

# Isaiah 9

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[ 0 : 00 ] I don't know about you, but I don't always feel like wishing people a happy Christmas.! Not like the chip shop on Pitsang and Lane, not in that sense.

! But it's not always easy, is it, to wish people a happy Christmas. When you know it's going to be a lonely Christmas, it's not easy to wish someone a happy Christmas.

When you know it's going to be a sad Christmas, because they're grieving over the death of a loved one. Think of friends of mine, many of you know, who've moved to America, and they have a stillborn daughter, and this year.

And it's so painful. It's not easy to wish someone a happy Christmas when they're mourning.

They're mourning the one they can't share it with. It's not easy to wish someone a happy Christmas when you know that somebody is sick.

Or that it's going to be an anxious Christmas, because they've lost their job, or they're about to lose their job, or because they're in severe debt. Then there are those people out there who are nursing the wounds of a broken relationship.

[ 1 : 11 ] I can think of other friends of mine who are surrounded by happy families. And their Christmas is far from happy. And painful. It's not easy, is it, to wish someone like that this morning, have a happy Christmas.

It isn't easy. Now for most of us, wonderfully, Christmas is a very happy time. And we love going together with our families, with our friends, and celebrating Christmas time.

But even then, even today, we are aware that the world is far from a happy place. We can't forget that. You think of what happened in Berlin just a couple of weeks ago.

We can't imagine, can we, what Christmas is going to be like for the victims' families. We can't imagine what Christmas is going to be like for the people of Aleppo, and for the hundreds of thousands of refugees spread across our continent from war in Syria.

Peace on earth, goodwill towards men, seems very much absent, doesn't it, at this point in history. And when we're honest about the world, and what the world is like, it's not that easy for any of us to wish, anyway, a happy Christmas.

[ 2 : 28 ] How can we overcome this dilemma? We want people to be happy, don't we? And when life is this messy, and when life is painful and sad, we feel like we need a happy Christmas.

We need some relief from the darkness. Some rest from the sadness. How do we find that relief? How is it possible for us, and the world in which we live in, to find happiness at Christmas again?

Well, we could do what many people do. And that is to put the darkness and the sadness out of our minds. We can wish people happy Christmas through denial.

We just pretend that the mess doesn't exist at all. Or we could convince ourselves that yes, it is messy, but it's not as bad as it seems.

I didn't like this, that there's going to be a Berlin-style attack that's going to happen here. Thankfully, we don't live in Syria. Or we've got to convince ourselves that our broken relationships, they're really a doorway for new beginnings.

[ 3 : 35 ] And our loneliness and our unhappiness is going to be short-lived. Or we can convince ourselves, can't we, that the people we grieve over and mourn, they wouldn't want us to be sad.

So we should just get on with it and celebrate. And maybe if we pull all those things off, we can wish people a happy Christmas. And mean it. The other approach is distraction.

We can eat, and eat, and eat. And drink, and drink, and drink. And watch telly, and watch telly. And watch telly.

There's such determination, and such vigour, that we do manage to distract ourselves. We can drink to forget, and we can eat to forget. And we can entertain ourselves to forget. And maybe then

we can wish people a happy Christmas.

Or perhaps, there's another approach. A better approach. And that is from the readings that we've read over the last couple of weeks, and the carols that have echoed those readings.

[ 4 : 37 ] And that tells us that God has a better way. And he has a better suggestion for us. And it's a more honest way, I think. And the wonderful thing about the Bible, I don't know whether you know this, is that the Bible is very, very real.

Very, very real. It's real about the world in which you live in. And it's real about the experiences that you have in your life.

But it also offers you real hope. So will you open your Bibles with me to Isaiah chapter 9? Isaiah chapter 9. Look at verse 1.

Isaiah chapter 9 is on page 573 of the Church Bibles. And it says this. But there will be no gloom. There will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish.

In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. But in the latter time he's made glorious the way of the sea. The land beyond the Jordan, the Galilee of the nations. And then it says this.

[ 5 : 43 ] The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. And those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them her light has shone. And you have multiplied the nation.

You have increased its joy. They rejoice before you. As with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder and the rod of his oppressors, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle of treatment. And every garment rolled in blood will be burned as feral for the fire. Now do you see this?

There's bits of those verses which are definitely going to explain. But do you see the main thrust? That what God is promising through the prophet Isaiah is he's promising a day when sadness will be overcome. And when distress will be gone.

And it will be replaced by joy and peace. And a day when death and darkness will be overcome by light and life. And a day when the enemies of God's people will be defeated. And the power of the oppressor will be overcome.

[ 6 : 49 ] And how long does this happen? It will happen because of verse 6. For to us a child is born. And to us a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

And of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end. That's how it's going to happen. The Bible says a child will be born. A son will be given. And that son will be God's ruler. God's appointed ruler. Indeed the son will be Almighty God himself. And he will have the government of the world on his shoulders. And that son will bring peace.

And he will reign forever and ever. And he will establish perfect justice. And the zine of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. At the end of verse 7. God wants peace more than we want peace. God wants justice to be done more than we want justice to be done. And he's going to deal with evil. And he has an answer to it. And that is the good news that Isaiah declares.

[ 7 : 48 ] And the child promise of course is Jesus. And Jesus is coming. And so we might ask for what good has that done? Where is there peace on earth?

Where is there justice? And it doesn't really seem to be present does it? And the answer the Bible gives you. Is that at the moment we do not enjoy all the benefits. Of Jesus rule.

That there is a day coming. When perfect justice will be done. There is a day coming when perfect peace will reign. A day when there will be no more massacres. A day when there will be no more refugees.

When there will be no more bloodshed. And there will be no more separation. A day when there will be no more floods. A day when there will be no more homelessness. No more crying. No more pain.

No more sickness. No more death. And that day is coming. But it hasn't arrived. But it hasn't arrived. But it will. And we know it will.

[ 8 : 46 ] And the reason we know it will. Is because of what Jesus did that first Easter. That he died and he rose again. And when he did that. He struck a fatal blow against evil.

And against wickedness. And against darkness. And he secured the victory against injustice and pain. And one day he will return.

And that is the promise that is repeated in the Bible more than any other. That Jesus will come back. And he will bring with him the full benefits.

Of the victory he won on that day when he died. And three days later rose again. And evil will be destroyed. And death will be destroyed. Doesn't that sound good?

What a world that will be. And we might think. When we realise. What the world we live in is like. We might think.

[ 9 : 42 ] Why the delay? Why is he waiting? Why not now? And the reason that the Bible gives to that answer.

Is that he waits. Because God wants people to be with him. In that perfect world. To enjoy him and it.

And the trouble is. We are not fit for that place. The reason why the world is messed up. And is sad. Is because of people.

And it's because of humanity. It's because of the way we have treated God. From the very beginning. From the start we've rejected him. We've refused his good and his loving rule.

We've loved the darkness. Of doing what we want. Instead of the light. Of doing what he wants. We have sinned. The Bible says. And our sin stops us from knowing God.

[ 10 : 39 ] And it keeps us out from that perfect place. But the great news of Christmas. And what we've been reading about. And saying about. Is that Jesus came to deal with that problem.

That Jesus came to repair. The perfect relationship. Between human beings. And the God who made them. That relationship.

Which has been broken. Because of our rebellion. God came to repair it. Listen to what the angel. Told Joseph. We've read it a couple of times.

In our service already. In Matthew chapter 1. And verse 21. Joseph is told. You shall call his name Jesus. She will bear a son.

And you shall call his name Jesus. For he will save his people. From their sins. Listen to what. Another angel. Told some shepherds. In Luke 2.

[ 11 : 36 ] And the angel said to them. Fear not. For behold. I bring you good news. Of great joy. That will be for all the people. For unto you is all this day. In the city of David. The Saviour. Who is Christ. The Lord.

And what all the angels sang. In the presence of the shepherds. Was glory. To God. In the highest heaven. And on earth. Peace to those. On whom God's favour rests.

Baby Jesus. Was born. To bring peace. Peace where we really need it. Between us and God. He came to take away our sin. To bring us back to God.

And it cost him a lot. To make that possible. His mission. Took him to the cross. And on the cross. He was punished for our sin. And he died in our place. And Jesus came.

Not only to make. This perfect future world. A reality. He came to make sure. That there will be people. There to enjoy it.

[ 12 : 34 ] He came. To fit us for heaven. He came to give us. What we need. To meet him. When he comes back. As judge.

On that day of justice. He came to give us. What we need. In order to enter. Heaven. The third of hell forever. He came.

To give us. Forgiveness of sins. He came to give us. A right relationship. With God. He didn't come. Just so that you could have. A happy 25th of December. Every year. He came for something.

Bigger. And better than that. He came so that you and I. Would be happy forever. And he wants. You. And I. To be happy forever. And that is why God.

God patiently. Delays. The day of justice. To give you. Time. To respond. To him rightly. And in his great love. He is calling.

[ 13 : 30 ] On you. To trust in him. And to believe. On him. And to receive him. And to turn. From living. Our own way.

And to acknowledge him. And to submit to him. And to trust in what he's done for us. That's what he's been doing this morning. And this Christmas.

As you've heard the Bible read. As you've sung the carols. He is calling you to receive him. And to all who receive him. He gives the right to become children of God.

Heirs of this new creation. This perfect new world. That Christmas is all about getting. Isn't it? Some of us think it's all about giving.

You may have taught people that. But Christmas is all about getting. In one sense. It's about receiving. We give gifts at Christmas.

[ 14 : 29 ] To remember that God gave the greatest gift. And what the first Christmas teaches you. Is that God's place. It is God's place to give. And it is our place to receive. Christmas.

For us. Is receiving. God's gift. His son. The child who was promised. The child who came. And who defeated sin and evil. And who will reign forever and ever.

And so the question of Christmas day. Is have you received him? Have you believed in his name? I hope you have. And if you haven't.

Place your trust in Jesus. Well you can do it today. Because this gift. Is good news for all people. So it doesn't matter where you're from.

And it doesn't matter how bad you think you are. No one is bad enough. This is a gift. For everyone.

[ 15 : 28 ] And God wants you to enjoy this perfect forever world with him. And that's why Christmas happened. And if you do receive him. You will know happiness. Today.

And you will know happiness forever. The Bible calls that joy. And joy is a deep emotion. That can exist alongside sadness.

And joy can coexist with grief. And it is grounded in the recognition. That though there is great pain. And though there is great sadness in our life.

And though there is difficulty and trouble in our lives. There is something that transcends all of that. And it fills the human heart.

With a happiness that cannot be stolen. The happiness of knowing that our sins are forgiven.

Happiness that comes from knowing that God the creator of the world loves little old me.

[ 16 : 28 ] The happiness of knowing that evil has been defeated. And one day there will be no more. The happiness of knowing that death one day will be no more.

The happiness of knowing that peace will be forever. And there will be no more separation. And that happiness comes from receiving God's gift. His good news of great joy for all people.

And it comes from receiving his son Jesus. Our saviour and our only hope. And that is why I will be happy this Christmas. And many of us here will be happy this Christmas.

Because in spite of my sadness. In spite of my pains. In spite of the difficulties and the troubles facing me. In spite of the real mess that this world is in.

I will be joyful. I will be joyful. And I will be joyful. Why? Because of the gift of God. Because the gift of God is greater than every evil.

[ 17 : 30 ] Because of the light. The light that shines in the darkness. And the darkness has not overcome it. And the darkness will not overcome it. The light will win.

And the light has won. And Jesus has won. And Jesus will win. And if you receive Jesus. That will be your joy as well.

You do not need to stick your head in the sand in denial. You do not have to distract yourself. By eating or drinking too much. Or watching tally for hour upon hour upon hour.

You can honestly face up to the river of pain. That does flow through this world. And still no joy. Joy because of the vast ocean of God's love.

And his gift to us in Jesus. Joy that comes from receiving Jesus. Joy that comes from knowing that the pain. And the sadness. And the hurt. They are temporary.

[ 18 : 30 ] And the justice. And the peace. And the happiness. And the joy. Where they are forever. And when you know that joy. That joy that comes from receiving Jesus.

It is possible to honestly. And meaningfully. Wish people. A happy Christmas. For to us a child is born.

And to us a son is born. And the government will be upon his shoulders. And he will be called. Wonderful. Counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace.

And of the greatness of his government. And peace. There will be no end. Happy Christmas. Everyone. Born. Thank you.