

“Let Earth Receive Her King”

Sermon Notes

➤ **In the aftermath of a polarizing election, the Preacher has some wise words this Advent into the days ahead**

**Two truths for our mission in 2021 and beyond...*

1. Don't be surprised about governmental corruption under the sun (vv.8-9; Exodus 1-12; 1 Kings 8:1-22; 11:6; 12:14; Daniel 2:36-43; 7:1-8; Revelation 13:1-10)

2. Instead, lead people to Christ, and look forward with eager longing to governmental perfection under the Son (12:13-14; Daniel 2:31-35, 44-45; 7:9-14; Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:4; 29:9; 35:5-6; 42:1; Micah 4:6; Zephaniah 3:9; Matthew 4:23; Revelation 19:11-22:21)

Next Week: Ecclesiastes 5:10-6:12 - “He Who Loves Money Will Not Be Satisfied”

Community Group Study Guide
For the Week of December 13th - 19th

This week, read and reflect with your family or community group on this outstanding Advent article from David Mathis, “Advent in a Global pandemic”
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/advent-in-a-global-pandemic>

These have been dark days in 2020, even in the light of spring and summer. Those spared great personal suffering and pain haven't lived under such ominous clouds since the aftermath of 9/11. And the anxieties of a slow-moving pandemic, in a highly contentious election year, has cast a longer, and perhaps darker, shadow than even those grave days.

Now we come to the cusp of December — and winter. Dark days get darker. And Advent begins today, not a day too soon, just in time to declare the message we too often ignore: in the very darkest of days, the true light shines out all the brighter.

Advent, the season of waiting and preparation before the high feast of Christmas, is a chance to regain spiritual sanity, and create fresh and healthier rhythms personally and as a family and as churches. As we enter the six darkest weeks of the year in this hemisphere, we will pivot midway to mark the greatest and brightest turning point in all history: the birth of Christ. And perhaps this Advent will begin restoring what the locusts have taken this year.

Here at the beginning of Advent 2020, it's good to know that the real Christmas doesn't require all to be calm and bright. Emphatically, all was not calm, and all was not bright, that first Christmas. And have we not come to learn, in our own lives, that those Christmases when all has seemed calm and bright didn't actually prove to be the best ones?

The light of Christ's first Advent dawned in days of deep darkness. Zechariah prophesied of his coming “to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death” (Luke 1:78–79). That's where God's people found themselves that first Christmas: sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. Matthew 4:16 (echoing Isaiah 42) captures that darkness, and the inbreaking of light, as well as any of our favorite Advent readings:

The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.

They dwelled in darkness as they awaited his first advent. Jesus didn't come to a world already alight with comfort and joy. He came to bring peace to a world at war. He came to bring true comfort to a world distressed. He came to announce good news of great joy to those drowning in a sea of sorrows. He came as light, shining in the darkness.

Two millennia later, it's easy to overlook just how dark those days were, and how shadowy the details of his arrival: the scandal of an unwed mother with child; the shock Joseph faced to find her pregnant; the suspicions and judgments against her in the small town of Nazareth, where word would spread quicker than fire; an inconvenient and arduous journey to Bethlehem, with Mary at full term; not even modest accommodations while she labored; the indignity of a manger. Christmas first came when and how our race would have least expected it.

Into a world of such thick, suffocating darkness, Jesus came as Light, and he came to triumph, not be turned back. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5). But holding the darkness at bay didn't mean his victory was easy or immediate. "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him" (John 1:11).

Even as his sun rose and began to chase away the night, it did not flee all at once. "This is the judgment," he said, "the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil" (John 3:19). Yet the tide had turned with his coming. Light had dawned, and he called his followers, out of the darkness, into his light. "Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12; also John 12:46).

But while the Light had come, and would prevail, Jesus did not pretend the war against the darkness was over before its time.

For three decades, his light pushed back against the darkness. And then, as he went to the cross, he gave the darkness its one last thrust: "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). Judas went out from the Twelve, "and it was night" (John 13:30).

The battle of the ages between darkness and light came at last to its head — and God echoed it in nature: "It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed" (Luke 23:44–45; also Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33). Then followed that Black Sabbath, that longest, bleakest day in all history — the day, from sunup to sundown, that the Son of God lay dead.

On Sunday morning, though, the women "came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb" (John 20:1). In the very belly of the darkness, the light began to shine anew. He was alive again, and now with indestructible life. Once and for all, Light had dealt the Dark its deathblow.

We now live in fundamentally different days, however dark they seem. Christ has come, and conquered. The Light has already triumphed, even as we engage in the final campaign. We

endure “this present darkness” (Ephesians 6:12) and know well its dangers, but we do so having already tasted Christ’s decisive act of deliverance.

The Father “has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13). Delivered. Past tense. It is done. “God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). Just as God spoke light into the dark at creation, so too has he spoken light into our dark souls as new creations in his Son.

Our eyes now see the light. The critical kingdom-transfer has occurred. And so, as Peter says, we “proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). Once: darkness. Now: light. “At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord” (Ephesians 5:8).

God not only brings his light to us, while we sit in darkness, but he makes us lamps of his light for others. As Christ himself said to the apostle Paul, “I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God” (Acts 26:18). He calls us “children of light, children of the day . . . not of the night or of the darkness” (1 Thessalonians 5:5) and calls us to be “a light to those who are in darkness” (Romans 2:19).

Which brings us here to Advent, a precious opportunity in a year of strange and deeper darkness. Advent reminds us again, “The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining” (1 John 2:8). For many of us, this might be the most important Advent of our lives. It will be telling. Is Advent real? Are we real? What is Christmas really about for us? Perhaps it will be precisely in the dark days of a year like this that we will see light dawn like never before.

Advent doesn’t pretend the darkness is gone. Our lives may yet grow darker. But Advent looks darkness square in the eye and issues this great promise for our season of waiting: darkness will not overcome the Light. It is only a matter of time. And Christmas is just over three weeks away.