

Reflection Questions

1. Reflect on the darkness in the world or that you are experiencing personally.
2. Identify the Light in the darkness. How is God working? What is He doing? What signs of hope are there in the midst of darkness?
3. The best way to be light in the world is to point people to the Light of the world. Does what you say or do look like Jesus? Does it point people to Jesus? If not, what changes need to be made in your life?

Prayer for Those Searching for Truth:

Lord Jesus, you claim to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Grant that I might be undaunted by the cost of following you as I consider the reasons for doing so. If what you claim is true, please guide me, teach me, and open me to the reality of who you are. Give me an understanding of you that is coherent and convincing, and that leads to the life you promise. Amen.

Prayer of Belief:

Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am weaker and more sinful than I ever dared admit, but through you I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope. I thank you for paying my debt on the cross, taking what I deserved in order to offer me complete forgiveness. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, I turn from my sins and receive you as my Savior and Lord. Amen.



Isaiah 9:2, 6-7
December 20, 2015

Their Dark World

"The people walking in darkness..." Isaiah 9:2a (NIV)

At the time Isaiah is prophesying, the nation of Israel has been split into two kingdoms: Judah in the south and Israel in the north.

Judah is being threatened by Aram & Israel because Israel and Aram are being threatened by Assyria. Aram & Israel are calling Judah to make an alliance with them so they can protect themselves from Assyria.

Judah, then, is caught in the crosshairs of a political power struggle and they face war or the loss of corporate identity. It was dark days for Judah.

Our Dark World

We are also living in darkness.

In the dark, things look scary and it's easy for fear to overcome you.

Darkness makes us lose perspective.
Darkness and fear make us believe we have no options.
Darkness causes us to lose hope.

And, you can get used to the dark. When you get used to the dark, you either fall into complacency (you don't care that it's dark), or you respond to the darkness with more darkness.

The Light In Their World

"...on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." -Isaiah 9:2b

In the midst of darkness, Isaiah speaks these beautiful words, "On those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned. For unto us a child is born..."

"For unto us a child is born" - This is the traditional announcement for the birth of a child, except it is normally singular, "To you a child is born." This time, its plural, "To us a child is born..." This means that everyone will benefit from the birth of this child!

Isaiah spoke of a day when light would pierce the dark.

You can imagine what hope these words would bring for a nation being threatened by attack

The Light In Our World

The good news of Christmas is the Light has come!

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." -John 8:12 (NIV)

Light gives us new perspective.

Light sheds the truth on lies we have believed.

Light opens up a world of new possibility. Where darkness and fear takes away our options, light gives us new possibility.

When we can see and know the truth we can dare to hope.

A world living in darkness is a world void of hope.

Hope gives us a God-inspired "nevertheless" in the midst of darkness.

Nevertheless, God is still good and he is still working!
Nevertheless, this trial has not stolen my joy and has not taken my hope!

The apostle Paul said it this way in 2 *Corinthians* 4:8-9, *"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."*

Called To Be Light

If we dare to hope in an age of darkness, we will shine.

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. -Isaiah 60:1 (NIV)

"You are the light of the world. -Matthew 5:14a (NIV)

The best way to be light in the world is to point people to the Light of the World.

Ask yourself two simple questions:

"Does what I'm doing or saying look like Jesus?"

In the darkness all around me, do I blend in or shine?

Prayer

O God of Elizabeth and Mary, you visited your servants with news of the world's redemption in the coming of the Savior. Make our hearts leap with joy, and fill our mouths with songs of praise, that we may announce glad tidings of peace, and welcome the Christ in our midst. Amen.

--Revised Common Lectionary, Year C, Advent, Fourth Sunday of Advent, Thematic (<http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/>)