

Welcome:

- Welcome to Germantown Church. Thank you for joining me. I hope that you have a good Christmas and a blessed New Year.
- Thanks – Advent Food Box Project
 - Please don't forget about the Food Bank as we go through the year.

The Advent Wreath

All of the Candles on our Advent Wreath are now lit. The four candles around the outside of the wreath represent Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. The White Candle in the center is the Christ Candle, which we lit at our Christmas Eve service. On Christmas day, we celebrate the news that Jesus has come! In the gospel of John, Jesus uses several word pictures to describe Himself and His work in the world. "I am the Bread of Life", "I am the Good Shepherd" "I am the door to the Sheep fold". But the one that stands out for us today is His declaration, "***I am the LIGHT of the world***" Jesus said it twice. The first time is in John 8. He is speaking to people that He is trying to persuade to be His disciples: ¹² ***When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*** Jesus wants people to know that He will give them light. The second time He says it is in John 9, right after he cures a man who was born blind from His blindness. ⁴ ***As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.*** ⁵ ***While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.***" In the setting of this miracle, Jesus says that His work in the world is to open the eyes of those who are blind – physically and spiritually. We use Candles in our Worship services not just because they are pretty, but to remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World. We use Candles in the Christmas season to remind us that God's light has come into this world to dispel the darkness of evil, sin, shame, temptation.

Prayer: We thank you God that Christ has come. He has brought light to our world, and to our lives. We yield our lives to Him and pray that He will take His place at the center of our lives. And we pray that from His light will come Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. Fill our lives with the Light of Christ. Amen

December Prayer Focus - Haiti

Mission of the Month – Marineau Church, Haiti

- Sometimes we need some encouragement and be reminded of God's power to answer prayers. There are several stories in the Bible about miraculous rescues. But can God still do that?
- 17 Missionaries freed
- Prayer

Scripture

Isaiah 9:1-7

Message: Christmas Hope from Isaiah, Part 5

In the Sunday's of Advent leading up to Christmas, we looked at some prophetic passages from the book of Isaiah. At the time when Jesus was born, there were some faithful Jewish people who were looking forward to the arrival of the Messiah that God had promised to send into the world. We meet two of those people in the Gospel of Luke. Mary and Joseph brought the newborn Jesus to the Temple to fulfill the obligations of Jewish parents. When they came to the Temple they met an **old man named Simeon and an old woman named Anna**. Simeon and Anna were familiar with the prophetic words written by Isaiah (and other prophets) where he wrote about God's promise to send a Deliverer for His people. The Jewish people were not free at this time. They were **captives in the Roman Empire**. While the Romans granted some privileges to the Jewish people to worship in their Temple, the yoke of oppression on the Jewish people was heavy. People longed to be free to worship and serve God, to honor God as they did in the time of Israel's greatest king, David. One of the things they longed for when Messiah would come, they anticipated that when he came He would liberate them from Roman rule. He anticipated a time of spiritual awakening and revival of Worship. They would be free to be God's beloved people again. When Simeon and Anna encountered Mary and Joseph in the Temple, Simeon felt some confirmation that **this Baby was the one He was waiting for**. This was the Child whose

coming Isaiah announced. **This child would fulfill the longing of his heart and the longing in the hearts of many others in Israel.**

Isaiah's words express the longings that many of God's people had. He writes about a coming time when **God's people would no longer be in distress and darkness.** In particular he refers to people in the territory around the Sea of Galilee. That area had been the area that had first fallen into the hands of Israel's enemies – the Assyrians. But in the day that Isaiah writes about, he mentions that this area would be honored and enlightened. In the Gospels we read that Galilee would be the territory where Jesus would grow up and begin his ministry. Galilee was honored through the life and ministry of Jesus.

²³ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴ News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. ²⁵ Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis,^[a] Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him. (Matt. 4:23-25)

As the passage from Isaiah continues, he writes further about God's deliverance and restoration of His people. Just as God defeated the enemy Midian in the days of Gideon, God would once again break the yoke of oppression that was upon them.

And **all of this will be accomplished with the coming of a baby. Verse 6, ff.** In God's time, a Child would be born, who would bring light to the nation, who would **break the yoke that oppressed God's people – not just the Roman oppressors, but the oppression of sin and evil.** This child would be given some significant titles:

Wonderful Counselor – This child would be the source of Wisdom; He would be present with His people to guide them and comfort them in times of Sorrow

Mighty God – this is a title that is used to refer to Israel's God. This child will be God, with us.

Everlasting Father – This child would care for His people as a loving Father, cares for and provides for His children.

Prince of Peace – this child will be a source of peace for God's people. This does not refer only to an absence of conflict, but a condition of peace and harmony. It is the **Shalom of God.** One of the ways that I have heard the word Shalom defined is this: ***Shalom is God's rule and reign that creates flourishing for all.*** When this child comes, no one will be left behind. He will welcome all into his rule and reign who long to be under His rule.

The Christmas carol, ***O Little Town of Bethlehem*** includes this line: ***"The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight."*** I believe that the longings of our hearts are met by the child whose birth Isaiah wrote about and whose birth Simeon and Anna looked forward to.

What do you want this year for Christmas? I am not referring to the material things that we long to have – Clothes, cars, boats, etc. But what is it that your heart longs for.

- Do you long for the abiding presence of God in your heart to guide you, comfort you. Do you long for a relationship with the **Wonderful Counselor?**
- Do you long for the power of the **Mighty God** to be revealed in your life, breaking down your enemies, breaking the power of temptation, sin and shame
- Do you long to have a relationship with an **Everlasting Father**, who will love you unconditionally, who will be a safe place for you to run to after you have wandered away
- Do you long to experience the peace and rest that only comes from the **Prince of Peace** Himself?

I believe that this Child whose birth we celebrate is the one who can fulfill the longings of your heart. Amen.