

“Come and See”  
Isaiah 9: 2 -7  
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In one respect this metaphor of Isaiah’s is very relevant for us and our age because we are also a people who walk in darkness. There seems little need to explain.

But...

If darkness is meant to suggest a world where nobody can see very well – either themselves, or each other, or where they are heading, or even where they are standing at the moment;

If darkness is meant to convey a sense of uncertainty, of being lost, of being afraid:

If darkness suggests conflict, conflict between races, between religions, between nations, between individuals who are all pretty much out for themselves when you come right down to it; then we live in a world that knows much about darkness.

- Darkness is what our newspapers and our TV newscasts are all about.
- Darkness is what most of our best contemporary literature is about.
- Darkness fills the skies over our own cities, no less than over the cities of our enemies.

In our individual lives we know much about darkness too.

If we are people who pray, darkness is apt to be a lot of what our prayers are about.

If we are people who do not pray, it is apt to be darkness in one form or another that has stopped us from praying.

The prophet Isaiah certainly knew the deep and disorienting darkness of despair when he wrote today's passage of Scripture. His people had experienced the rod of oppression, the tramping of warriors and the tumult of battle. They knew the reality of depression and death. Darkness had settled on the land of Israel when, out of nowhere, there came good news of great joy:

“For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests up on his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace ...” (vv. 6-7).

A child was born in Bethlehem, and the world was introduced to a new way of seeing. Expectations were turned upside down by a prince being born in a barn, a Mighty God taking the form of a vulnerable baby.

This birth marked the beginning of a new era in human history, one in which injustice; selfishness and violence were to be replaced by justice, righteousness and peace.

But like all new forms of seeing, this innovation required some adaptation. It took a while for people to get used to seeing with the eyes of Jesus.

*Maybe we're still making the adjustment today.*

So what does it mean to see the world through the eyes of the one who was born long ago in the City of David — our Savior, Christ the Lord?

Isaiah gives us a clue with the four names he attaches to the child who is put on the throne of David and given the kingdom of God.

To have the eyes of Jesus is *to share the vision of a Wonderful Counselor;*

this means that we come to see the world with the perspective of the one who is our guide and our leader. We are not forced to figure out everything for ourselves, but we can follow the clear and compelling guidance of the one who knows the path to health and wholeness and everlasting salvation.

Consider the fresh new perspective that Jesus the Counselor gives us on the way we are to treat our enemies.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy,’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:43-45).

When we see with the eyes of Jesus, we aren’t looking to love only those people who love us, because everyone does that. Instead, we are looking to love everyone — friends *and* enemies — as children of our heavenly Father.

That’s a whole new path for us to walk, and it’s one that leads us to everlasting life.

“Do not be overcome by evil,” says the apostle Paul in his summary of this new approach; instead, “overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21).

To see with these lenses is also *to perceive the activity of a Mighty God*. Sure, this may be hard to visualize when Jesus first appears on the earth as a powerless child, but keep in mind that he grows into a man who goes so far as to conquer sin and death. He’s not the weak and skinny Jesus who appears in the animated series *South Park*, hosting a cable access show called *Jesus and Pals*. No, the real Jesus is one who has the skill and the strength to achieve significant victories.

Remember this when you are doing battle in your own life ... with a temptation ... with an obstacle ... with a setback ... with a rejection ... with a disappointment ... with a particularly crushing loss. You have a Mighty God

riding in front of you, one with the strength and the skill to provide real leadership in battle. Follow the guidance of Jesus when you are feeling bruised and beaten down, and he will show you the way to emerge victorious.

“Thanks be to God,” says Paul to the Corinthians, “who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Seeing with the eyes of Jesus also gives us *a clear vision of our Everlasting Father*. God is not an absentee father, nor is he an abusive one. Instead, he is a close and caring and attentive Father — one who has deep concern for the welfare of his people.

“Look at the birds of the air,” says Jesus to his first followers; “they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” (Matthew 6:26).

Jesus encourages us not to worry about clothing or food or shelter or anything else we need for life. He assures us that our Everlasting Father will meet our needs, as long as we put time and energy into pursuing his kingdom and his righteousness.

This is not to say that it is easy for every Christian to embrace the metaphor of God as a heavenly Father. Psychologist Bill Gaultiere has heard people say,

“My parents divorced when I was 3. I hardly ever saw my father after that. Now it’s hard for me to connect with God.”

Or, “My dad was an angry alcoholic. He used to refer to himself as G.O.D., short for ‘Good Old Dad.’ He thought it was a joke, but I have the same distrust and disdain for my heavenly Father.”

Here’s where it is important to remember that Jesus and his heavenly Father are one God, so the face of Jesus is the same as the face of God the Father. Jesus is our Everlasting Father, and when we need an image of a close and

caring and attentive parent, we can look directly at him.

Finally, the eyes of Jesus help us to *see the world from the perspective of the Prince of Peace*. The mission of Jesus is to bring peace, prosperity and well-being to all people, and he challenges us to work toward the very same goals.

So often we confuse the interests of our nation with the interests of Jesus, or we assume that our own sense of security is going to line up perfectly with the intentions of our Lord. When we look at life in this way, we might be in need of a vision correction. We might need to make sure that we have put on our Jesus Eyes.

To see eye to eye with the Prince of Peace is to live

“With justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore” (Isaiah 9:7).

It means to embrace these virtues in our personal lives, in our community involvement, in the way we treat strangers, and in the way we practice our politics. It means that we see the world as a place that needs more peace, more justice and more righteousness, and that our mission as Christians is to push toward these goals in whatever way we can.

As we come to see and understand Jesus as Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, we are called to sing *Adeste fidelis* –

“Come all ye faithful,” and all ye who would like to be faithful if you only could, all ye who walk in darkness and hunger for light. Have faith enough, hope enough, despair enough, and foolishness enough at least to draw near to see for yourself.

*Adeste fidelis* – “come and behold him, born the king of angels. “

Speak to him or be silent before him. In whatever way seems right to you and at whatever time, come to him with your empty hands.

The great promise is that to come to him, who was born in Bethlehem, is to find coming to birth within ourselves something stronger and braver, gladder, kinder, and holier than we ever knew before or than we ever could have know without him.

### **Let us pray**

Dear God, in the darkness of the virgin's womb the holy child grows.

In the darkness of the world's pain, the blessed light begins to kindle.

In the darkness of our own doubting of thee and ourselves, the great hope begins to rise again like a lump in the throat;

The hope that thou will come to us truly, that the child will be born again in our midst, the Prince of Peace in a world at war, the hope that thou wilt ransom us and our world from the darkness that seeks to destroy us.

O Lord, the gift of new life, new light, can be a gift truly only if we open ourselves to receive it.

So this is our prayer, Lord, that thou will open our eyes to see thy glory in the coming again of light each day, that thou will open our ears to hear the angels hymn of joy stirring within us at the coming of the child;

Open our hearts to the transforming power of thy love as it comes to us through the love of all those who hold us most dear and those who have sacrificed the most for us.

Be born among us that we may ourselves be born.

Be born within us that by words and deeds of love we may bear the tidings of thy birth to a world that dies for lack of love.

We ask all of this in the child's name. **Amen**