



**Carstairs-Bancroft United Church**  
January 6, 2022  
**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT**  
**DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**  
**By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces**



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Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

**Today's Inspiration in one sentence**  
**"Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress."**  
(Isaiah 9:1)

**Did You Know?**

Let's recall the basic information that we have already learned about **Isaiah**:

Isaiah, son of Amoz, is often thought of as the greatest of the writing prophets. His name means "*The Lord is salvation*". He was a contemporary of Amos, Hosea and Micah, beginning his ministry in 740 BC, the year King Uzziah died.

Scholars date the Book of Isaiah between 740 and 680 BC. Many of them challenge the claim that Isaiah wrote both halves of the book (chapters 1-39 and chapters 40-66) that bears his name. Yet his is the only name attached to it.

Theologians divide the book of Isaiah into two parts: 1. *The Book of Judgement* (chapters 1-39); 2. *The Book of Comfort* (chapters 40-66). Today's text is part of *The Book of Judgement* based on the above division. Still, Isaiah prophesies about a royal son, a Son of David, who brings light and hope to all the people. In Hebrew each of the four throne names of the Messiah consists of two elements:

- *Wonderful Counselor*: as Wonderful Counselor, the coming Son of David will carry out a royal program that will cause all the world to marvel. What that program will be is spelled out in chapter 11, and more fully in chapters 24-27.
- *Mighty God*: His divine power as a warrior is stressed here.
- *Everlasting Father*: He will be an enduring, compassionate provider and protector.
- *Prince of Peace*: His rule will bring wholeness and wellbeing to individuals and to society.

(The NIV Study Bible; Isaiah)

**Personal Insight**

Today the Christian Churches celebrate Epiphany, which also marks the end of the Christmas season. I remember the time spent in a British friend's house at this time of the year. She was very particular in putting away all the Christmas decorations in that space from the tree to displayed Christmas cards.

But does this mean for us that the good news of Christmas is gone for the rest of the year? The recurring passages for Epiphany are about the visit of the magi, and the word itself means "appearance" or "manifestation". This festival remembers the realization of the three kings that in that human baby the divine entered our world.

Epiphany opens the way to our own perception and accepting what John put like this: **"The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world."** (John 1:9)

This divine "Light" is willing and able to stay with us beyond the Christmas season, in every joy and sorrow of our lives!

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



## The Prince of Peace

*And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father,  
Prince of Peace.*

Isaiah 9:6

### READ Isaiah 9:1-7

When John's cold turned into pneumonia, he ended up in the hospital. At the same time, his mother was being treated for cancer a few floors above him, and he felt overwhelmed with worries about her and about his own health. Then on Christmas Eve, when the radio played the carol "O Holy Night," John was flooded with a deep sense of God's peace. He listened to the words about it being the night of the dear Savior's birth: "A thrill of hope the weary soul rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!" In that moment, his worries about himself and his mother vanished.

This "dear Savior" born to us, Jesus, is the "Prince of Peace," as Isaiah prophesied (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus fulfilled this prophecy when He came to earth as a baby, bringing light and salvation to "those living in the land of the shadow of death" (Matthew 4:16; see Isaiah 9:2). He embodies and gives peace to those He loves, even when they face hardship and death.

There in the hospital, John experienced the peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7) as he pondered the birth of Jesus. This encounter with God strengthened his faith and sense of gratitude as he lay in that sterile room away from his family at Christmas. May we too receive God's gift of peace and hope. – By **Amy Boucher Pye**

### REFLECT & PRAY

**God of peace, when I'm anxious and fretting about many things, help me to turn to You and receive Your gift of peace. Amen.**

How have you experienced God's peace in the midst of a difficult situation? Which aspect of God in Isaiah 9:6 do you most need today? Why?

### SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

The prophet Isaiah lived during the reign of four kings of Judah—Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah—around 740 years before Jesus' birth. According to tradition, Isaiah was sawn in half, and thus many believe Hebrews 11:37 refers to him. In Isaiah's beautiful prophecy of the coming Messiah, this child to be born (God incarnate) would be called the "Prince of Peace" (9:6). Elsewhere, Isaiah offers a glimpse of the peace He'll bring (11:1-9; 65:25). Jesus, the Prince of Peace, will usher in this peace with His second coming and millennial reign, and "of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end" (9:7; Revelation 11:15). - By **Alyson Kieda**

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