Nov. 19, 2017 Isaiah: A Child Is Born Isaiah 9:1-7 (John 8:12) Liturgical color: Green PRAYER OF THE DAY God of light, There can be overwhelming obscurity in this world. But you shine your light and increase joy, and for your brilliance we are grateful. Amen. HYMNS Immortal, invisible, God only wise ELW 834 Creator of the stars of night ELW 245, H82 60, UMH 692, NCH 111 When twilight comes ELW 566 CHORAL True Light, Keith Hampton

John 8: 12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

Children’s Message – Night Light… comfort, peace, warm, cozy, watches over us all night… Like Jesus

Announcements Prayers

Thanksgiving services & well wishes folks in hospital, those undergoing

treatments, and those just done

Life begins at 75

I’m walking on sunshine, don’t it feel good?! – *Katrina and the Waves 1983*

Or if you prefer country music… “sunshine on my shoulders makes me happy” – *John Denver* 1970’s

You Are My Sunshine - *Doris Day 1950 written by Jimmie Davis*

School students and staff are on vacation, or close to it; the college students who have been away are heading home for Thanksgiving break; even people undergoing therapy and medical treatments have a tiny pause in the routine this week, families are preparing for meals together, in football Penn state won (I’d add that Gov Mifflin won big too yesterday… and my Eagles aren’t too shabby this season either) Ahhh, what a treat, like walking on/in sunshine.

But these events are unusual.

The [other](http://www.definitions.net/definition/other) night, dear

As I lay [sleeping](http://www.definitions.net/definition/sleeping)

I [dreamed](http://www.definitions.net/definition/dreamed) I held you

In my arms

When I awoke, dear

I was [mistaken](http://www.definitions.net/definition/mistaken)

And I hung my head and [cried](http://www.definitions.net/definition/cried)

[Chorus]

You are my [sunshine](http://www.definitions.net/definition/sunshine)

My only [sunshine](http://www.definitions.net/definition/sunshine)

You make me [happy](http://www.definitions.net/definition/happy)

When [skies](http://www.definitions.net/definition/skies) are grey

You'll [never](http://www.definitions.net/definition/never) know, dear

How much I love you

Please, don't take my [sunshine](http://www.definitions.net/definition/sunshine) away

I'll [always](http://www.definitions.net/definition/always) love you

And make you [happy](http://www.definitions.net/definition/happy)

If you will only

Stay the same

But if you [leave](http://www.definitions.net/definition/leave) me

To love [another](http://www.definitions.net/definition/another)

You'll [regret](http://www.definitions.net/definition/regret) it all [someday](http://www.definitions.net/definition/someday)

[Chorus]

You told me once, dear

You [really](http://www.definitions.net/definition/really) loved me

And no one else [could](http://www.definitions.net/definition/could) come [between](http://www.definitions.net/definition/between)

But now you've left me and love [another](http://www.definitions.net/definition/another)

You have [shattered](http://www.definitions.net/definition/shattered) all of my [dreams](http://www.definitions.net/definition/dreams)

[Chorus]

This song is probably closest to the one that the people of the northern kingdom of Israel were singing in this time when Isaiah was a prophet. About 725 BC we pick this little tiny passage and hear the very familiar words of promise most often read at Christmas time… and hear the prophetic announcement we associate with the coming of the Messiah who is Jesus Christ our Lord.

Like the chorus… you are my sunshine, my only sunshine, you make me happy when skies are grey… we know the chorus very well, but maybe not the verses… verses about shattered dreams, regret, abandonment and lost love. That’s quite similar to what’s happening here in Isaiah’s time.

The northern kingdom has badly strayed from a close loving relationship with God. {*turn off all lights in sanctuary*} (we’ve heard this most recently from Elijah, and Amos already). Time has passed, but the bad behavior has not changed, instead it has become entrenched, accepted, even normalized! Injustice to the poor, oppression of the weak, ignorance of rituals that honor the One true God, cheating on the intimate relationship between God and these chosen people… the people are worshipping idols, and now also trusting enemies by making military alliances with them rather than trusting God’s direction and protection.

So since the people have left God to love another… “You’ll never know how much I love you” croons the Almighty voice of God… through chapter after chapter of dire consequences, military destruction of this Promised Land and the chosen people in it. As on the day of Midian when (Judges 6-8) those other non-chosen descendants of Abraham besieged the Northern kingdom for 7 years, with their *multitudinous* beasts who *swept up the produce of the earth* … like a horde of locusts… then when that corrective action was done a consequence of the sins of the chosen ones… AFTER the 7 years, the Midianites lost BIG in battle *overwhelming military loss; 120,000 warriors including 2 kings and 2 princes[[1]](#footnote-1)*

Then for this brief moment in the scripture, the pain is halted… no gloom, no contempt… the yoke weighted with burden, and the rod of oppression are Broken! Routed in a major upset (better than football)… in fact this break in the routine of war is so massive… the warrior’s boots will be burned in fire, no longer necessary… the bloody garments no longer held as painful, sentimental memories, never to be forgotten… no… even they become fuel for the fire, let go for something different.

Instead of gloom, anguish, utter obscurity like the darkness in a mine (*Hebrew* Isa 9:2)… there is a brilliant light. A child has been born {*Turn on ceiling lights in sanctuary*}; a light has literally dawned, new, full of promise, and life, and power and peace, a mighty God, a wonderful counselor, an everlasting Father… a benevolent king whose authority grows continually, in justice and righteousness forever! A beautiful crack of dawn!

This would be more convenient if it were in the future tense, not the past tense, since we read this as a prophetic foreshadowing of the Messiah, a birth that would not happen for about 700 more years after this time of Isaiah… in fact occasionally you’ll find a Bible translation which puts this passage in the future tense (New American Version… but original language has all this in the past tense (as does our NRSV translation)… that’s one reason we use this translation. (Vs 3 & 6)

Isaiah clearly says “A child has been born to us, a son given to us” past tense… and we as Christians also see Jesus as the fulfillment of this prophesy, the Messiah sent to be the Light in answer to the deep darkness that exists in the world. I don’t know… maybe it’s both, maybe the baby born was King Hezekiah as some scholars suggest; maybe this child born is also Jesus as other scripture (such as the gospels of Matthew, Luke & John) state.

What is very clear is the shining of this son that is born. Light is shining upon blessing after blessing… a multiplied nation… by the way, note that this is only ONE nation who is receiving blessing. The nation of Israel, after being beaten, oppressed, crushed, almost destroyed… that one nation will receive this abundant blessing, increased population, the result of many healthy births, a sign of blessing; people are rejoicing like they do at times of harvest and military victory… times when there are not worries about food or protection, times without fear, times full of abundance and prosperity, those times of exultation and joy! (Isa 9:3) and don’t miss the end of Isa 9:7 “The Zeal of the LORD of Hosts will do this”. That is in the future… this is an action that has been taken and will continue to bear fruit. The pain of the present, will give way to a better time, a more wholesome reality… why, because God is passionate about this dawning reality. The Zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this… God is fully engaged in this action… it shall come to pass! God is not going ½-way and then quitting when the going is tough.

And this message holds true for us as a word of promise today. The going is tough, skies are grey sometimes, the tragedies and injustice and oppression that fills the news can plunge a person into deep darkness… but that’s where the brief glimpses from Isaiah’s proclamation of promise give a ray of sunshine… {*turn on lights in sanctuary cross*} “if you leave me to love another, you’ll regret it all some day” says the song…. Here’s the great news… this relationship is one sided… God never leaves! The LIGHT of the World, is here to stay… saying you’ll never know dear, how much I love you! … but Jesus, his birth, life, death and resurrection is a hint.

Isaiah 9:1 But there will be no gloom for those who **were** in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali {North/Israel}, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, **Galilee of the nations.**

2 The people who **walked** in darkness have **seen** a great light; those who **lived** in a land of deep darkness-- **on** **them** light has shined.

3 You have multiplied the nation, you have **increased its joy**; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

4 For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have **broken** as on the day of Midian.

5 For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

6 For a child **has been** born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is **named** Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 His **authority shall grow** continually, and there shall be **endless peace** for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The **zeal** of the LORD of hosts will do this.

1. *ISBE Bible Dictionary (Bible Works – on laptop)* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)