

December 10, 2008  
 Messiah  
 Midweek Advent II

Isaiah 9:2-7  
 Heaven in a Manger

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### **Introduction**

1. Sometimes we long for a just a little piece of heaven
  2. Does your family every seem like it's all out of control; parents fighting, kids running the house; total chaos –
    - a. we've probably even considered, or made use of, some family COUNSELING
    - b. In our families – if only we could get just a little piece of heaven
  3. How about at work – do you ever get into a situation where you just feel powerless
    - a. You've run up against a brick wall, you feel stuck, nothing's going right
    - b. If only we were a little MIGHTIER to make things happen at work the way we think they should be done
  4. How about inside, deep down – have you ever felt insecure, like you needed a little FATHERLY love and advise, just some comfort, telling us everything will be ok?
  5. And how are your relationships going – are there some rough ones?
    - a. Is there tension between you and someone else?
    - b. Is there a family member, who when in the house together, the sparks fly?
    - c. Is there some deep-seated hate between you and another person – where you just long for some PEACE?
  6. Life – if only we could just get a little piece of heaven!
- I. I'm guessing that's what the people in Isaiah's day thought as well**
- A. There were 12 tribes of Israel
    - i. They were all related – all the way back to Jacob
    - ii. These tribes entered the Promise Land, as Joshua led them
    - iii. Right away each of the 12 family groups were fighting and arguing and even warring between each other
    - iv. There were major fractures, even to the point of 2 separate kingdoms: a North and a South – each with their own king
    - v. They literally warred against each other, shed each other's blood, killed each other's family members
    - vi. Getting together for family holidays would have been just as dysfunctional then as our families sometimes are now
    - vii. Talk about needing a COUNSELOR – to work out these deep-seated family struggles
  - B. You've heard sayings like “the strongest man wins” or “survival of the fittest” – it's pretty much the premise of the old game we used to play on Wisconsin snow hills: King of the Hill – the strongest one was on the top

- i. With Israel, in Isaiah's day, Israel was not always the strongest
- ii. As a matter-of-fact, often times she got pushed around by her neighbors: especially Assyria and Babylon
- iii. Some days for Israel were pretty dark: these stronger nations taxed Israel heavily, sometimes these strong neighbors would burn their cities and destroy their homes, other times these mighty nations would literally take the people into slavery, as Assyria literally led off a great number of Israelites with fish hooks in their mouths – all chained together
- iv. These were DARK days for Israel
- v. One of the greatest fears of the United States is still the fear of terrorism – not a whole lot different than the fears of Israel
- vi. Israel longed for a King to rise, one like MIGHTY David; and even though we put much money in our military defense, MIGHT is what we are after as well

C. Parents of adult children know that “parenting is never done”

- i. Even as grown children, we have sometimes relied on our parents when we hit a financial crisis, or our marriage is falling apart, or we just need mom or dad to console us
- ii. Israel was called the “sons of God” – but often Israel went astray and forgot about their heavenly Father... until they were in a heap of trouble and needed bailing out
- iii. For generations Israel was in the middle of financial success, they went searching after other gods, they lived life with no thought of consequences or love for God...
- iv. Israel had gone so far astray, that even when she was in trouble, she forgot who God was, she forgot about her Heavenly FATHER, and they lived as frantic, rebellious children
- v. There are times we call our earthly Father on the phone, just to tell him our problems, just for a listening ear, or maybe even a little wisdom

D. A little piece of heaven – is what Israel needed and desired

- i. Israel was just tired at being at war, of all the hostilities she faced, of all the enmity, bloodshed, and hate
- ii. Why couldn't someone come and secure PEACE?
- iii. We're not a whole lot different than Israel: every relationship we're in we're either working toward peace, having just lost peace, desiring the peace would last, or feeling downright hopeless about the lack of any peace in the relationship at all
- iv. We have become so fallen, at times we just go snooping around for a fight, picking a fight, disturbing peace, and even delighting when everything is in chaos – now how fallen is that?!

- II. A little piece of heaven... on earth... wouldn't it be nice?**
- A. It is for the people of Israel that Isaiah speaks his words
- i. It is for us that Isaiah speaks his words
  - ii. "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace"
- B. God comes to earth, Jesus is born in Bethlehem, the Infant Christ is born in a stable, the Messiah is laid in a manger →
- i. and this Jesus is ALL OF HEAVEN in the manger;
  - ii. In Christ, we get not just a "little piece of heaven" – in the stable is the whole kingdom of God, glorious heaven
  - iii. And what does that mean to us?
- C. It means we have a WONDERFUL COUNSELOR in the manger
- i. It is for our problems, our sin, our death, our crisis, our sickness, our phobias, our diseases, our mental problems that God came to earth
  - ii. He counsels us through His Word – His Word is power to change our lives, His Word takes away our sins, His Word gives us the sure and certain hope that regardless of the problems of this world, ours is eternal life in heaven because Heaven came to earth to save us
  - iii. This same Wonderful Counselor hears now your daily prayers – go to Him in prayer, speak to Him your troubles and your sins, and He will hear you, and His Word is answer back to touch, fix, and make better your life and your soul
- D. Heaven in the Manger means we have a MIGHTY GOD among us
- i. Superman looks weak when he is merely Clark Kent
  - ii. Spiderman looks weak when he is merely Peter Parker
  - iii. And Jesus looks weak when he is merely a baby lying in a manger
  - iv. Unlike Superman and Spiderman who are make-believe, Jesus is real, and true
  - v. And though He appears weak – He is the MIGHTY GOD come to earth
  - vi. His baby fingers contain all the power to destroy sin
  - vii. The breath that comes from his infant nostril is all the power to blast away Satan
  - viii. His tiny feet has in them all the power to crush death
  - ix. Whether in a manger, or on a cross → it's still GOD, it's still ALL OF HEAVEN – it's still the MIGHTY GOD come to save us!

- x. This is the mighty God who strengthens you each and every day – giving you a mind, a heart, a soul to make decisions, to seek His Word, and to lean not on our own understanding, but on HIM who is MIGHTY

E. Heaven in the Manger means we have an EVERLASTING FATHER

- i. As Fathers go – there are some good ones and there are bad ones, there are some nice ones and there are some mean ones...
- ii. But Jesus is God – He is of the Father who loves us as a Father loves His own dear child
- iii. God's love for us is never selfish, self-seeking, imperfect, or disappointing
- iv. God is the PERFECT FATHER, and daily we climb into His lap and talk to Him, seeking Him for forgiveness, for help, and for the needs of this life

F. Heaven in the Manger means we have a Prince of Peace

- i. God gives us a way to deal with our enemies, and with those with whom we fight and becomes hateful and resentful...
- ii. God gives us Himself, the Prince of Peace
  - 1. And this Prince gives us forgiveness of sins, as we forgive those who sin against us – this is the power of the cross
  - 2. This Prince of Peace gives us a love that seeks to mend relationships, a desire to care about how we get along with others
  - 3. This Prince of Peace gives us a new heart: a heart that is patient, that is kind, that is generous, that is giving, that is serving
  - 4. And the enmity we once had with God because of our sins – is now forgiven, restored, and made new
  - 5. The Prince of Peace has made peace between us and God, which is to our relief, knowing ours is now eternal life in heaven!

**Conclusion**

1. We sometimes long for just a “little piece of heaven”
2. Long no more – for Jesus in the manger is heaven in the manger → all of God, all of heaven
3. And for in you life – this “heaven in the manger” is your Wonderful Counselor, your Mighty God, your Everlasting Father, your Prince of Peace. Amen.