

12/19

“The Promise Foretold”

Isaiah 9:2 – “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light, on those living in the land of darkness a light has dawned.”



Special Music: “Do You What I Hear”

Home Free

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**LET JOY STEAL THE NIGHT**

The night sky is black  
Blanketed in obsidian  
With shades of Jasper.  
Heritage Davidian  
The branch foretold but unexpected

Soft now the night  
Coal dust and forgotten trust  
Among the voided stars  
Prophecies and truths combust  
Creation's light directed

Into a rejected, dejected world.  
Where hope was lost, and grace denied  
Came the light of a thousand stars  
That all might be sanctified  
Through love and grace injected

Into the human soul.  
Those who walk in darkness  
Have seen a great light!  
The black of night gives way to the starkness  
Of God's promise perfected

In the guise of a child.  
To heal the world, broken

**By sin and separation  
The word of God Spoken  
The brokenness is corrected**

**Let joy steal the night  
Away from the dark  
As the sky is lit  
From creation's spark  
A promise collected**

**In order to make things right.**

Bill and Frank are lost. Their plane had gone down in the middle of the desert. No flight plan had been filed, so no one knew where they were, nor would they come looking for them. They had a compass, so they had taken their bearings, grabbed what they thought would be useful, including water, and began the hike towards where they thought they might find civilization. Having hiked for several days and feeling like they were getting nowhere, their water ran out. Both of them sat down in the hot sand to go over what to do next. Their lips were parched and bleeding, but they knew if they stayed where they were, they would not survive. Between the heat and lack of water, everything seemed hopeless

Frank convinced Bill that they should keep moving, but that they would do better if they traveled at night when it was cooler. So, they pitched the small tent that they had, lay down, and took a nap.

When evening came, Frank woke Bill to tell him it was time to get moving. There was somewhat of a cool breeze in the night, so they packed up the tent and kept hiking in the original direction. After a few hours, they were exhausted and a little delirious, but they kept on going.

Suddenly, Frank saw two moons. No, wait. One was a reflection in a small pool. It had to be an oasis. Bill told him that it was just an illusion, a mirage. But Frank insisted that it was real. He claimed he could even see a small campfire nearby, but Bill continued to tell him he was an idiot and they needed to keep moving.

Believing what he was seeing was real, Frank turned towards the pool and the campfire. Bill said he was not going to waste time checking out a mirage and kept moving in the original direction. So, with that, the two parted ways, but Bill felt that Frank would come catch up with him when he realized he was just chasing dreams.

Coming to the pool, Frank realized that it was not an illusion. The water was real. The nearby campfire was real as well. Frank stooped to get a drink, but heard someone shout to him, "Don't do that, the water's bad!" Frank looked up to see a man coming towards him. "I've already tested it and the water is bad," he told Frank, "but I have plenty of fresh water with me and you are welcome to join me."

Frank went with the man and just as the man had said, fresh water awaited him. He took a long slow swallow and was so very grateful.

"What are you doing out here in the middle of the desert?" the man asked.

"Plane went down a week ago. We are trying to get back to civilization."

"We? Is there someone with you?"

"Yeah, my buddy Bill. He didn't believe any of this was real, so he went on ahead."

"Well," said the man, "you are never going to get back to civilization by going that way. There is nothing that way but more sand. I'm sorry about your friend."

**“What do you mean you’re sorry?”**

**“We’ll never find him in the dark and by morning his footprints will be gone. But you, my friend, are safe. I have my truck and I am headed to the city in the morning and you are welcome to join me.”**

**“But what about Bill?”**

**“I’m afraid your friend missed his window. He should have listened to you. He will probably spend the rest of his life, which won’t be long, looking for the salvation you have found.”**

**Over the years, I have visited a lot of caves. I won’t say that I am a natural spelunker, but I do enjoy visiting caves. I am in awe of the collections of stalactites and stalagmites, the colors, and the incredible beauty of nature that can only be found in a cave. However, I can’t think of a single cave tour where, at some point, the guide didn’t turn off the lights just to show the visitors the absolute blackness in the cave. It is disconcerting being in an unfamiliar place and have the lights go out, even if we do have a guide. We’re afraid to take a step in any direction. It is somewhat more reassuring if there is a handrail to hold onto. But the feeling of awkwardness bordering on fear is magnified in caves when we cannot see our hand in front of our face.**

The countryside around Jerusalem would have had a night sky flooded with stars and perhaps the ambient light of a moon as well. This night was not blanketed in the darkness that we find in a cave. The night air would have been filled with the sounds of insects and sheep as they moved about. This wasn't a silent night with gentle snow drifts and the air of winter.

When we are talking about silence and darkness we are actually thinking metaphorically about the condition of the Jews at this time. They had been waiting so very long for the promised Messiah. They had all but given up hope. Jewish people continue to wait for the promised Messiah to this very day.

In Fiddler on the roof, there is a moment when Motel the tailor, asks the Rabbi: "Rabbi, we've been waiting for the Messiah all our lives. Wouldn't now be a good time for him to come?" The Rabbi then replies: "I guess we'll have to wait someplace else."

**Isaiah 9:2 – "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light, on those living in the land of darkness a light has dawned."**

How sad it can be if we don't see or believe in the light, the fulfillment of prophecy. At this point in history, a light appears, both literally and figuratively.

## **Luke 2:8-14 (NIV)**

**And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”**

**Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”**

**Now, if you just happened to be one of these shepherds in the field outside of Bethlehem, you have a decision to make. What just happened is pretty amazing. And then you ask yourself, “But did it really happen, or did I just imagining it? Maybe it was just a dream, and I will wake up in a minute.” Is that really an oasis and campfire, or is it just a mirage. Do I take a chance on checking it out? How long do I intend on walking in the dark? Am I just waiting for the next bright light to come along? Is this the light Isaiah the prophet was talking about? Is this the moment we have all been waiting for? Seriously, is it too much trouble to go into Bethlehem and check it out just in case it isn't a dream or an hallucination? What do I really have to lose? This may be the very**



salvation, the fulfillment of prophecy, the answer to our hope, right here, waiting for us, a child lying in a manger in Bethlehem.

Or the shepherd can say, “I don’t believe it. This is a figment of my imagination. I’m not even going to bother to check it out. It would be crazy for me to run into Bethlehem looking for something that isn’t there. It would also be extremely embarrassing if anyone were to ask me what I was doing. I guess we will just have to wait for the Messiah somewhere else.”

**Isaiah 9:2 – “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light, on those living in the land of darkness a light has dawned.”**

What do we do with that? Do we think it is worth a look-see, a chance at salvation? Could this really be the moment we have been waiting and looking for?

Right here in this moment, the nature of our relationship with God, shifted. In this moment the human race went from trying to reach God, to God reaching out to us. We went from trying to obey the law in order to find favor with God, to God reaching down and saying, “You can’t do it. It isn’t possible. So, I am sending my son in the flesh of a man to pay the price for you. He is a babe, in a stable, in a feed trough, born of a woman. He is your salvation. Come and take a look.”

Christmas can be chaos for many people. It is too easy to get caught up in the details. But it doesn’t have to be that way. The chaos around us is not there

because of a baby in a manger. It is due to everything that we have heaped on top of that brilliant and simple event. The shepherds knew that. They chose to follow the words of the angel and the song in their hearts. They chose to listen to the prophet Isaiah. They chose to step out of the darkness and into the light. No one forced them to. But here was a chance to see hope fulfilled.

When we are in the dark and can't let go of the fear that we will never find our way out, when the oasis and campfire can make us question our own sanity, we start asking ourselves, "Does God really care? Are our eyes playing tricks on us? Is it real?"

**1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

**2 He was with God in the beginning.**

**3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.**

**4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.**

**5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it**

**John 1:1-5**

**14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

**John 1:14**

**16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**

**17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him**

**John 3:16-17**

The oasis is real. The campfire is real. The promise is real. The salvation is real. The truth is real. We simply need to believe in the possibility in order find the reality.

**Isaiah 9:2 – “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light, on those living in the land of darkness a light has dawned.”**

Join me on the path to Bethlehem so that we too can embrace the light. So that we too can find the joy in salvation that our Creator has given to us through the birth, life, death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

God bless you all!

**AMEN**

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