

EVANGEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCA)

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Sunday Worship 8:30 AM and 11:00 AM

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The Real Christmas Message

The Christmas story told by Isaiah hardly resembles the one that is familiar to us. He never mentions a star, a hillside with shepherds, or a stable with a manger. In a sense Isaiah brings us to reality. He forces us to correct the charming and somewhat distorted picture we have of our Savior's birth.

The real story is not so quaint. The manger was real and so were the shepherds and the star; but it was not warm and cozy. The spotlight of history was not focused on Bethlehem as it is on London when an heir to the throne is born. Unlike royalty, Christ grew up unnoticed. His ministry was not widely accepted.

The amazing thing about the Christmas story is that our Lord survived the fury of Herod; that anyone would follow Him; that the Church was established or that the message of salvation is known around the world today. The astounding thing is that this baby born in obscurity became the most significant personality in human history. That is the real story.

Isaiah speaks of Christ seven hundred years before His birth. He speaks of Him in majestic terms as one would expect the Messiah to be described. He would be the light shining in the darkness. He would be Immanuel, God with us.

But Isaiah also speaks of Him as one who would be despised and rejected. His entry into the world would be, "like a root out of dry ground." (Isaiah 53:2) He would grow up like a tender shoot: It is a picture of a fragile little shoot that begins to bud and grow off the edge of a stump cut close to the ground. (Isaiah 6:13) To make the picture more drab, the stump with its tender shoot is located in a barren, dry desert. There is no likelihood the shoot will survive. This is Isaiah's way of saying that the Messiah's life would be difficult and unattractive.

He is saying that the Savior would derive nothing from the soil in which He was to grow. He would grow and flourish in spite of all this. In fact this tiny, tender plant would grow to be such a magnificent tree that only its presence would make the barren desert livable. Jesus, in fact said, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

Today the shade of His salvation provides a refuge and hope for multitudes who have languished in this hot, dry, barren world. This shoot can take root and grow in the most unlikely places. He never finds fertile soil when He comes to us, but He gives everything: Conviction of sin, grace to repent, faith to trust, hope for tomorrow and all eternity. He gives life. (John 10:28)

The human heart has nothing to offer but dry, barren wasteland, yet when one receives Jesus as Savior and Lord a lush beautiful garden begins to emerge. The same is true of families. Families can be barren, dry deserts but when the marriage partners yield their lives to Christ, a new life begins and soon there is restoration and healing. Nothing is beyond His reach; no situation is beyond His power to change.

Think of the driest place imaginable or the hardest, coldest heart, the shattered marriage, the godless government, the savage culture which glorifies brutality and treachery. The stump of which Isaiah spoke will produce a shoot that will thrive there. "A shoot will spring forth from the stem of Jesse and a branch from his roots will bear fruit." (Isaiah 11:1) Jesus said, "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly." (John 10:10)