

### Media and Graphics Notes

<b>Sermon Starter Video?</b>	Yes
<b>Sermon Notes?</b>	There are no notes on screen with this sermon.

## Key Questions

### ***What is this sermon about?***

This sermon is about how our context affects the way that we experience the season of Advent.

### ***Why is this sermon important?***

At times Advent can sometimes seem routine and distant, yet the truth is that the good news of light breaking into darkness is for everyone.

### ***What is the context of this sermon?***

This is the first sermon in the Advent 2015 series.

### ***What are the next action steps?***

God shows up and brings light into darkness.  
Wait for it...  
Expect it...

### ***What is the good news (bottom line)?***

The good news is that "the people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned."<sup>1</sup>



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## Metadata

### Topic(s)

1. Changing Lives
2. Making Disciples
3. Share
4. Transformation of the World

### Sermon Books of the Bible

1. Isaiah

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 9:2, CEB.

1st Sunday of Advent  
A Season of Hope - Expectation  
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado  
Text Online at <http://j.mp/1lbogbK>

November 29, 2015  
Isaiah 9:2-7  
Preaching Target Word Count: 2,016  
Audio Online at <http://j.mp/1Nr0TuY>

2. Matthew

## Tags

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist,  
UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, ElDorado, Kansas, GreatPlains,  
AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, Advent, hope, expectation, Isaiah,  
context,

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## Table of Contents

<b>Isaiah 9:2-7, CEB</b>	<b>4</b>
Response to Scripture	4
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
Sermon Starter Video	4
Series Review	4
Sermon Notes and Scripture Study	4
Prayer	5
<b>Context Matters: The Royals in Southeast Texas</b>	<b>5</b>
Advancing Pastoral Leadership Cohort	5
Conversation Starter	5
World Series Royals	5
"We're from Houston."	5
Transition	
<b>Isaiah 9</b>	<b>6</b>
Old Testament Context	6
New Testament Context	6
Jesus Biography	
Early Church	
Today's Context	7
Distant and routine	
Real and gripping	
Transition	
<b>A Season of Hope</b>	<b>8</b>
Christmas Wish List	8
Real Hope	8
Good News	8
Call to Action	8
Invitation	8
Closing Prayer	8

## Isaiah 9:2-7, CEB

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.

You have made the nation great; you have increased its joy. They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest, as those who divide plunder rejoice. As on the day of Midian, you've shattered the yoke that burdened them, the staff on their shoulders, and the rod of their oppressor. Because every boot of the thundering warriors, and every garment rolled in blood will be burned, fuel for the fire.

A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and authority will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be vast authority and endless peace for David's throne and for his kingdom, establishing and sustaining it with justice and righteousness now and forever.

The zeal of the Lord of heavenly forces will do this.

## Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

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## Introduction

### Sermon Starter Video

Play sermon starter video.

### Series Review

"The season of Advent begins [today] and focuses on the past, the coming of Christ at the incarnation, and on the future, his [second] coming as judge [when God's kingdom will come fully on earth as it is in heaven."<sup>2</sup>

This season, we have the opportunity to find renewed hope and joy in the overwhelming love of God with us. Join us for Advent: A Season of Hope as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus once again, experience God's presence with us in Word and Spirit and anticipate Christ's return.

### Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions
  - Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the message today.
  - Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.
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<sup>2</sup> Vena, Osvaldo "Advent." In Volume 1, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by Katharine D. Sakenfield, et. al. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

### **Prayer**

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

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## **Context Matters: The Royals in Southeast Texas**

### **Advancing Pastoral Leadership Cohort**

Earlier this month, I was at the first retreat for Advancing Pastoral Leadership, a leadership development program sponsored by the Texas Annual Conference. I was one of 12 pastors in this group. I am the only participant from Kansas. There is one from Louisiana and the remainder are from the southeast Texas.

### **Conversation Starter**

I don't know what it is like for you when you meet people for the first time, but sometimes I wonder what to talk about. After the evening meal on the first night, I thought I would talk about the Royals. The season ended not too long ago, they won the World Series and I am from Kansas, so it something distinct that I might bring to the conversation.

### **World Series Royals**

So, I said, "How about those Kansas City Royals winning the World Series?"  
There was dead silence. No one said anything. I was expecting a different response.

I didn't grasp the significance of the silence and thought, perhaps, they didn't understand the magnitude of the celebration, so continued on, "Come on, they are World Champions for the first time in 30 years."

Still nothing.

### **"We're from Houston."**

Then someone said, "We're from Houston."

Then it hit me. Houston. As in, the Houston Astros.

You know, game four of the American League Division Series when the Houston Astros are six outs away from continuing in the post season and the Royals score five runs in the eighth inning and two more in the ninth.

The Royals conversation starter will work better in some places than others.

**Context matters.**

### **Transition**

The same is true for the passage of scripture for today.  
Let's take a closer look at Isaiah.

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## **Isaiah 9**

Isaiah was a prophet in the Kingdom of Judah around the 8th century before Christ.<sup>3</sup> This particular passage from Isaiah "[contains] some of the best-known and most compelling lines in the Bible."<sup>4</sup>

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*"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned. ... A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and authority will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."<sup>5</sup>*

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### **Old Testament Context**

Those who first heard these words, understood them to be about the birth of a king of Judah. These verses may have become a hymn that was sung at the coronation of other kings as well.

Then, you remember, the people of Israel were taken into exile. The hope of a king that would rule in this way began to be understood as a promise for the future – a savior is coming.

These are words of hope for a people that are living in darkness. They create an expectation for a future when things will be different. Things will be put right, don't give up hope.

### **New Testament Context**

#### **Jesus Biography**

800 years after these words were written, Jesus is born. He grew up in Nazareth, was baptized by John the Baptist and began preaching and teaching. He called people to follow him and become his disciples. He went to the sinners, tax collectors, the least, the last and the lost – those walking in darkness – and he gave them a hand, he healed them, he welcomed and ate with them. He shone light into the darkness of their lives.

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<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia contributors, "Isaiah," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Isaiah&oldid=691785896> (accessed November 29, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Leander E. Keck, ed., *Isaiah*, vol. VI of *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002, 121).

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 9:2, 6, CEB.

He was eventually tried and put to death by the authorities. He was crucified, died and laid in a tomb. But on the third day, he rose again. He ascended into heaven, but before he did, gathered his followers again and told them to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that [he had taught them]." <sup>6</sup>

### **Early Church**

This is exactly what they did and it was in this context that "The early church heard [the promise of Isaiah] and saw it fulfilled in Jesus, and [we] hear these words as proclamation of the birth of Jesus. All this is as it should be, for this ancient song helps faithful Christian hearers understand the meaning of Christmas." <sup>7</sup>

### **Today's Context**

This brings us to today.  
Right now.

### **Distant and routine**

Maybe these words seem distant and routine to you. This is part of the story of Christmas that feels the same this year as it did last year which felt the same as the year before that. Perhaps you find yourself in a place where you wonder, "What could possibly be new this year? How could I be waiting for something? I already know what to expect."

### **Real and gripping**

Perhaps you feel that these words are real and gripping. Maybe you are aware of having walked through a season of darkness in your life and know that this promise is for you – You have seen a great light. Light has dawned in your life.

Maybe you are in the darkness right now and you are hoping beyond hope that somewhere, somehow light will shine. need to hear a word from God. You need to hear from someone you can call "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."

### **Transition**

Context matters.  
I wonder,  
Where do you find yourself this year?  
What shapes the way that you hear this promise today?  
What are you hoping for this Christmas?

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 28:19-20, CEBA.

<sup>7</sup> Leander E. Keck, ed., *Isaiah*, vol. VI of *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002, 124.

## **A Season of Hope**

### **Christmas Wish List**

For years, I have made a Christmas wish list. When I was growing up, the beginning of this season was marked by anticipation for presents. I would pore over the ads from the Sunday paper making a detailed list of what I would like to receive.

I made a list again this year. Well, really, I updated a list that I keep throughout the year. I have a wish list that I keep online at Amazon that helps me not buy things that I have an impulse to buy knowing that I can come back to them later.

I checked this week and there are 855 items on the list.

855 items... Really?

Are these the things that I am really hoping for?

### **Real Hope**

The truth is, no. Not really, anyway.

Not when I am honest with myself.

Every one of us, at times, walks in darkness or lives in pitch-dark in some part of our life. So, I am hoping that these words from Isaiah will become true again this year.

That they will be made real for our world, our country, Butler County, El Dorado, our congregation, our family, for you and for me.

### **Good News**

The good news is that "the people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned."<sup>8</sup>

### **Call to Action**

This good news is for everyone.

No matter what this year has been like for you, Advent is a season of hope.

God shows up and brings light into darkness.

Wait for it...

Expect it...

A child is born. A son is given.

A leader will finally bring peace and justice forever.

### **Invitation**

This is the first Sunday of Advent

Let the waiting begin.

### **Closing Prayer**

[Text here] Amen.

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<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 9:2, CEB.