

**Sermon Topic: All I Want For Christmas Is To Walk In The Light
(27 Nov 2016)**

Sermon Text: Isaiah 2:1-5, Romans 13:11-14, Matthew 26:36-44

Introduction

Advent:

- marks 1st day of new Christian year
- spans 4 weeks up to Christmas Eve.
- In Latin means “coming” or “arrival”:
 - o looks backwards to Jesus’ 1st arrival at Bethlehem as Savior
 - o points forward to the return of Jesus as Messiah and Lord

Advent is significant:

- invites us NOT to rush into Christmas without preparation
- teaches us how to behave patiently and productively as we wait for the full Kingdom of God to come.

Reflection:

a. In contemporary Singapore, what is the advantage(s) of following the Advent season?

b. Share with your group your Christmas desire / longing for 2016?

2016, a year more uncertain and painful than 2015:

- Deepening conflict in the Middle East and North Africa, political violence, religious crimes in Syria, the refugee crisis, increased extremism and terrorism, human trafficking, Zika outbreak, Brexit, middle classes becoming poorer and the poor becoming miserable.
- the world is looking for salvation and solution out of the troubled mess.
- Who should the people go looking for when their hearts are troubled?
Where can they find light when their path is dark?

Prophet Isaiah:

- invites us to anticipate a time when all peoples and nations will turn toward the light of God for counsel and direction.

“This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: in the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many people will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house 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. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many people. 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. Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.” (Isaiah 2:1-5)

- Isaiah was a Hebrew born in 8th century BC
- Served under 4 kings (Ahaz, Uzziah, Jotham and Hezekiah)
- Known to advise God’s people to turn to God for everything in life.
- The prophecies he received from God
 - o spoke not only of Israel and Judah’s destiny in the near future (historical)
 - o but also into the future far greater, prior to the arrival and return of Jesus Christ (Christological)

Plot and Problem of Israel and Judah

- From a human perspective
 - o Israel and Judah was progressing and prospering, despite political instability and uncertainty (threats from Assyria, Nazi of that time)
- From God’s perspective, however, the people of God were
 - o sick with unbelief, idolatry and negligence of justice.
 - o Religious externally, going to the temple for worship and sacrifice:
 - But God said they were hypocrites
 - Moral and spiritual rebels in their hearts and by their actions.

- Trust in military alliances and political powers for deliverance:
 - o Indicts depth of backsliding
 - o Slide into rationalization and self-help solutions instead of seeking God.

Proclaiming the Power and Promise of God

- Prophet Isaiah refused to be moved. He immensely believes in the power of God and that the whole world belongs to the Almighty:
 - Pleads with the people to look to Mount Zion and the temple as symbols of their salvation.
 - Paints a vivid picture of God's dominion in the future
 - God will save His chosen, govern peoples and nations, and stop war and hunger.
 - Even blind Gentiles will come to the light of God.
 - Proclaims that God is sovereign above all
 - Prophesies that God will establish such a dominion. His strategy: through the birth of a child (*Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:6*)
- People of God refuse to believe and submit to God's way of salvation. As such, they refuse His way of deliverance and governance.

Reflection:

- 1. What got you down and brought you into darkness in 2016?**
- 2. How did you deal with it? How would you describe your strategy of "deliverance"?**
- 3. What did you learn from Isaiah's words and God's heart for His people in the above passage?**
- 4. What would God want you to do differently when you encounter tough times?**

- With many challenges coming up in 2017 are also many opportunities to walk in the light and point people to the God of light.
- God has promised to lead and teach people and nations about His ways through Jesus Christ

- The day will come when the prophecy of Isaiah about the Messiah will be completely fulfilled with the 2nd coming of Christ.

Apostle Paul says:

The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. (Romans 13:11-14)

Paul speaks to believers with great urgency because:

- He is convinced that the Savior will return as Messiah to judge the living and the dead.
- In waiting for His 2nd arrival, He tells us to:
 - o Wake up – if we belong to Jesus, we are no longer spiritually dead.
 - o Clean up – if we belong to Jesus, we should not walk in steps of secrecy and darkness.
 - o Grow up – if we belong to Jesus, we will desire to make it our goal to grow into a person just like Jesus, shining forth the light of God.
- Isaiah and Paul tell forth the Word and work of God.
- They declare a vision of the future
 - o to encourage us to begin to obey God today.

Reflection:

In light of God's promise to return for you, what kind of person will you be today? Are there areas you need to wake up, clean up and grow up?