

Week 4

Isaiah 9:1-7 “Oppression that needs Lifting”

Begin with prayer

Lord God,

We know we often live lives inattentive to the hurts and needs of those around us.

We ask that you will help us to truly see others, please open our hearts and our eyes.

Help us to care and advocate for those who face oppression and experience injustice. Lord, help us not only to see it, but to fight it.

Help us to be your agents in this world, seeking your will and loving your people.

In Jesus name we pray,

Amen

Read the text for today. (Suggestion: Go around and read it out loud, each person taking a verse.)

Ask: What stood out to you about this text? What, if anything, doesn't make sense? What caught your attention and sparked curiosity?

Isaiah 9 begins in the dark. Isaiah paints a grim portrait. The people of Israel have been living in the dark. They have been dwelling in the chilly shadow of death. Worse, he tells us in verse 4 that the people have been afflicted by a burdensome yoke. A kind of heavy bar across their shoulders, as they are driven forward under the stinging blows of an oppressor's rod and whip. The images here are awful. Isaiah goes on in verse 5 to talk about warrior's boots and about garments rolled in blood.

Isaiah was referring to the exile of the people of Judah during the seventh century B.C. However, this could just as well stand as a description for the many examples of humanity's larger enslavement to sin and evil. At any moment, you can locate people who are suffering under an oppressive regime

Make no mistake: the yoke of oppression that needs lifting (verse 4) is still with us and it has a thousand different forms. It vandalizes shalom. It wrecks human flourishing in God's good creation. The yoke must be broken, and the burden of slavery must be lifted and shattered. What is needed to lift the burden? What is needed for those of us who live in the valley of the shadow of Death? We need the Prince of Peace, the Mighty God who came into this world to make all things