

12/22/24 - Isaiah 9:6-7 - "Reverence Between Two Advents"

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading this morning is from Isaiah chapter 9, verses 6 and 7. This is the word of the Lord.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

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. Amen. This is God's word. Thanks be to God.

You guys sure did pull a fast one on me today. Usually I see that stuff coming, but I appreciate it. Thank you so much for the leadership here and for the intentionality that's just exuded through care for one another.

[1 : 15] It's just amazing. So, we're continuing this Christmas season, obviously. We're a Sunday away from Christmas Eve, which is coming up on Tuesday.

And I hope that we can conclude this Advent series together under candlelight controlled flame. And you do not have to bring your own flame.

We will provide it. Thank you very much. And it will be a time of just solemn reflection upon the birth of Christ. It's a beautiful service to attend.

And we look forward to having friends and family members come and join us. And it will be a somewhat of an evangelistic message and something shorter so that we can fit in a lot of singing and get the kids incorporated into the service.

So, praise the Lord. I'm looking forward to that. But we're not ending yet. Yes, we're on the fourth day of our Advent season. And so, we're going to be looking at reverence today.

[2 : 28] And Christmas is a season that's often marked in reverence, isn't it? Just solemn, solitude. It's an interesting word, reverence.

Because it's a profound response to something that's greater than ourselves. It takes attention off of us and places it upon something else, something greater.

And it's similar to great respect. Right? To revere someone is to have great respect.

It takes humility. And now reverence is not just a feeling, though. It's not just a feeling of emotions. It's deeply rooted in neurobiology.

It's deeply rooted in neurobiology. Literally how our brains were made to function. And the complexity of our minds. And it begins with perceiving something.

[3 : 34] Observing something. Something that's within a certain perception that you take in after observing it. This triggers multiple different reactions within our brains that compel us to express things like fear or awe, if reverence is to be on the topic.

And now responding in reverent fear, reverent awe, this can cause a response based on a perception. A simple perception. Sometimes it brings us to tears.

Sitting in reverence of who God is. Sometimes it brings us into just a posture of reverence on our knees. Or sometimes just sitting in silence if you're a good, faithful Baptist.

Right? Just sit in silence of reverence for God. Now, there's something worth reflecting on today.

And it's the fact that we were designed that way. We were designed to perceive something.

[4 : 53] For it to process deeply in our minds. To move our hearts. And to respond. We were created this way.

God created us with the capacity to perceive and respond. Not just to the latest deals that McDonald's chicken nuggets have. And, oh, you know, as great as that can be.

And trust me, my kids go wild for it. But the greatest perception that you can observe. Known to man. Who God is.

And what God has done. God created us that way. This is a remarkable truth that we were created to respond to our creator.

And it was his intention for us to revere him. He wired us that way. To perceive who he is and what he's done.

[5 : 57] To fear him. To be in awe of him. Reverence is often translated in the Bible as fear. As a sense of fear.

The quote, fear the Lord, is mentioned over a hundred times throughout the entire Bible. And in Hebrews, I think it rightly parallels reverent fear with reverent awe.

It pairs the two. In Hebrews chapter 12, verse 28. It says, therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

And thus, let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence, fear, and awe. For our God is a consuming fire.

For our God is a consuming fire. A response to that. The nation of Israel felt the weight of that consuming fire.

[7 : 04] Anybody who has read the Old Testament can definitely attest to it. Consider the profound tragedy of Israel before the first advent of Jesus Christ.

In their darkest moments of distress. They felt the weight of relational deprivation. God seemed silent.

And God seemed distant from this nation. And this is paradoxical. That we were created to respond to God.

But what happens when he's silent? Even today, that tension remains, doesn't it? Despite the advent of Jesus Christ, we got the manger all set up.

Great glory to God. But still, life can pan out. As if God is silent. We can't escape life uncertainties.

[8 : 12] Global threats of war. If you turn on the news, you can be captivated by that. And sometimes go into very dark places. Struggling with chronic diseases.

Illnesses. Or even personal loss this Christmas season. But how do we respond to perceiving those things?

How do we respond to it? I believe it's often responded as doubt. We doubt God's goodness. We doubt his plans at times.

We doubt his love. But is that why we were created? Is that God's intention? To create us to doubt him?

No. So Christmas calls us then to reflect deeply on this tension. That we are stuck smack dab in the middle of the fulfilled promise of God in Jesus Christ's first coming.

[9 : 17] And the hope of his promise yet to be fulfilled in his second coming. And we are going to ask this question today. How do we revere the Lord in fear and awe stuck between these two advents?

So the sermon title, you guessed it. Reverence between two advents. And today's main point will reinforce this tension, but also provide a resolution for us.

That we were created to respond. Yet uncertainty we face. And we are called to revere the Lord in fear of his holiness and awe of his grace.

So let's see that unpacked today through a couple selected pieces of scripture. And I'd like to pray as we dive into what was just read from Isaiah 9.

Let's pray. Father, we come to you feeling the tension, feeling the weight of division in this world, feeling the uncertainty in our own lives, feeling sorrow at times, and even feeling joy.

[10 : 43] But help us, Lord, in all of this to not stop revering who you are. Teach us, Lord, how to revere you and what that looks like as a command for every Christian.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. So, Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6.

It's often quoted around Christmas time and for good reason. It says, For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders.

And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of the increase of the increase of the increase of his government and of peace.

There will be no ends. On the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness.

[12 : 00] From this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. This prophecy introduces the hope of a child to be born.

And this child is given these divine attributes, signifying his divine authority and eternal reign.

And now, if you were to flip to the left a little bit in Isaiah, you'll see that Isaiah 8 was the complete opposite story. Isaiah 8 was pretty gloomy.

Judgments against Israel. Of that problem, of that tension that they feel. Of their perceiving. And the attributes are, four attributes that we just sang today in a beautiful chorus.

Wonderful Counselor. That this child would be the source of wisdom and guidance. Counselor. He'd be mighty God.

[13 : 12] He'd be attributed as mighty God. Which reflects his divine strength. Reflects his divine sovereignty. He is supreme over all. Everlasting Father.

He is a protector and provider with eternal care. And the Prince of Peace. Ruler who establishes justice. He establishes peace.

He establishes wholeness and unity. But man, this nation was suffering. The suffering nation was nearing destruction under the shadow of the Assyrians in 700 BC.

Real people. Real people. Real lives. Real time period. Real history. And now it's highly unlikely that they interpreted this prophecy as the son of Mary.

They didn't know who Mary was. They didn't know who Mary was. They didn't know who Mary was. They had no inkling of any of that. But they were probably thinking, well, this sounds good.

[14 : 22] Salvation. Bring peace. Bring justice. Right? Maybe this would be Hezekiah. Maybe this might be even another David-like ruler that would come to them.

But God's promise didn't unfold for 700 years. For a people created to respond to God in reverence.

And reverence originates by what is perceived. Then the perceivable silence from God would have been all the more crushing for 700 years.

And so reverence born of perception can feel impossible. God's way in the face of pain and in the face of judgments and His discipline, His loving discipline.

And yet this judgment was perceivably deserved. Was it not? Was it not the nation of Israel who worshipped the golden calf in Exodus 32?

[15 : 35] Were they not guilty of forsaking God for idols through judges and kings? Were they not guilty of rejecting God's leadership in 1 Samuel as we studied as a church?

Were they not addressed by the major and minor prophets of the Old Testament of widespread corruption and injustice? And you see, man's rebellion is the only thing that testifies to the absence of reverence for God.

It's nothing that God has done. It's actually what man has done. It's our problem if God is perceivably absent.

And church, this is the power of sin, isn't it? It severs our ability to respond rightly to God and places us under His just wrath.

The only gift that we deserve is judgment. The penalty of sin is death, right? And this is the reality every single human being on this earth will face one day.

[16 : 54] Whether they believe in God or they want to do their good vibes and die however they want to die. Every single human being within this room will face that reality.

Whether you want to believe it or not. How often my kids wear me down inquiring about things like candy.

Can I have this candy? And you know, you tell them no. And the begging continues. They're insistent. Come on, give me that.

I just really want it. Christmas time. I do not take my kids to stores. The insistent begging. The pleading. They even justify it and rationalize it like, I'll use my own money.

We're just like, no. You're going to save it. But it's my money, right? And so, those who cannot perceive God in reverence sometimes need to perceive the effects of their sins.

[18 : 00] Sometimes the best thing is to learn the hard way. To eat all that candy. To allow them to do that.

It's not a problem with us. It's a problem that they need to discover. And this is exactly what God did with this nation for 700 years.

Those who cannot perceive God in reverence sometimes need to perceive the effects of their sin.

It's a hard lesson. But it will produce repentance. Because God in his great mercy created us that way. To respond.

How are we to rightly perceive our sinfulness than to realize that we know what we deserve.

[19 : 04] That we know exactly what we deserve. And this is exactly the perception of this nation. It was discipline. But then our loving God who created us to respond in reverence.

To respond in repentance. Said, for to us a child is born. To us a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder.

His name shall be wonderful counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace. Our loving creator. Entered creation.

And spoke through his son Jesus Christ. It would be the intervention through Christ that God did the unimaginable to rebellious people.

The unimaginable. The unthinkable. To give us the exact opposite of what we deserve. It is through God's salvation that reverence shifts from fear to awe.

[20 : 14] It's been like that all throughout the Old Testament. The rebellious people rebel and they fear the Lord because the Lord gives them what they deserve.

And then they repent and then they're saved and then they're in awe of the Lord. And then they're in awe and the cycle continues.

Then they lose the fear of the Lord. And so reverence is that balance. God's solution to sinfulness was to transform our penalty of sin to Jesus Christ.

Christ. That's an awesome truth. An awesome truth. Don't let that truth get old. Ever. It's awe.

It's an awe that Jesus took our place upon the cross upon the cross and that God initiated salvation.

[21 : 16] Amen. I got a witness. Woo! That grace abounds where wrath was due. I think we might have a Pentecostal in here.

Reverential fear, though, is good. Reverential awe won't just cut it. We can't have awe without fear.

We can't have fear without awe. And it's that awe that we find at the cross in the work of Jesus Christ. And reverential fear reminds us of sin's weight in our lives.

Reverential awe reminds us of salvation's wonder. And together, they produce nothing less than worship. Worship in spirit.

Worship in truth. So there's a challenge. If you found yourself here today realizing realizing that you cannot run from the penalty of your sin and that you feel challenged in a need to repent and to turn from your sin or, as Christians call that, repentance.

[22 : 35] That's a challenge for unbelievers today. To stop right now. to hear the gospel and know that God's way is true and God's way is sure.

And believers, I think, also need to be reminded of our awe of salvation. I want us to go there as we've been traveling. I think I've forgotten how to do my job.

This is the first section. Maybe I can just start over. First section is reverence in light of the incarnation.

And I want to go to reverence in light of the second advent, the consummation. and we turn none other than to Revelation 21.

I want us to see something. Something we've been seeing and reinforcing these past couple weeks of the advent season. Revelation 21.

[23 : 51] See this as I read. Close your eyes. See it. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more.

And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

listen to this church. Verse 3. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore. For the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new.

[25 : 21] Also, he said, write this down for these words are trustworthy and true.

This vision, church of future, gives us a hopeful perception, doesn't it? A hopeful perception.

For those who feel distant from God, God will one day dwell with his people again.

Facing death today, facing pain in this life. Death, mourning, and pain will all cease. struggling, suffering, all things will be one day made completely new.

For Israel in 700 BC, this hope was far beyond their imagination. And for us, caught between these two advents, the already and the not yet, it is this perception that we claim.

[26 : 45] There's a reason why the voice from the throne said, write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.

when Christians perceive the silence and the darkness of life as if God is unresponsive to us.

God, by His grace, revealed Himself. Do you see the grace in this initiative? He gave us, not only Revelation 21, He gave the nation of Israel Isaiah 9.

He revealed Himself through His Word. And the object of our perception is solely to reinforce that His plans are trustworthy.

And they're true. We revere Him in this. These words are trustworthy. And so how do you revere the Lord today?

[28 : 03] Do you have the two-sided coin of fear and of awe? Fear of the Lord is not enough. Awe is not enough.

But to be reverent for the Lord and to revere the Lord consists of fear and awe. Fear of His holiness and awe that we deserve to be crushed.

And He didn't crush us. As we reflect on Christmas this year, let's not neglect our call to revere the Lord.

Fear, humble recognition of our unworthiness, of awe, of a joyful response to God's salvation. creation. And for us, that's in Jesus Christ.

Church, we were created to respond this way. We were created this way. And though life may feel uncertain, life may feel dark, the perceivable promise of Christmas is that God has not forgotten us and that God will never abandon His church.

[29 : 22] It's the good news that Christmas reinforces in this tension and season. He's making all things new. He's in the process of it.

Right now, in your life, making all things new. This Christmas, may we respond that the truth in reverence, respond to that truth in reverence, allowing for us to God make us new.

If you're not in Christ, welcome to a newness of life. It begins now. By your faith in Jesus Christ, it begins today. That God has a plan for your life that is far greater than any pleasure of sin.

Anything better than sin. God's love is available according to His revealed word. I'm here today to invite you to perceive it and to respond.

How do you respond? Repent, turn from your sinfulness, and believe in Jesus Christ and keep going and watch God make you new.

[30 : 37] And for believers today, God is continuing to make us new. God's not done. There's no retirement on Christian maturity.

I got an amen from Les. I earned that one. He's continuing to make us new. It will never end.

Don't feel as if you've ever arrived. Continue to grow humble yourself. And it's often through the uncertainties of life that God does this most vividly.

It's the darkness where we grow most. Not always the mountaintop experiences. So be molded, suffer well, and rejoice well today.

Never lose sight of the perception required to revere God as He intended for us as His creation. He created us this way. We were created to respond, yet uncertainty we face.

[31 : 42] We are called to revere the Lord in fear of His holiness and in awe of His grace. Amen. Let's pray.