

**Everything Sad Coming Untrue:
Why Jesus Came and Why He's Coming Back
Part One: The King Will Come and Reverse the Curse
Isaiah 9.6-7**

Sermon Series Intro

Every time we gather for worship, we come as broken people who live in a broken world, presenting ourselves before a perfect King who reigns over a perfect world.

We are reminded every day that things are not the way God intended them to be.

We come praying that God's kingdom would come and that God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. .

As we begin the Advent season, we remember when God began to send the prophets to strengthen his people with a message of hope and promise – the hope and promise that things will not always be the way they are now. God will put things right.

A Messiah will come and reverse the curse: bringing reconciliation between God and his creation, bringing restoration to humanity, and bringing righteousness and justice to society.

In the final book of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Sam and Frodo give everything they have to destroy the ring of power in the fires of Mordor. It seems to them their mission has failed. Their beloved angel-like guide Gandalf has died. The world around them is collapsing into chaos and the evil armies of Sauron seem on the edge of victory. After Frodo and Sam complete their mission they lay down to die, assuming that all things are coming to an end.

But then days later, Sam wakes up to find the world at peace and his dear friend Gandalf standing before him, whole and well:

“Gandalf!” he cries. “I thought you were dead! But then I thought I was dead myself. Is everything sad going to come untrue? What's happened to the world?”

This sermon series is about God's promises through Isaiah to make everything sad come untrue. And it's about the fulfillment of those promises in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, their partial fulfillment now, their complete fulfillment when he returns.

Message

The movie *Grand Canyon* begins with a wealthy white immigration lawyer getting lost in the middle of a poor black neighborhood in LA. Then, to make matters worse, his car breaks down, and he soon finds himself surrounded and threatened by an armed gang. Just in the nick of time a tow truck driver arrives, pulls the gang leader aside, and asks him to let the man go. When he is asked why, this is what he says:

Simon (Danny Glover): Man, the world ain't supposed to work like this. I mean, maybe you don't know that yet. I'm supposed to be able to do my job without having to ask you if I can. That dude is supposed to be able to wait with his car without you ripping him off. Everything is supposed to be different than it is.

There's so much that is not the way it's supposed to be in this world, not the way God intended it to be. Everything is supposed to be different than it is.

We long for things to be put right around us. That there would be an end to violence and disease and hunger and abuse and war and poverty.

We ache for things to be put right between us. That there would be an end to hate and unforgiveness and judgment and prejudice and separation along lines of difference.

We hunger for things be put right within us. That there would be an end to selfishness and shame and anxiousness and fear and despair and pride.

Our Advent series, *Everything Sad Coming Untrue*, is about the promise God made to do just that – to take everything that isn't the way it's supposed to be and make it right – and how that promise was, and how that promise will be, fulfilled.

Our focus this morning is on the familiar promise God makes in

Isaiah 9.6

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

But to hear the explosive force of this promise the way we should, we really have to put it in context. Not just in context in the writings of Isaiah, but to put it in context in the widest story possible – the story of God's dealings with humanity.

Creation

The starting point, as told to us in the opening chapters of Genesis, is that God, who has always existed, created humanity for relationship with himself.

He established the first man and woman in a garden paradise in which they could not only enjoy each other, in perfect harmony and peace, but enjoy Him – a perfect setting for perfect human beings to enjoy a perfect relationship with their perfect God.

The Fall

But almost from the start, things went wrong. Exercising the remarkable gift of free will with which God clothed humanity, they promptly chose to receive the gift but reject the

Giver. They pushed God out of the center and arrogated to themselves the place of rule in their own lives, living life on their own terms.

The Curse

Their defiance of God's design, which was that we would live our lives with Him and for Him, sent a ripple fracturing its way through the world, leaving nothing intact.

As a result of their rebellion against the God who created them for relationship with Himself, God allowed a curse to settle on the world.

In Genesis 3.17 God says.

Cursed is the earth because of you.

In a moment, all that was perfect became imperfect, all that was whole became broken, all that was united was splintered apart, and into a world of life death was introduced.

Suddenly humanity found itself separated from God, alienated from one another, and at odds with the world.

Paul tells us that, from that point on, creation has been longing to be restored to the paradise it once was, when everything was rightly related to God and to one another.

Romans 8.19-22

The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

Incidentally, if you are considering the Christian faith, I would argue that the Judeo-Christian account of the creation and fall of the world offers a better explanation for why things are the way they are – why this is a beautiful but broken world inhabited by human beings who are a majestic mess – than any other world religion or philosophy.

The Prophets

The next part of the story centers on the prophets. The prophets were a group of poetic messengers that God raised up to bring to light humanity's spiritual condition, and to urge rebellious humanity to turn back to him.

Often the prophets found dramatic and compelling ways to describe the human condition. Here are three metaphors that prophets like Isaiah used to describe the broken world around them, images that would have spoken powerfully in the ancient world.

As you think about what is going in our world today, which one do you connect with most?

One image of spiritual brokenness and sin was ***Darkness***:

In a world without electricity, the night is a domain of fear and vulnerability, a place of disorientation and uncertainty. Without light we feel blind and lost, wandering about, uncertain where we are and groping to find our way.

Another image of spiritual brokenness and sin was the ***Desert***:

For people living in a harsh arid climate, the desert represented a realm of thirst and threat. Without water, it was a forbidding land, unsafe, hostile, without growth, without blossom or fruit, stripped of beauty and barren of life.

And another image of spiritual brokenness and sin was ***Discord***

The ancient Near East was a land divided between dozens of warring city states that typically saw each other as threats and enemies. Without peace they were constantly at each other's throats, hostile, divided, separating apart and squaring off, battling and injuring one another, and leaving a wake of death and loss.

Those are metaphors that seek to capture what it is like for an individual life, and for a whole world, that is not properly centered on God.

Let me stop now and ask which of those images most speaks to you as you think about as you think about humanity's plight, and maybe about your own life?

Where do you see the darkness and confusion of everyone lost, the desert of struggling to survive and flourish, the discord of creature turned against creature?

The Promise

Then, into the brokenness of our spiritually wayward world God began to speak a message of hope through the prophets.

He promised a better future – one in which everything wrong in this world would be put right. And he promised a divine King who would come and usher us into that future.

This is where we the passage from Isaiah 9 comes in. It is one of several places in Isaiah's writings where God gives the promise of a king who will come and put things right.

Isaiah 9.6-7

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9.7

Of the greatness of his government and peace
 there will be no end.
 He will reign on David's throne
 and over his kingdom,
 establishing and upholding it
 with justice and righteousness
 from that time on and forever.
 The zeal of the LORD Almighty
 will accomplish this.

This king, this Messiah, will come and establish his kingdom with justice and righteousness – making all things “just right” – and reversing the curse that laid upon the land because of humanity’s dismissing God from the center of their lives – the curse of darkness, desert, and discord.

Let’s look at three passages where Isaiah describes the curse being reversed.

First, in chapter 9, Isaiah speaks of the Messiah bringing light into the darkness.

Isaiah 9.2

The people walking in darkness
 have seen a great light;
 on those living in the land of deep darkness
 a light has dawned.

To a world that is lost and confused spiritually, living in fear, each one wandering off in his or her own direction, the Messiah will come like the rising sun and bring spiritual illumination, bringing the world out of darkness and into the light.

Isaiah also speaks about the Messiah bringing life to the desert.

Isaiah 35.1-6

The desert and the parched land will be glad;
 the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.
 Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom;
 it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.
 They will see the glory of the LORD,
 the splendor of our God.
 Water will gush forth in the wilderness
 and streams in the desert.

Photos of California Super Bloom



Death Valley Super Bloom



These are photos of Death Valley during a rare event called a Super Bloom. To a world that is spiritually parched and barren, the Messiah will bring the water of life, and the desert of human existence will be transformed into a garden of life and beauty.

Finally, in chapter 11, Isaiah speaks about the Messiah bringing peace where there is discord.

Isaiah 11.6-9

The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.
The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
The infant will play near the cobra's den,
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.
They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

World War II decimated whole regions of Europe, as Nazi Germany waged war on the free world. Here are a few pictures that capture specific places in Europe during the war, and then those same places after peace was declared, the war was ended, and the cities were rebuilt.

Paris rebuilt after war



Ukraine rebuilt after war



Dresden rebuilt after war



They are a picture of the way the Messiah will come and turn the world around, making all things new, bringing an end to hostility and ushering in peace, bringing together those who are divided, healing wounds, reconciling hearts, and making brothers and sisters of sworn enemies.

For eight hundred years the promise echoed through the corridors of human history, promising the coming dawn, the coming rain, the coming peace.

dark is the world
through which we
search, lurch,
longing for light

dry is the world
in which we
thirst, cursed,
weeping for water

divided the world
in which we
war, worn,
pining for peace

Messiah
Sun-certain
will come will come
promise repromised
the verse is rehearsed
without end

will come and dawn day in the darkness
 will come and loose blooms in the desert
 will come share shalom in the discord
 the curse is reversed

Messiah
 will come
 welcome
 Messiah

The Messiah

Then – two thousand years ago, true to God’s promise of nearly a thousand years – the Messiah was born. God comes in human flesh to a small town called Bethlehem in the land we know today as Israel, and is heralded by heaven as the One in whom God will fulfill all his promises.

At the moment of his birth angels appear to shepherds out in the fields and give the birth announcement.

Luke 2.10-11

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.”

The promised Messiah, God’s great Promise Keeper, is born – Jesus, the son of Mary, in the lineage of David – and he begins to establish his Kingdom!

But his ministry unfolds in unexpected ways
 Forgiveness is given, but sin persists
 Healing is extended, but sickness is not swallowed up
 New life is poured out, but spiritual death persists
 Captives are set free, but the occupying army still chokes the land.
 Peace is offered, but wars and rumors of wars continue

John the Forerunner is even prompted to go back to Jesus and ask

Matthew 11.3

“Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”

Gradually it becomes evident that what Isaiah and the other prophets anticipated as a single event – the Messiah will come, the curse will be reversed, all will be put right – will actually be spread across *two* events.

Jesus comes the first time to set things in motion, to establish the kingdom and reverse the curse in individual human hearts. But it will not be until Jesus returns that all things will be brought to completion.

His second coming will be very different from his first.

In Luke 21.27 Jesus says,

They will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

In his first coming, he came to us as suffering servant in gentleness and humility. At his second coming, he will return as conquering king in power and majesty. He will come and establish his kingdom on earth once and for all.

That moment is described in Revelation 11.15

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever."

When Jesus returns, he will bring human history to a close, and he will reverse the curse of darkness, desert, and discord globally, universally, comprehensively, once and for all. All will be made new and put right.

Listen to the way that is described using figurative language in the last chapter of the bible, Revelation 22.

Revelation 22.1-5

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

* * *

Application

That's how things will be one day . . . but that's not how they are today, is it.

We live today in what one New Testament scholar described as "the already but not yet." Jesus came as king to establish his kingdom and to reverse the curse. There's the already. But that promise will only find its complete fulfillment when he returns. That's the not yet.

Here's what that already-but-not-yet-reality of the Kingdom means for us today.

First it means that we can rejoice in the already! Joy to the world, the Lord has come! Let earth receive her king!

While it is true that the curse has not been completely reversed, the new day has dawned, the desert has started to bloom, the warring has started to come to an end in the hearts of people all around this world. Slowly but unrelentingly, one life at a time, Jesus advances his kingdom and reverses the curse, as people open their hearts to him as savior and put their trust in him as king.

Listen to these passages that describe how in his first coming Jesus has already set about reversing the curse.

He has come as God's light in our darkness.

John 8.12

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."

He has come as God's water in our desert.

John 4.13-14

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

He has come as God's peace in our discord.

John 14.27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

And in John 16.33

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

He comes to make His blessings flow

Far as the curse is found

Isaac Watts, "Joy to the World"

Jesus has not yet reversed the curse globally, but he will. And until then, we can look to Jesus to reverse the curse individually, one heart at a time.

Have you opened the cell door to your darkness and stepped into his light?

Have you turned the face of your desert up toward his living water?
 Have you waved a flag of truce in the middle of your discord and opened your heart to his peace?
 What is keeping you from putting the weight of your life on Jesus today, trusting him as king and deliverer?

The second thing that the already-but-not-yet-reality of the Kingdom means for us today is that we can be honest about the difficulty and disappointment of the not yet.

These days between the first coming of Jesus and his return are a time of longing and lament. This world is still very broken. It's still full of pain and loss and grief and fear and hostility and division and death.

How we long for our hope to find its fulfillment! For this world to be put right! For God to make all things new!

In almost the very last words in the Bible, in Revelation 22.20, Jesus says,

Yes, I am coming soon.

And then John gives voice to the longing felt by every one of his followers.

Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

Where do you most long for this world to be put right? Where do you most deeply feel the frustration of the curse in which much of this world remains bound?

Part of how we as followers of Christ express our confidence that God will keep his promises and our hope that he will return is in our prayers of longing and lament, as we cry out with our brothers and sisters around the globe for God to make all things new:

Come, Lord Jesus!

And here is the unexpected third thing that the already-but-not-yet-reality of the Kingdom means for us today.

During this time when we rejoice in his first coming and at the same time long for his return, Jesus calls *us* to join *him* as curse reversers, serving as his agents and representatives in this world, his sent ones, called to help make his blessings flow far as the curse is found.

In a stunning turn, each phrase Jesus used to describe his own ministry he turns around and applies to ours!

Listen to these passages that talk about how Jesus commissions us to join him in the work of reversing the curse in this world while we wait for his return.

Calling us to shine with him as light in the darkness, Jesus says to us

Matthew 5.14,16

You are the light of the world. ... Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Calling us to join him in quenching this desert world's thirst, Jesus says to us:

John 7.38

Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.

And calling us to join him on his mission of bringing peace into this world's discord, Jesus says to us:

Matthew 5.9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

And in John 20.21

Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.

Loving our neighbor isn't just a good thing to do. It is how the church fulfills its calling between the first coming of Jesus and his return, as we hold out the word of life to this lost and warring and dying world.

Our world is broken and we long for it to change, to be set right, so that once again it will perfectly reflect the heart of the God who created it and lays claim to it.

How will that come about? Only Jesus can make the world right. Only Jesus can make all things new.

But until he returns, Jesus calls *us* to be part of his work of putting *individual lives* right, by sharing with them the hope and promise that we have in Christ who is our light and life and peace.

As Paul writes in II Corinthians 5.17:

If anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation. The old has passed away, the new has come!

That is not just what *God* desires of us. And he does. It is what this *world* desires of us too. Listen again to a passage I read at the beginning of this message. Listen especially to the first line.

Romans 8.19-22

The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

The world isn't supposed to be this way. Everything is supposed to be different than it is.

This curse-bound world longs for the children of God to step forward, it waits in eager expectation for followers of Jesus to be revealed by their lives, by their love, and to speak the words that will break the curse for them, and bring them into the light and life and peace of Jesus.

Jesus says to you and me:

You are the light of the world.

Rivers of living water flow from within *you*.

Peace I give to you. As the father sent me, so I am sending *you*.

What is your response to the King? How will you offer yourself in his service as together we wait for his return? What is a way that this week you could be part of bringing light and life and peace into the part of the world where God has you?