

My office is like any other office. There are decorations on the wall, door, and desk space. Many of these decorations are sentimental - a picture of my mom and me years ago, a baseball from a summer trip to North Dakota, a "Jesus loves me" doorhanger. Then I have one sign which says, "In the beginning, there was nothing. And then God said, 'Let there be light.' There was still nothing, but you could see a lot better." This humorous quip is based on what we read in Genesis chapter 1, verse 3. We see that God created light before he materialized the light in the sun, moon, and stars that he would go on to make in the creation process. Isaiah the prophet saw the light. Not by waking up in the morning and needing to cover his eyes from the sun peaking into his room, but through revelation from God. Isaiah looked forward to the light of Jesus coming before Jesus was born here on earth. Through God, Isaiah was able to speak about the light before it materialized. This light, that has been around and has been shining, would bring people to God and bring peace into their lives, culminating in the ultimate peace of heaven! Tonight we'll see, just as Isaiah did, that God's light brings peace.

Even though Isaiah had the privilege of seeing this light of God ahead of time, it doesn't mean that he lived during a time completely different than ours. The people who lived during the time of Isaiah were sinners who strayed from the word of God. God spoke through Isaiah and had him write down three ways the Lord was going to reach out to these troubled people. God would redeem them, bring them to repent, and renew them in their faithfulness. Now we zoom in to see a closer picture of what that looks like.

One example, the temple of the Lord, shows up in the text right away, "In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it." Isaiah points out the church, the family of believers, how many people from all over the world will be brought into it. What's drawing these people to gather together as part of the church? It's the gospel, the good news of Jesus! The message that Jesus came to wash away our sins is causing nations to stream into the church. That particular word - stream - comes from the Hebrew root that as a noun means "river". I want you to think about that river, moving along without being pushed or told to keep going... it's only natural for the waters to stream towards their destination. Usually rivers flow FROM their source and go out from it, but here we have this river of people flowing TO the source. They're going to the source. They're being brought in to hear the gospel, the good news of Jesus!

Listen to the encouragement that flows from those streaming to the gospel, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Does this sound like something you would say? Or would you rather not talk so openly about what you do at Resurrection... Do you share that excitement to come and hear the Word of God? Are you equally thrilled that God is going to proclaim to you his ways, his paths that are right? Does that leave you with the conclusion that others have the exact same need as you do? Boy, our sinful nature really comes out in full force sometimes, convincing us it's in our best interest to stay quiet.

Think about when you receive a text from your relative who just had a happy, healthy baby. You call everyone over to show them the picture, "Everyone! Come see this!" You forward the email to

everyone, you give a quick call to your loved ones. The word goes out. It's easy to do that, it's like second nature, it springs from the love you have. We all have very good news about a child who was born, one people have been waiting longer than nine months for... this child is the Savior of the world. We get to share God's love. Our goal for Christmas Eve is to invite one million people throughout the synod. We have a wonderful opportunity to bring the good news that is for all people, to share the Word, "Come and see what's going on here!"

As we look at the church, we see the gospel being shared. The gospel takes effect and God causes beneficial change within the community. "He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore." Another effect - there is a considerable lack of violence. God's people are not relying on warfare to settle conflicts. There is exceptional peace among them, a spiritual peace that comes from God. It's important that we view this peace in such a way. After all, Jesus himself gave us signs of the times and told us what great terrors and troubles must come to the world before he returns. Yet even in the chaos of a sin-stricken world Christians are at peace. Instead of adding to strife, we strive to stifle it. Because spiritual peace makes peacemakers. Having your heart stilled by God's presence and assurance of a Savior, Jesus, changes our approach. This is the peace that God brings. This is the light which Isaiah foretold.

And so God's people respond once again, "Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord." Once darkened hearts have been reached with the light of God. Encouragement is given to continue to walk in that light. As an experienced hiker guides his companions to bring a flashlight for when sunset comes, so the one who has experienced God's message spurs another on to have the light of God's Word while travelling in a dark world. It's the light that guides our path, and our path is one that ends up in God's arms in heaven.

Remember how in the beginning God made light and then he gave it a vessel (like the sun, moon, and stars), he materialized the light into something physical? God did that with light another time after creation. God, as the everlasting light, came to us and was born as a child in this world. That child, Jesus, is the one whom the prophets foretold, the light that brings peace. He brought us peace that lasts, peace that allows our souls to find rest knowing that heavenly bliss is ours through his life, death, and resurrection! God fulfilled his promise in sending a Savior. Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord! Amen.