

Read also Luke 2:9-11, John 3:16-21. Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Have you ever lost something that was dear to you? Once my father was robbed and the thief took my grandfather's shotgun and his watch and a number of other valuables which my father had inherited. Another time my stepmother's wedding ring was literally stolen off of her finger. It had belonged first to my grandmother. It wasn't just the value of these items; it was the family history that they lost.

Or, perhaps you misplaced something special and you haven't found it yet. It may not be that valuable, but there is something of meaning attached to it.

Or maybe you have moved from another country and you would love to go back and see some of the people you left. You feel the loss.

Or you lost your job unexpectedly. It has been so humbling to lose that job.

Once, a man was wrongly convicted of a serious crime and sentenced to life in prison. It felt like he had enemies which he had never imagined. Then, thirty-five years later DNA testing proved his innocence and he was released. Even with the huge loss, what a wonderful turn of events.

Have you found a treasure you lost years ago? Oh, the joy!

Or the police find your stolen possession and you get it back!

Have you ever been reunited with friends from childhood? A friend on Facebook recently posted a picture of our 4th grade class and four of us classmates instantly showed up—on Facebook, of course! A fifth said, "They had cameras back then?"

You may not see the possibility of positive stuff coming out of all those setbacks. You don't believe your lost job can be replaced, or your possessions recovered, or the man can regain the lost thirty-five years. It may not seem possible to even overcome life-in-general losses.

Loss and gain.

Isaiah has been talking about loss: God's loss, when his people turned away; Israel's loss of a unified nation; the loss of peace, due to their enemies. Isaiah saw all these great troubles.

I wonder if he went to bed with a headache.

But in chapter nine he woke up with a huge smile. A silver thread of blessing suddenly bursts upon the scene with awesome, joy-filled expectations. God is still here! Heaven still rules the earth! Peace is possible! We need not fear, even when humbled.

Isaiah just can't live in the darkness because he believes. Hear the story: READ Isaiah 9:1-7

CONTRASTS –

Darkness becomes light
Even though deeply humbled, there is a future
Dark circumstances are overcome by a shining light of HOPE
Their small country has a large future
Famine becomes harvest
War becomes peace

REJOICE! CELEBRATE! CHEER!

It's like being married for years and finally the baby arrives.
It's like paying off the mortgage under which you strained for 30 years—or more!
It's like the Cowboys beating ten teams—in a row!
It's like winning a war and peace reigns throughout the land!

REJOICE! RAISE YOUR GLASS! CHEER!

Someone has stepped in for you. For all the times you have been humbled you will now be honored. Nothing else will be destroyed. **You will win!** You can pack away the anger, fear, and distress forever! *For a child has been born.*

REALLY? That's all? It seems too simple; too ordinary.

But this child is special. He is the light that overcomes darkness. He is Jesus.

“Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them” (Lk 2:9-10b).

Heaven intentionally breaks in. The curtain is drawn back and this shining light illumines everything.

Isaiah has talked about this baby before, right? But now we learn more about him. He is more than human. He can achieve things no human being can ever achieve. The same old problems, the same old injuries, the same old shame is no longer ruler over us. We win!

God has compassion on you because he knows you are human. (Ps 103)

You haven't been forgotten or abandoned. (Mt 28:20)

Jesus is humble in heart and gentle, and his burden on you is light. (Mt 11:29-30)

Jesus has a place for you to belong. (Jn 14)

Jesus reverses the death sentence, and commutes a life-sentence into freedom. (Jn 3:16, 8:32)

The weight of governing will be on Jesus' righteous shoulders. (Rev 7:17)

That's why this is good news!

Once I needed a place to live but I wasn't planning on being there long, didn't have any furniture, and did not want to sign a lease. I met a woman in a Bible study and she had a spare

room. She offered the room, no strings attached; right where I wanted to live, and for no cost. God is good!

Jesus, the Mighty God. We cannot help but be happy if he is our friend.

He speaks the right word at just the right time. (Ps 119:105)

My son was with my dad when he was dying, talking to his grandpa as he took his last breaths. Suddenly he these heard words in his head: "I can't talk to you any longer; I'm talking to my son." Those words pulled back the curtain to heaven for just a moment for all of us. Jesus allowed us to know my dad is alive. My brother is with him. There's a place for us forever.

Jesus, the Wonderful Counselor. He speaks words of wisdom, direction, and help.

Isaiah's next title for the baby is "Everlasting Father." That's a little odd. God is normally called Father, so how are we to understand Jesus this way?

God is one, yet our faith resides in "God in three Persons," the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus' title here, Everlasting Father, reflects two things: The authority of a Father. God has set him in charge. He is not *the Father*, just like you are not your father. Rather, Jesus is "the image of the invisible God." He shows you what your Everlasting Father is like. He's a perfect reflection for you to see. The second thing this title reflects is that God has allowed for "all things to hold together in Christ" and for "all things to be reconciled through him." (see Col 1:15-22)

It's purely a gift to you, for God to show us himself in Jesus, to hold the world together in Christ, and reconcile the world through Christ.

That is why you give back to God. When you give, you may not experience immediate results. It may feel costly. It may take a while to experience the benefits of God's gifts back to you. But you can never out-give God. Eventually you will receive abundant blessings.

We need to know that giving is not just to get; not a bargaining tool. You sign a commitment card. That helps your giving to become a regular, consistent lifestyle. Giving is meant to be built into everything we do and every action we take, and then God, through Jesus, begins entrusting more and more to you because you are able to handle it and not squander all that you have on yourself. What a sad life that would be.

If you do not understand this you will think life is all about stuff and making yourself secure, rather than storing up treasure in heaven. Every time you give, you are putting another investment in the house waiting for you in heaven. Doing this will build your trust in God, which will lead you to peace.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

He keeps the peace, gives the peace, and creates peace in his kingdom.

Why do we have such incredible good news?

For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. There's no judgment for anyone who believes in him, only for those who do not believe. (Jn 3:16-18)

God's light has come into the world. Do you love it, or prefer darkness?

Live in God's light, and you will bask in God's intentional acts of incredible kindness.

AMEN