**To Us A Child is Born**

Isaiah 8:11-9:7

Key Verse 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."

We are heading toward the end of the year and facing the New Year 2016! It feels like a few days ago that we chose the New Year key verse. Next week, we will have 2015 UBF Christmas celebration! Let’s prepare a room for Christ in our hearts! During this Christmas season, what gift do you want to get? What was your best Christmas gift ever? Haven’t you received even one? Please do not be disappointed or despair. Here is the best gift from God for all of us. In this passage, God says: I am going to give you a gift. It is not like a gift that will end up in trash can. It is an unusual gift, a child. However, he is not just a child. He is “Wonderful Counselor”, “Mighty God”, “Everlasting Father”, and “Prince of Pease.” Many people often throw out or reject this gift of the Christ because something else looks bigger, more impressive and appealing. However, anyone who receives the son will receive eternal life in the kingdom of God. Today, let us receive the baby Jesus.

First, Jesus is the Great Light. In Isaiah Ch7, the hearts of King Ahaz and his people were shaken with fear as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind. Syria and Northern Israel were threatening Judah, surrounding the city Jerusalem. At this moment, God spoke through Isaiah that he had nothing to fear for they were only “smoldering stubs of firewood”. God wanted Ahaz to repent of his unbelief, but have faith in the living God of Israel and seek help from God. However, he rejected the word of Isaiah. Instead, he looked for help from the superpower nation, Assyria. He gathered all the temple vessels of gold and silver and sent them to the King of Assyria to make alliance. Did Assyria bring them peace? Not at all! Instead, Assyria invaded Judea and brought them destruction and desolation. Isaiah Ch. 8 is a picture of panic and terror that will take place in the land of Judah. The land will be devastated by Assyria. What a terrible picture of the moral and spiritual darkness in Judah! In their desperation where do they turn? They turned to Mediums and spiritists! By seeking answers apart from God, they will not find the way but plunge themselves into greater darkness. They would see only distress and darkness. Out of fear, people seek answers in strange ways: like consulting a fortune-teller, reading horoscopes or even fortune cookies. They buy lottery tickets with a vague hope for a miracle. This was the culture of Isaiah’s day, and how little things seem to have changed today.

Where should we look for answers in the time of distress?   Let’s read verse 20 together. **“Consult God’s instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.”** God want us to seek the answers in the word of God. God wants us to go back to the Bible. Instead of seeking help from Assyria, God want us to look at the living God of Israel. People are seeking answers in the wrong places, not in the word of God. When we reject the word of God and turn away from God, there is no place to find the answer. People depend on wise men’s words, science, education or social justice. In reality, people are still in distress, darkness and fearful gloom. Sin still dominates them. Fear and sin cannot be resolved by those. “Consult God’s instruction and the testimony of warning.” Instead of Assyria, we should look to the living God of Israel. We should go back to the Bible. **The word of God is the one thing that enables us to stand even in the time of darkness, and overcomes the fear of the world and live by faith.**

Someone might ask how God allowed his land to be devastated. It was because they had forsaken God and worshipped idols. It was because they did not keep God’s decrees but followed their evil hearts and did evil things such as offering their kids to idols. However, our God is Immanuel. No matter how dark and gloomy and desperate the day may be, God is always with us. Look at 9:1a and 2. "Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." It seemed that God had failed completely when the Northern Israel and the Southern Judah were destroyed by Assyria and Babylon due to their adulterous sins in spite of God’s amazing grace upon them. Our God never fails. He shines his Light onto his people. In those dark times, Isaiah saw the light of God breaking through the gloom and dispelling the darkness. The people walking in darkness will see the light. This light will shine on those who live in the land of the shadow of death. This light would enlarge the nation and increase their joy, like people rejoicing at harvest time or after a military victory. This light would set his people free from their oppressors, shattering the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders. This light would bring peace, burning every warrior’s boot and every garment rolled in blood. There would be no more war. What a wonderful light it is!

Then, what is this light? The great light is Jesus. Look at verse 6a. “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.” Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled when God sent Jesus through the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. In Luke 1:31-33, the angel said to Mary, “You will be with child and give birth to a son. And you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of Most High. The Lord will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end.” The light of God would drive out the darkness through the birth of a child. The peace of God would come through the giving of a son. Jesus is not just any son, but the Son of God. He will establish and uphold his kingdom with justice and righteousness from then until forever.

Second, Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor.  How do you make important decision which determine the direction of your life such as “What shall I do with my life?” “Whom shall I marry?” “Which college shall I go and what shall I study?” “What jobs shall I apply for or take?” “Shall I accept Jesus as my Savior and Lord and commit my life to him?” We need someone who is full of wisdom and knowledge and spiritual insight; someone who will guide us to the best way.  Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor. Here “wonderful” means extraordinary, beyond the bounds of all human expectations and limits. Jesus is the wonderful counselor because he understands our weaknesses. (Heb 4:15) He knows our names. He knows our thought. He even knows what is in our heart. Jesus is the wonderful counselor because he really cares for us. 1Peter5:7 says “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” Jesus is the wonderful counselor because Jesus knows the truth. He is the one who knows God’s plan and will for us. Jesus was the Wonderful Counselor to the woman at the well in Samaria, to the woman caught in adultery, to the rich young ruler struggling with self-righteousness, to the confused disciples, and so on. God wants us to come to him in our prayer and ask wisdom. We have an amazing privilege to come to this wonderful counselor.

Third, Jesus is our Mighty God.  Jesus is the Mighty God. Jesus is the Almighty God who created all things. We know Jesus as someone very meek, mild, gentle, and kind. When the solders beat him, and made him carry his cross, he did not resist. He was crucified on the cross like a little lamb. All these things are true. But Jesus is our Mighty God who is the fortress that we can turn to for refuge and protection. Jesus is the Mighty God who gives us victory against our enemy, Satan. Jesus is the Mighty God who has defeated and conquered the power of sin and death through his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead. Christ is our victorious king. He will deliver us from laziness, bad habits, lust, pride, selfishness. His mighty power has been demonstrated in his every words. By his mighty word, "Be clean," lepers were healed. By his word, "Talitha koum!" a dead girl came to life. By his word, "Quiet! Be still!" a stormy sea subsided. By his word, "Lazarus, come out!" and the dead man walked out of his tomb. Is anything too hard for Jesus? Jesus is the Mighty God who heals the sick, drives out demons and controls the sea. Nothing is impossible for Jesus, the Mighty God. Jesus is the Mighty God who delivers us from the power of sin and death. Jesus is the one worthy of worship.

Fourth, Jesus is our Everlasting Father. A father provides his children with love, protection, home, food, and all his children need to grow. Under his care, children can grow well in humanity. But there are many children whose fathers are not present in their lives for one reason or another. Even the best human father has faults and cannot be there all the time for their children. But Jesus is our Everlasting Father who never fails, who is always available. Jesus is our everlasting Father who is full of love and compassion for his children. Jesus promised in John 14:18, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." He promised to be with us forever in Matthew 28:20, "Surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Jesus is the everlasting Father, who is source of our life. Jesus is the one who gives eternal life to us.

Fifth, Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Jesus, the Prince of Peace promised in 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." Isaiah wrote in 26:3, "You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!" (NLT) God promises peace to those whose minds are stayed on him. Even in the midst of the most chaotic time, even in the midst of persecutions, and troubles, we can have Peace when we fix our eyes on Jesus.

People seek peace in many ways. People try to forget their troubles through parties, or sports, or video/computer games, or music or sleeping or some other hobby. These things may give a temporary feeling like peace, but troubles soon come back. Dark clouds of depression and anxiety rob their joy. Many students have heavy hearts, worrying about grades, meeting a right person for marriage, and getting a job. People who are a little bit older than students worry about money, buying a house and children’s education. That’s why people suffer from depression and frown their faces. Today we learned who Jesus is. He is the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peeace. Jesus became a baby for our sake. Jesus became a baby to be our best gift ever! Whatever problem you have, it does not matter. The only thing to do is trusting Jesus and consulting his Words! Jesus will keep you safe and you will not die but live even if there will be many troubles in your life!

Since I was young, I knew that I can’t expect much financially from my father. I studied very hard to enter the best university in Korea. I had great fear to live a failed life like my father. Even though I entered the University of my Dream, I was not sure that I could graduate due to lack of money. I was not sure of what to study. In 2nd year, I became very humble due to several events in my life and I accepted God as the creator. I was so happy to know that God is my father. Since then, God have been my father. At that time, I chose math as my major not because I liked math but because I failed to choose a popular program such as computer science. Even though my GPA was not good, I got a scholarship from one company which was twice as my tuition fee. I realized that my earthly father is poor but my heavenly father is rich! I never experienced financial difficulty afterwards. When I was in fourth year, I had to choose my future direction. Shall I go to the military service or enter a graduate school? Every morning, I asked God to guide me. One day, God told me to enter a master program. He said that I will meet Jesus personally there. As God’s said, I met Jesus who loved me so unconditionally even though I was a dirty sinner full of lustful desires and pride. I shared my graduation testimony with many tears. After I met Jesus, I made a decision to marry a woman of faith to serve campus ministry together, so I did not date. In God’s time, I got married with M. Rebecca, a woman of faith, intelligence and beauty. Lord, I pray that I may serve campus students faithfully until you come again. I confess like David. “The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in great pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” God is our Everlasting Father while on earth and also in his Kingdom!

Though God really wants to give this gift, there are people who reject this gift. The problem is not with God’s gift. The problem is that many people are distracted by things of this world that appear bigger, more attractive, more appealing to them. May the Holy spirit lead us to receive the gift from God, the child,  the Great Light, our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace in our hearts. The Zeal of the Lord Almighty may accomplish his purpose for each of us.  The zeal of the mighty God may accomplish his Salvation!