

Your King Is Coming!

Special Christmas Narrative Sermon

December 21, 2014

My name is Isaiah, and you know me from the book of mine you read every year in the Bible which bears my name. I am here today to encourage you in the midst of your troubling times not to lose hope in the face of what appears to be the defeat of all that is righteous and good. I know it can be hard to remain positive when you see the signs of your times indicating that Satan is gaining more and more ground and righteous people are being killed and tortured. I know you can get discouraged when you see the likes of ISIS terrorists beheading children and killing Christians by the thousands. I know you despair when you hear on T.V. that the Taliban entered a school in Pakistan and killed 140 students and teachers. I know you are frustrated with evil men when you see videos and pictures of your own Twin Towers aflame on 9/11/2001 and people jumping 100 floors to escape burning to death because terrorists hijacked airliners and flew them as bombs into those office buildings.

Even in your own country, one of the last outposts of freedom in the world today, there are signs that godly people are being punished for their faith and penalized for standing up for what is right and true. Just recently I heard that 5 judges in North Carolina have resigned because they are now required to perform same-sex marriages against their will, some of these judges have been serving as justices of the peace for over 25 years. And in your own state a new policy requires school boards to allow gender confused boys to play on girls sports teams and to get dressed and showered in girl's locker rooms. Are you beginning to think that all sanity and common sense has departed from your world?

I know it can be troubling, believe me, because I lived in similar troubling times. I too have lived in times of relative peace as you have in the past but seen it shattered by armies abroad who are using their power to destroy you and everything you stand for that is good and holy. So my mission today is to encourage you, not only by reminding you that evil has always been in this world, but by showing you a prophecy given to me that is still partially unfulfilled, a prophecy of our coming King that will inspire you not to lose hope but to fix your eyes on the only thing that is permanent in this life. I want you to fix your eyes and hope upon the Messiah we call Yeshua, who is going to come and reign soon as the King over all the earth and He is going to put every enemy under His feet and He is going to use you, the saints who belong to His Kingdom, to reign and rule with Him as the people of the Lamb.

Let me take you back to a time 2,700 years ago when Israel was facing an enemy many times its size and just as brutal and cruel as the ISIS army you are hearing so much of today. In ancient Iraq, there was a city called Ninevah, which was the capital city of the Assyrians. You know that city as Mosul, Iraq, a city much in the news today. The Assyrians were becoming more and more powerful as an empire and beginning to threaten little Israel and its neighbor Syria. You already know that Solomon's empire of 12 tribes was torn in two because of his adulterous ways and the northern 10 tribes called themselves Israel while the southern two tribes of Judah and Benjamin called themselves Judah. Judah was governed by King Ahaz and Israel was governed by King Pekah. King Ahaz was an ungodly man despite being the grandson of Uzziah a godly father and king. He made one of his sons pass through the fire, the fire of Molech, and of course he died as a sacrifice to this demon god. The other son you know as Hezekiah who was

spared the flames of that idol god by his mother. Because king Ahaz rebelled against God, the Lord allowed the Edomites to attack and take away as slaves thousands of Judeans. Then God allowed the Philistines to attack and they took over large amounts of land and cities including the populations of those cities. God was nibbling away at Judah putting increasing pressure on this land and this ungodly king in an attempt to get him to repent. It would be a similar situation today for you to imagine China attacking and successfully taking over California, Oregon and Washington states. Have any friends in those states? Imagine how hard life would be for them to have to learn Chinese in order to live and do business.

Then to make matters worse for Ahaz, King Tigleth-Pilezer of Assyria was beating the war drums and hinting at attacking Syria, ruled by King Rezin, and Israel. The king of Syria and the king of Israel, Rezin and Pekah decided it would be a good plan to partner up and form a coalition to stand against the rising power of the east, Assyria. Included in their plans was to add Judah to their coalition but king Ahaz wanted nothing to do with it. So, the two nations of Syria and Israel attacked Judah and laid siege to the smaller country, in hopes of deposing King Ahaz and putting their own puppet king on the throne. It was a good plan, except it wasn't God's plan and when anything isn't God's plan it is guaranteed to fail as did they.

Now I want you to open your Bibles to chapter 7 of my book.

In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it. When the house of David was told, "Syria is in league with Ephraim," the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind. And the LORD said to me, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field. And say to him, 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah. Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying, "Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it," thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass. (Isaiah 7:1-7 ESV)

Did you hear what the Lord told me to tell Ahaz? He said, their plans will not stand, they shall not come to pass. I hear the boasts of wicked terrorists today say "We will see you in New York" and I think "will they really"? Will they be able to sneak in a nuclear weapon and destroy your nation by one evil strike? They certainly plan on doing so, but if you think those murderous madmen can carry out their plans against the will of God who knows all, orchestrates all, overpowers all, then you do not know your God. And, did you catch the name of my son? It was Shear-Jashub, which means the remnant shall return. Wow. 150 years before God kicked Judah out from Jerusalem he was prophecying he would bring a remnant back once again. Did you know that you are part of that remnant? Oh your names are not Jewish and end with stein, but you are nevertheless part of that group of people that are key to God's plan to bring out of this world a righteous remnant that will be faithful to Him and will love Him and will be a source of hope and light to a lost world.

Keep on reading.

For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. And within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered from being a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.” (Isaiah 7:8-9 ESV)

If God was gracious and merciful enough to promise an ungodly king like Ahaz that within 65 years both of his arch enemies would be destroyed and they would be no more while he and his kingdom and people would still be having lunch in Jerusalem, what do you think He would say to His righteous people today? Would he say, I've forgotten you? Be afraid? Of course not. But we must see things from God's perspective. God always has the long-term perspective in mind. Here it was 65 years before he annihilated the enemy and another 500 years before he brought forth the Messiah. You and I are so used to short term solutions and relief that we struggle when we hear that God will bring something about in our grand-children's lives 50 years from now. In the meantime, will Christians suffer? Will they be martyred? Of course you know the answer to that. Will they lose their jobs? Indeed some will lose their lives even in this country, it has happened already.

God has promised to preserve His people and that the church of God will make it through all the way to the end of the age and will not be destroyed by the forces of Satan. But that does not mean that every single member of the church will make it unscathed and unharmed. It's much like God making a promise to the American army that it would win the war, does not mean that every soldier will come out alive. You and I need to have a corporate perspective, just as God does. His church will be victorious and as a fellow soldier in that church you and I need to be willing to sacrifice everything you hold dear to see that you will do your part to make that prophecy come true.

Would you like to know how to do that gladly and cheerfully? Would you like to know how to be a victorious martyr for Christ? I'll tell you. You see, once I was living for myself. Oh I was a good man for sure as good as any Israelite could be, but I still was living for myself. If I knew that my life and the life of my family would be sacrificed for the cause of Christ I would have hesitated at the very least and probably protested at most. But that all changed one day. In the spirit, God lifted me from this earth and placed me before His throne in Heaven and when I had that face to face with the great King everything changed. I saw God for who He really was. I saw Him as the everlasting source of joy and holiness and pleasure and goodness and mercy. I would have been snuffed out for my own sin had it not been that God instructed an angel to take a burning coal from the altar of Christ's sacrifice and cleanse my lips and soul. And I lived. I stood before the great God who created this all. You think Dorothy's shoes shook in front of the Wizard of Oz, well my cells were vibrating with fright when I stood before God, that is until the coal did its purifying work, then everything was at peace. Your conversion was that moment for you. When the Holy Spirit came and revealed God's mercy to you, he was showing you His grace and mercy and giving you a first-hand look at the majesty and glory of God. Hopefully you have not forgotten that.

When I toured Heaven and stood before the throne I realized I wanted to be in God's presence more than anything in life. All the money in the world could not tempt me to leave His presence and when he asked for a volunteer to go and give his life to preach the good news I immediately volunteered. If I had 10 lives to give, I would have gladly given all 10 or 100 or thousand. That's because giving my life, which is only the smallest fraction of eternity

imaginable, is an extremely small price to pay to enjoy His love, His happiness, His joy, His holiness forever. If a person comes to Christ simply because He is afraid of hell, then I am convinced he is not yet saved, for he is only afraid of being burned, and has not yet fallen in love with the Savior who was the one burned for him. So, seeing God for who He really is and being overwhelmed with His glory makes all the difference in the world. You would have as much courage as Daniel would being thrown to the lions or Shadrach Meshech and Abed-nego being thrown into the fiery furnace.

Poor King Ahaz. When I found him he was checking out the city's water supply by the upper pool. I could tell he was frightened that he would be losing everything, including his life. It was obvious by the fact he was storing up water for the siege, that he was placing his faith and trust in the city walls and his stash of food and water. He was definitely not placing his faith in the God of Israel. That's what God meant when he said if you are not firm in faith you are not firm at all.

Then God was gracious and kind even to this ungodly king and told me to tell him this:

“Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. The LORD will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah.” (Isaiah 7:10-17 ESV)

Look how kind God was to this unbelieving king. God knew that he was frightened, and for the sake of God's name and for the sake of His promises to David He was willing to rescue Ahaz out of the tight spot he was in and offered Ahaz the chance to ask for any sign he wanted as an assurance that God would do as He said He would. But Ahaz was too proud and too far from God to humble himself before God that way and so God said, O.K. if you're not willing to ask for a sign I will give you as sign anyway, “Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” You are familiar with that prophecy as referring to the Messiah and indeed that is the greater fulfillment, but the initial fulfillment of that prophecy was a baby to be born to my wife and me. Before that child would be old enough to know the difference between right and wrong, God promised that both the nations of Syria and Israel would be destroyed, and not just militarily destroyed, their land would be deserted, wiped off the map.

Not long after that encounter, my wife had a baby boy just as God prophesied we would. We were told to name him Maher-shalal-hashbaz. Here's what God told me to do:

Then the LORD said to me, “Take a large tablet and write on it in common characters, ‘Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz.’ And I will get reliable witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to attest for me.” And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, “Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz; for before the boy knows how to cry ‘My father’ or ‘My

mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria." (Isaiah 8:1-4 ESV)

Did God ever come through with His word! Before my son was three years old Syria was defeated and seven years later Israel was gone. Their lands were a wasteland and their cities were empty. The threat had been neutralized just as God promised. But aren't you and I a lot like Ahaz? Don't we marginalized God and tell him we will take care of our own problems and not live by faith in his ability to work things out in his time and for our good? You see the second fulfillment of that prophecy we of Messiah's birth and this is God's promise to rid us of all dangers in our life that matter and the most important danger of all is the danger of sin and eternal death. Now if you and your neighbors have things to fear in this life with all the school shootings and the economic bad news and the terrorist threats against your nation, you need to know that all of them combined are nothing, zero, in comparison to the greatest danger of all, the danger of our sin condemning us for all eternity and leaving us under the wrath of God. So as my son's birth signaled the end of the threat of Syria and Israel against Judah and King Ahaz, so God's Son has signaled the end to the greatest threat of all, your rebellious condition called being a sinner.

Unfortunately, King Ahaz wasn't interested in trusting in God's salvation. If he did, he knew he would have to acknowledge God as the one who rescued them and give credit to Him and give allegiance to Him, so he wouldn't do it. Here was God's response:

The LORD spoke to me again: "Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and rejoice over Rezin and the son of Remaliah, therefore, behold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory. And it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks, and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel." (Isaiah 8:5-8 ESV)

This is beautiful. Please don't miss what God is saying here. He said because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently and are putting their trust instead in Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel then I (God) am going to allow the Assyrian army to sweep over the banks of the Euphrates and come right up to Jerusalem. The waters of Shiloah refer to a small spring that fed Jerusalem with water and the word means gentle. Do you know that another word for Jesus is Shiloh, meaning the gentle one? In the end, Ahaz was refusing to place his trust in the gentle and quiet power of the Lord Jesus Christ for his salvation, perhaps because He is gentle. How many today refuse to place their trust in Jesus because he is gentle or at least came as the gentle lamb in his first coming? People like those your pastor witnessed to yesterday who seemed to have no interest at all in hearing about this gentle Savior.

That's the majority of Americans. They want no part of Jesus, and most of the rest claim lip service to belonging to Jesus but are not truly trusting in him, not as long as they keep worrying and let their fears control their hearts. But out of the many God is calling a few, a remnant that will trust in him whole-heartedly and lean on him when terrors come. These are the ones who provide comfort to others while being held hostage together. They are the ones who stare at death with a smile because they know their Savior will be waiting for them on the other side. God speaks of this remnant in the next passage. Listen as he speaks:

Be broken, you peoples, and be shattered; give ear, all you far countries; strap on your armor and be shattered; strap on your armor and be shattered. Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us. (Isaiah 8:9-10 ESV)

These are the faithful in Judah who love their God and trust their God. They are able to mockingly call out to the ferocious enemies and say, bring it on, do your worst, strap on your AK-47's and your beheading swords, they don't frighten us. Why? For God is with us. Immanuel. Jesus is with us. What kind of people are these who belong to the remnant and are true Christians? Jonathon Edwards describes them this way:

As he has more holy boldness, so he has less self-confidence. . . . As he is more sure than others of deliverance from hell, so he has a greater sense that he deserves it. He is less apt than others to be shaken in faith, but more apt than others to be moved by solemn warnings, God's frowns and the calamities of others. He has the firmest comfort, but the softest heart; richer than others, but poorest of all in spirit. He is the tallest and strongest saint, but the least and tenderest child among them. ¹

Does this description describe you? Then you would have been one of the ones in Jerusalem shouting to the enemies, "strap on your armor and do your worst, but God is on our side and there is nothing you can do to us eternally that will harm us." Do you have that kind of faith? That is why I am here today to give you added faith in your Messiah and His Father in Heaven.

The Lord God reminded me and chided me in my own faith. Listen to what he said to me:

For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: "Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken." (Isaiah 8:11-15 ESV)

In other words God was telling me in very straight forward language that I was not to fear what the people in Jerusalem were fearing. I was not to be afraid of what the king of Syria or the king of Israel were about to do or even more what the king of Assyria was going to do after they were gone. What are you afraid of today? Are you afraid of home grown terrorists gunning down shoppers at Midway Mall or lone wolf terrorists attacking the local high school? The Lord said to me, do not label those threats as if they are threats and do not talk about them the same way people talk about them, but instead be fearful of me. I was told to live as if God was the all-powerful one, as if God was the all holy one who would guarantee justice in the end and save his people as he chooses and in his time. If you live in fear of what is coming ahead as

¹ From *Isaiah: God Saves Sinners* by Ray Ortlund Kindle edition page 94.

many are inclined to do, then in reality you are living as if God is not God and He is not in control of your life. Does that honor him? I think not.

Here was my advice to the fearful in Jerusalem:

Bind up the testimony; seal the teaching among my disciples. I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him. Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion. And when they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward. And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness. (Isaiah 8:16-22 ESV)

If you are fearful then get back into his word and teach it to the next generation. It is God's word that gives us faith, not some mystical feeling of his presence. It is his word that informs us of his promises and reminds us of his faithfulness. But there are those who refuse to find their hope in the word of God. They would rather get their hope and information of the future through witchcraft and talking to mediums and going to séances. How foolish. The reason these people do not go to the word is that they have no dawn in them or no light in them, which is the light of Christ. Instead they go around with their faces to the ground in a constant state of misery and gloom. Their fate is hell and eternal darkness.

But that won't be the case for the remnant. The faithful remnant will hear the message of Christ's good news and respond with joy and gladness. The cities that were hardest hit to the north of Jerusalem when Assyria attacked Israel were the ones who took the brunt of the punishment for their sin but there is a day coming and has come when those same cities would be the first to hear of the good news of the eternal gospel of God for salvation. Listen to this promise:

But there will be no 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 has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

Because of their rebellion against God those cities received the worst of punishments as invading armies came marching towards Jerusalem, but God is always gracious. He gives the best to those who have suffered the most. He promised that when Messiah would finally come that He would center His ministry there in Galilee and that the Galileans would be the first ones to receive and welcome the good news of salvation that has come to them in Jesus.

The Spirit overcame me and I started prophesying these words:

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.

This was me saying that God was going to multiply His people and grow a large remnant from the peoples of the earth starting in Galilee, and those who were going to respond would respond with such joy it would look like a harvest celebration after a bountiful harvest and it would look like soldiers dancing after they divided the spoils of victory.

I continues in my prophecy exulting in the Lord: I said:

For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

Just as Gideon defeated the Midianites with a mere 300 men, a miracle of God against overwhelming odds, so will the Lord defeat sin and Satan and death in the future with an army of one. But it is not just sin and death that will be defeated by this army of one, so will every army that is recruited to fight against God's people be crushed and annihilated, as I predicted, **For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.**

But, who is this army of one? Who is this future Gideon who will defeat all the terrorists of the world and all of the political hacks who are ruining the lives of the common people, and who is this one who will defeat Satan and his satanic plans to keep people in chains of sin and misery? He is Jesus the Mighty God who came to us 2016 years ago as a baby in a Bethlehem manger.

For to us a child is born, 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. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (Isaiah 9:1-7 ESV)

This supernatural divine Gideon will come to save the world as a child. When the forces of Sauron in Tolkien's novels can only use brute force and overpowering intimidation, God sends a baby, under the radar, underwhelming everyone's expectations. And in the end, when he comes in His glory, he will wear the crown as King of Kings and Lord of Lords and rule with justice in Jerusalem. His name is Wonderful Counselor because His wisdom is greater than Solomon's and he has the exact answer to every problem in this world. He is the Mighty God, meaning he has the power to execute His wisdom and overpower any adversary. He is the Everlasting Father which means that He is the fatherly shepherd of not only Israel but all God's people who comprise the final remnant. He is the Prince of Peace, bringing all enemies to reconciliation with one another and us to the Father above. And the increase of the joy of his reign? Well there will be no end to the joy His kingdom brings to His people. Never in all eternity will we say I've seen that before and today's joy is old. No, it will be ever expanding throughout all eternity. This is the nature of the king whose birthday you celebrate this week. Worship and bow down before His majesty.

