natural disaster, and pandemics are “normal”
- iv. But there’s nothing “normal” about them, they weren’t what God created but are the result of our fall
- c. That was the real darkness that God had come to dispel - the deep darkness of sin, death, and separation from Him
 - i. And God loved His creation too much to let that stand.
 - ii. The little baby born in Bethlehem this night so long ago would grow up to be the man who would heal the sick, raise the dead and ultimately give His life as a sacrifice for us on the cross.
 - iii. So that our sins would be forgiven, and that all who believe in Him would have eternal life with Him – His death brought us life!
 - iv. The Good News of Great Joy that will be for all people is that God remembered His promise and gave us the gift of life through His Son born of a virgin in the little town of Bethlehem!