

**Tuesday, December 26**

**Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 9:2

**Text for Today:** *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them has light shined.*

The hope of Christmas dawned in desperately dark days. When the prophet Isaiah wrote to the besieged and endangered people of Israel, they were covered in darkness with Assyrian conquerors bearing down on them. The hope that Isaiah articulated so powerfully was that the yoke of oppression would be lifted from their shoulders, that weapons of conquest would be shattered, for “a child has been born for us, a son given to us, and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

The hope of Christmas is that God will intervene in the darkness and despair of death and defeat and anoint a chosen monarch who will rule with justice and peace. Both components of this vision are inseparable, because without justice there can be no peace, and only if there is both justice and peace will God’s people have cause for the exultant joy prophesied by Isaiah.

Of course it is no accident that Christmas comes the same week as the shortest and darkest day of the calendar year. Early on the church decided to place the festival celebrating the light of the world and hope of the ages in the midst of the greatest darkness in the northern hemisphere.

And in your personal life, you know that when your life is covered in gloom and grief, that is the time divine hope is most needed and most helpful. For many of us these days are darkened by the remembrance of our losses, and we miss those we love but see no more. How wonderful it is that the church stands up at this time in all its glory to proclaim that the light and joy of the coming of the “child born for us” is for you also.

**Prayer:** O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray; cast out our sin, and enter in; be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tiding tell; O come to us, abide with us, our God, Emmanuel

*Charles Watkins*

