

Border Crossing Christmas series

#1 – Crossing from Darkness into Light

12/2/2018

This morning I'm excited to begin a new Christmas series entitled "**Border Crossing Christmas.**" If you've paid any attention to the news lately, you're well aware that there's a lot of talk about strengthening our borders in order to not allow foreigners to so easily come into our country. Now, I'm not here to debate either side of this issue, but in thinking about this issue recently I became aware that there were all sorts of walls and borders that Jesus broke through when he left heaven and came to earth in the form of a child. So, over the next few weeks leading up to the celebration of Christmas we're going to discover the significance of the many borders Jesus broke through on that night in Bethlehem.

The first border we're going to look at this morning is the wall of deep darkness that Jesus broke through and shined brightly the light of heaven into the darkness of our world.

And as you drive around neighborhoods right now you can begin to see the transformation of many houses with the beautiful Christmas lights hanging from their houses, bushes and trees. This past week they had the lighting of the enormous Christmas tree on **Rockefeller Center**. That tree is lit with over **5 miles of lights**, which is only a few more than Connie typically puts on our Christmas tree.

So, it doesn't take much observation to realize that for some reason beautiful lights are an integral part of our annual Christmas celebration. But why?

Traditionally, we're not really sure why we celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25th. But one prominent theory is that it's because there was a Roman midwinter festival called "Saturnalia" that took place in December and so it was a good time to join in the celebration by observing Jesus' birth. But if you dig a little deeper you'll also realize that the celebration of Saturnalia occurred around December 25th because it was around the time of the Winter Solstice which is the day with the least amount of sunlight. To the pagans this meant that the winter was over and spring was coming and so they had a festival to celebrate and worship the sun winning over the darkness of winter. So naturally, it seemed like a good fit to also celebrate God's light coming into the darkness of our world in the person of Jesus.

One of the first glimmers of God's intent to send a light into the darkness of our world is recorded for us by the prophet Isaiah, 700 years before Jesus came to earth. The structure of the book of Isaiah is primarily about God's judgment upon his people for their continued sin and turning away from Him. He pronounces that He will bring about their defeat and captivity through foreign nations. And through historical records we can now look back and realize how amazingly accurate these prophecies were. Chapter 8 details some of the ways that people will turn away from God but it ends with these foreboding words: "***Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.***" Isaiah 8:22 (NIV)

The situation sounds pretty bleak and dark. And it sounds eerily similar to the conditions we are living in right now. People fighting with each other over an endless list of things and it seems like we're always holding our breath awaiting word of the next shooting to occur in our country. They needed some light in 700BC and we need some light today as well.

But God didn't just leave them in their deep darkness. For the very next chapter presents God's miraculous remedy for their darkness and ours.

Please listen or follow along as I read from Isaiah 9 the first 7 verses.

Read Isaiah 9:1-7

The promise of a light, not from us, but from outside of us.

Did you notice the promise in **verse 5** that there will come a time when all fighting will come to an end. And the way that will happen is not by one earthly army soundly defeating all others but by God taking over and reigning through a child who will be unlike any other child.

Verses 6 & 7 is really a birth announcement. However, it's unlike any other birth announcement that's ever been mailed out. For all other birth announcements come a couple of weeks after the parents give birth to their beautiful baby. And usually the birth announcement will include the name of the baby, their weight and length. The birth announcement by Isaiah occurred 700 years before baby Jesus was born and includes 4 specific and glorious descriptions of what this baby will be and achieve. He will be:

- **Wonderful Counselor:** that corresponds to my need for wisdom and guidance. The Lord has better advice for you than anyone else. It is amazingly and wonderfully different from the advice of the world.
- **Mighty God:** that corresponds to my need for strength and power to live my life pleasing to the Lord. There is no greater power in all the universe than his. It will prevail over all his enemies and one day put an end to all fighting. It is full of hope.
- **Everlasting Father:** that corresponds to my need for firm and gentle care and provision. Especially if I've never known it before. And as an everlasting father he will never die, like some of your earthly fathers. He will never get old and senile and leave you like an orphan on your own.
- **Prince of Peace:** that corresponds to my need for quietness and rest and freedom from trouble and agitation. The government will be upon his shoulders as a great prince and his kingdom will be everlasting peace.

So, for 700 years of darkness the Jewish people waited for the fulfillment of this glorious promise. But rather than their lives and situations getting better they seemed to continually get worse and darker.

But then in the opening pages of the New Testament the long awaited light begins to invade our planet.

- First a message of hope and light appears through the message of an angel to an elderly man by the name of **Zechariah** as he's serving in the temple. The angel tells him that him and his elderly wife, Elizabeth are going to have a baby.
- Then the message of light and hope continues when the angel appears to **Mary** and informs her that she's going to be the chosen mother of this long awaited light – the Messiah.
- Then an angel appears to a **confused Joseph** confirming what he'd already told Mary.
- And then one night, as **shepherds** were tending to their sheep, the dark night sky suddenly was filled with heavenly light as they were personally invited to go and see this invasion of light into the darkness of this world in the form of a little baby – God incarnate.
- The shepherds quickly went and saw for themselves this amazing light lying in a stable. And then they went out and began to **tell everyone else** about this amazing light.

The apostle John has his own unique account of Jesus coming into our dark world. And he says it this way: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not understood it."* **John 1:1-5 (NIV)**

Jesus came into our darkness in order to show us His light. But the reality is that the world in general doesn't understand nor accepts this light and they continue to live in their own darkness.

Example of Kris. – dressed in a red plaid shirt and wearing slippers.

That's one of the qualities of a light. It shines in places and reveals things that we'd just as soon keep hidden or covered up. The light of Jesus reveals those sins that we think we've kept hidden. And yet, as Jesus reveals those things in our life, He also offers us His love and grace, forgiveness and hope. Jesus doesn't leave us in our despair and heaps on his judgment in the midst of our brokenness. And God

doesn't just sit in heaven and point his finger at us pointing out our sins to us. No, compelled by His love for you, He left His position of power and authority, took off his royal garments and came to be born as a baby in our darkness so that He could eventually grow up and die on a cross and pay the penalty for our sins. I find it tremendously significant that on the day Jesus died on the cross the sky went dark, symbolizing the effect all of our sins had when they were placed on the shoulders of Jesus. And in that darkness, carrying all the weight of our sins, He felt the aloneness of being separated by his Father for the very first time in his eternal existence by our sins. At that moment there was this huge wall of darkness separating him from his Heavenly Father. But Jesus broke through that wall of darkness when he arose from the grave in the brightness of the 3rd day and once again the light of hope shined and dispelled the darkness. And the disciples who were hiding in fear suddenly were given hope in their disillusioned and shattered lives. And their new found hope compelled them to live transformed lives which changed them and as a result has continued to spread God's light into the darkness for over 2,000 years. They became a light in the darkness and that's what we're called to do as well. To live our lives as lights into every corner of the world we find ourselves. To tell others of how God has rescued us from our own personal darkness and brought us into His amazing light of hope.

Listen to the truth of God's light invading our darkness in the following verses.

Colossians 1:13-14 (NIV) *For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

Ephesians 5:8-13 (NIV) *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord*

1 Peter 2:9-10 (NIV) *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

This is just a small sampling of many verses that emphasize that as Christians we have been brought out of darkness and into God's glorious light. And now we are empowered to live constantly in His life of hope and spread that light of hope to others who are still in darkness.

So, let me ask you two very important self-examination questions:

1. How has God's light invaded and transformed your life? That's your testimony.
2. How is God's light shining out of you?
3. Who do you know that needs to experience God's light of hope?

I find it encouraging and significant that when the apostle John who first described Jesus' birth he described it as a divine light entering into our darkness. Many years later he was given a vision of heaven, which he recorded for us in the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation. And while there's lots of exciting and sometime confusing details in that book, one thing is clear is the ending. God wins over evil and at the end John sees God seated on his throne and he describes what he sees in these words. And we're going to read that great description together this morning to close our service with. But before we close the service out I'd like to offer an invitation hymn as an opportunity for anyone who is still living in darkness and needs to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. To accept his death on the cross as the payment for your sins and to accept His grace and forgiveness into your life. And then to be filled with God's Holy Spirit which will equip you to live every day filled with His light and His message of hope.

Revelation 21:22-25 (NIV) *I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.*

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#1 – Crossing from Darkness into Light
Sermon Notes

What's the purpose of "light"?

What significance has "light" had in your celebration of Christ's birth?

Why might we celebrate Christ's birth on December 25th?

Jesus came into a dark world. Would you say our world is dark now?
Why or why not?

What significance do these names for Jesus have in your life:

- Wonderful Counselor:
- Mighty God:
- Everlasting Father:
- Prince of Peace:

In what ways did Jesus shine His light into people's lives?

Application:

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