

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Friday, December 24th, 2021
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Love in Christ
Isaiah 9:2-7

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship (Responsive)

All God's people—

Boys and girls, women, men:

Come and worship!

Shepherds, Magi, saints, and angels:

Come and worship! Come and worship!

All who need the Savior, all who long for comfort:

Come and worship, come and worship Christ, the newborn King!

Prayer of Adoration

God of mystery and wonder,

Creator, Christ and Spirit,

On this holy night, the angels sing your praises with great joy!

Glory to you, O God!

The shepherds welcome your saving love, born in a manger.

Glory to you, O God!

Mary and Joseph ponder your promise, cradled in their arms.

Glory to you, O God!

And so we come to praise you,

singing with the angels,

amazed with the shepherds,

cradling the Christ Child in our hearts.

Glory to you, O God, Source of Light and Love for all people. Amen.

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Prepare the way of the Lord.

We light this candle in hope,

the hope of our coming Savior, Jesus.

Prepare the way of the Lord.
 We light this candle in love,
 The love that Jesus, our Savior, has for us.

Prepare the way of the Lord.
 We light this candle in joy,
 the joy that we have in Jesus, our Savior.

Prepare the way of the Lord.
 We light this candle in peace,
 the peace that Jesus, our Savior, gives to the world.

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
 We light this candle because Jesus, the light of the world,
 was born on this day,
 and he brightens all things.
Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!

Opening Hymn

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen.**

Responsive Reading

Titus 2:11-14

*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,
 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled,
 upright, and godly lives in the present age,
 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior
 Jesus Christ,
 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a
 people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

Music Ministry

Prayer for illumination

Mighty God,
 the shepherds of old were full of your praises,
 saying that all they had heard and seen
 was mirrored by what they had been told.
 Move among us now with your Holy Spirit,
 that we too might hear and experience
 the wonder and joy of the living Word
 as we seek to welcome the written Word into our lives.
 In Jesus' name, **Amen.**

Scripture

Isaiah 9:2-7

² **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.**

³ **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.**

⁴ **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.**

⁵ **For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
 and every garment rolled in blood
 will be burned as fuel for the fire.**

⁶ **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.**

⁷ **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.**

Sermon

What is Christmas? By definition it is Christ's Mas or Christs Celebration. This is why there has been a lot of debate about the term Merry Xmas. The irony being that the X is actually in recognition o the Greek Xhristos which begins with the letter X. Christmas is a meant to be a celebration of the coming of Christ our lord and saviour no matter how it is spelled.

If you were to go out and survey the general populace today, on Christmas Eve, you would find many people think of this as the winter holiday, or Santa's season. There are very few places other than churches who still celebrate the coming of Christ during Christmas.

This is the truth of how many people are celebrating Christmas even as we gather here tonight. The have the celebration, but they are missing Christ, the guest of honor. Tonight, we are called to look at Christ through the lens of Isaiah, who prophesized the coming of the King of King and Lord of Lords who he described as; Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. This is the Christ we will remember the first coming of and celebrate the future second coming of tonight!

We all need someone to lean on at times. Life is difficult and when we are strained having someone to listen to us, who understands our situation is a blessing. Jesus is this wonderful counsellor for all who follow him.

Jesus understands us, he entered into this world the same way as everyone of us, a helpless babe, in fact he probably had a tougher start than many people gathered here tonight. He grew up in a small town, which was unliked in the region and even faced the same temptations that we have in life.

Hebrews 4:15

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Jesus has walked in our shoes; he knows the human experience. He has been tempted by the things of this world and he has always chosen to not give in to that temptation. Jesus understands the trials that each of us go through better than any of the counsellors that people pay to visit.

Even as he was preparing to go to the cross – to die so that the debt of the sins of his followers would be forgiven – He prepared his disciples for his departure. He promised his followers someone who would be with them, help them and guide them.

John 16:12-14

¹² “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

He sent the counsellor, the Holy spirit to be active in the life of every believer. The Holy spirit is our guide, our interpreter, and our comforter. Through the Holy Spirit we are brought to an awareness of what it is that God is calling for us to do in our lives.

Often when we face problems in our lives, we seek the advice of professionals or experienced individuals. When we have financial issues we talk to family, friends, and advisors. When we have relationship issues, we often seek out the advice of family who seem to be in good relationships or go to a professional counsellor. When we have emotional issues, we are often seeking out the help of a therapist. How often do we turn to the counsel of Jesus?

Jesus is the wonderful counsellor. He knows all about financial problems, relationship problems and emotional problems. He knows about time management problems, health problems and any other form of problem you can possibly have in your life. Jesus is the ultimate counsellor, and we should be willing to turn to him and seek his guidance when we are facing difficulties or questions in our life. Consult his word in the holy scriptures, spend some time in prayer and listening. The best thing about having Jesus as a counsellor is that his office is always open and does not require an appointment.

Not only is he this Wonderful Counsellor, but Jesus is also our Mighty God.

We might find it difficult to picture the baby in the manger as ‘Mighty God’. The word mighty brings forth images of Heroes like we see in the Marvel universe. The truth is that Jesus is the ultimate hero. Christmas celebrates the coming into this world of God’s divine presence. Jesus is the only being that is both fully human and fully God. He came into this world for our salvation and as an example of God’s triumph over both sin and death in this world.

Isaiah 41: 8-10

**⁸ But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;
⁹ you whom I took from the ends of the earth,
and called from its farthest corners,
saying to you, “You are my servant,**

I have chosen you and not cast you off”;
¹⁰ **fear not, for I am with you;**
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

God has promised to use his divine power to strengthen his believers, to help them to endure whatever come their way in their lifetimes. God has promised to strengthen you, to strengthen me and to strengthen any who call upon his name.

So, what strength do you need this Christmas season. Do you need physical strength to get going each day? Do you need emotional strength to get through some tough times and situations? Do you need the spiritual strength to stand up for your faith in a world that is rapidly turning against it? Whatever strength you need, turn to God! Know that he is with you and will be your strength.

We can always turn to the Wonderful Counsellor, to our Mighty God for his strength because he is the Everlasting Father.

That babe that was born in stable was fully man and fully God. A full member of the Holy trinity; the father, the son, and the holy spirit. Three distinct persons in one God. The more we learn about Jesus the more we learn about the Father.

John 14:8-9

⁸ Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?

Jesus lived his life as a compassionate, caring, and loving figure to all those who follow him. As part of the trinity, he represented God the Father, the perfect father. All who have pledged their lives to Jesus have become Children of God.

We become Children of God as we learned about in Romans,

Romans 8:16-17

¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Jesus is like our older brother. He cares for us in the same way that the father does. He looks after us, takes care of our needs, protects us from the things that would harm us, gives us guidance in our lives.

Not only do we get these things from Jesus, but we have also been given the ultimate gift of eternal life. God gives eternal life to all of his faithful followers. We do not earn it, we do not buy it, we do not do anything, we just receive it as a gift from God. We get it by placing our trust and faith in Christ as our lord and saviour. When we trust in God and faithfully follow him, we receive the greatest Christmas gift possible: eternal life.

John 1:12

¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

All it takes is belief, real belief, not the superficial saying I believe and then living our lives the way we want. We need to receive him as our lord and saviour, submit ourselves to the authority of Gods word and acknowledge we need to obey his word. Once we do that, we are given eternal life. Our everlasting father will always be there for us. We are forever a child of God with full access to our Father, our Counsellor, and His might and this brings us peace in our life.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. From the times of the prophets Isaiah and Micah the messiah has been described as the Prince of Peace. He will usher in an age where there will be no more conflict, no more war.

Micah 4:3

**He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore;**

No leader in history has been able to usher in lasting peace. Many have tried to make peace, but at some point, every nation has conflict once again, either internally or with another nation. The whole world has been in conflict since the beginning of human history. However, Jesus will usher in an age where no nation will be in conflict. The King of kings will establish a kingdom at the end of the ages where there will be a peace that continues for eternity.

Not only will he establish eternal peace when he comes, but he has given us peace in our day to day lives when we turn to him.

Jesus taught the disciples

John 14:27

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Jesus told the disciples that he was leaving them his peace. His peace is the Hebrew word 'Shalom'. This is a peace that means much more than the simple lack of conflict. This is a peace we can experience of heart, mind, body, and soul. Knowing that we have God with us always as a counsellor, a mighty power and as father means we can turn over our troubles to him and be confident that he is in control of our lives, even when we believe that we are living in chaos.

Mark Buchannan, a pastor in British Columbia, wrote about a young woman who, in his words, "had a desolate past, a blighted landscape of childhood neglect and sexual abuse and, stemming from this, the many broken pieces of her own bad choices." As she poured out her heartbreaking story in his office, he sat in stunned silence, not knowing what to say or do. He acknowledged that therapy helps deal with past hurts, but he is not a therapist. Somehow God prompted him to help this woman by not looking at her past but seeing the possibility of a new future. He helped her encounter a Wonderful Counselor, someone who knew the way home. He helped her find a Mighty God more powerful than all her brokenness of the past. He introduced to her an Everlasting Father who would never abuse her with his love. And he shared a Prince of Peace who had come to make her life whole again

This is the baby that is born in the stable and placed in the manger. Will you invite him into your lives this Christmas? Let us celebrate the guest of honor in our hearts this evening, our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace this Christmas season!

Let us pray

Glorious God, as we contemplate your great love for us help us to recognise the fullness of the best Christmas gift, we could ever imagine in your son Jesus Christ. Give us the desire to seek and accept your wonderful counsel, the comfort to rest in your mighty strength and the knowledge of your eternal love which will allow us to know your calming peace. Help us to trust our lives to this baby who grew up to become our Savior. We ask this in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Hymn

Invitation to Offering

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given. God's gift in the Christ child arrived in a small town, a humble stable, to a couple no one invited in – and still that gift changes lives. Our gifts to God this Christmas share in that miracle.

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's

Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3) We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer.

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewsperthoffering@gmail.com Please include your Offering Envelope # in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (eg Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer

Generous and loving God, your gift to us in Christ Jesus still draws us to manger and opens our hearts with wonder. Bless our gifts in his name, so that they may draw others to your love and the blessing we have found in the One born for us. Amen.

Closing Hymn

Pastoral Prayer

God of the starry heavens and the good old earth,
Eternal God, God with us,
Tonight you come among us in the figure of a baby,
a newborn reaching out to us,
to bring a smile to our lips and hope to our hearts.
Thank you for your tenderness with which you touch our lives.

Tonight as we remember the baby lying in a manger,
We pray for peace:
Peace in all the places where there is anger or war or fear...
Peace in all the hearts that know sorrow or stress...
We pray for people who will not sleep safely tonight
because of conflict in their lives.....
Cradle all these people and places in your love
so the world may sleep in heavenly peace this night.

Tonight as we remember the mother Mary rocking her baby,
we pray for all children born this Christmas season...
Watch over mothers and fathers and grandparents,
hoping for the best for their newborns...
Help us create communities where every child is valued
and every family has enough ...
May families rejoice because Christ the Saviour is born

for each of us and for all of us.

Tonight as we remember the father Joseph protecting his little one,
we pray for all those watching over the helpless and the hopeless...
Be with all those who must work tonight
to keep the world safe and to care for those in need....
Be with those who are sick or sad or lonely
so each one will know your comforting presence...

God of the starry heavens and the good old earth,
Eternal God, God with us,
Tonight as we remember the shepherds coming in haste,
and the wise men coming in wonder,
open our hearts to reach out to the Christ Child,
to receive the gift you offer us in him,
even as we offer our love to you in his name.
Bless us in the year ahead so we can share your love
with all the lives that touch ours.
We pray this in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Benediction

The joy of the angels,
the eagerness of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the Magi,
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,
and the peace of the Christ child be yours this Christmas.
And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**