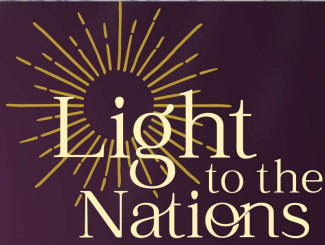


# ADVENT 2022 FACILITATOR GUIDE



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## Introduction to the Series

The prophet Isaiah lived in a world shrouded in darkness, but he pointed forward to the coming of a great Light — the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be a light not only to Israel, but to all people of the world. Not only did the Messiah come into the world as Isaiah prophesied, he also brought about and still is bringing about the Kingdom in every nation — opening eyes that are blind, freeing the captives, releasing those in darkness, and bringing justice to the nations. In Advent, we join together with those all over the world as we both long for and celebrate the finished work of Jesus!

In addition to these small group discussions, we encourage your group to join us in our Daily Worship devotions, reflecting on a different passage throughout the week that correlate and texturize the theme of our Sunday passage. You can find our Daily Worship devotions at [ualc.org/dailyworship](http://ualc.org/dailyworship).

## How to Use the Facilitator Guide

This is meant to be a resource to help you guide your group through a Bible-based discussion and into your prayer response time. You'll begin with a brief introduction to the topic, followed by a warmup question, often somewhat related to the topic of the study ahead. From there you'll read Scripture together, explore questions in an open conversation (remembering to practice good listening and encourage dialogue), and close with a time of prayer with each other. We end with prayer prompts that may help you tie these passages to the needs or desires of your group, and to bless what the Lord has done in your time together.

**There are typically more questions that your group will get through.** This is by design. We would rather you have more questions than you need than too few. We advise that the facilitator review the lesson ahead of the meeting and choose a few questions they'd most like to ask, so that you can skip over some questions for the sake of time. Remember, you're meeting routinely, so there will be time to circle back on these conversations again.

Please allot appropriate time for prayer at the end of your meeting. Prayer is an essential and irreplaceable part of small group. We'd rather you abbreviate the discussion and move on to prayer rather than have a long discussion and speed through prayer. That doesn't mean you can't pray efficiently (Mat 6:7), but we believe that God hears and responds to our prayers, and that we are knitted together when we pray with each other.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Dan Kidd at [dkidd@ualc.org](mailto:dkidd@ualc.org).  
For more small group resources, including facilitator training, visit [ualc.org/smallgroups](http://ualc.org/smallgroups)

Special thanks to our authors: Katie Borden, Brian Chandler, and Elaine Pierce.

# Light to Those Walking in Darkness

## Isaiah 9:1-7

### FACILITATORS:

### WEEK 1

This week we look at our 1<sup>st</sup> passage from Isaiah. Isaiah was a prophet who lived in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE who spoke on behalf of the Lord about the judgement and restoration of Israel. Isaiah is traditionally placed directly after 2 Kings in the Hebrew Bible, continuing the story of the tumultuous, all-too-often sinful patterns of Israel that led to God's painful intervention, using the Assyrians to punish Israel for her iniquities. Isaiah is primarily composed in long, poetic sermons, often in future-telling omens, that proclaim the reasons and nature of God's judgement, but also the promise of his presence and his intentions to continue to use Israel as a people who will bless the world. The New Testament often quotes from Isaiah because they recognize that the incredible promises God is making will be ultimately, cosmically fulfilled in the life, death, resurrection, and return of Jesus.

### INTRODUCTION FOR THE GROUP:

Today we're beginning a 4-week Advent series titled, Light to the Nations. The word "advent" come from the Latin *adventus*, which means, appropriately enough, "coming" or "arriving." This is a season where we reflect on, celebrate, and marvel over God's coming into earth in the person of Jesus.

- Why do we observe Advent at UALC?
- Do you practice any Advent traditions in your home (an Advent calendar, lighting of candles, etc.)?

In this Advent season, we're invited to remember and celebrate the physical birth of Jesus in the manger in Bethlehem, the coming of Jesus—by way of the Holy Spirit—into the hearts of believers, and our anticipation of Jesus' second coming, fulfilling once-and-for-all his mission of rescuing and restoring the world.

Over the coming weeks, we will read together from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. His poetic sermons were pronounced centuries before Jesus was born, but they met God's people in the middle of their despair, sorrow, and hopelessness. The Lord, through his prophet, proclaimed hope to those who had very little reason to be confident in anything but misery, suffering, and darkness. As we will hear today, the God of the universe--the Creator, Sustainer, and Giver of all good things—is Christ Jesus, the Light of the world that pierces through every last bit of darkness; the Light to the nations.

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### OPENING QUESTIONS:

- When did you most need a flashlight? And what difference did it make when you found it (or if you didn't find one)?
- Describe a time you made it a point to get up early to greet the sunrise.

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## OPENING PRAYER:

Pray something like: *Good and gracious God, thank you for this opportunity for us to be together, your invitation to us to celebrate the coming of the Light of the World. Lord, we seek to meet with you today. Bless us, encourage us, and grant us your peace. Amen*

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## SCRIPTURE:

Have someone read Isaiah 9:1-7. Remember to thank them for reading.

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## DISCUSSION:

Verse 2, Isaiah speaks of “the people walking in darkness.” Isaiah 8:20b-22 describes them this way: *“If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.”*

- What details stand out to you about those walking in darkness?
  - Receive all answers.
- In what ways might this describe people in the world today? Who among us might be suffering like this?
  - Encourage your group to consider people suffering both far and near. Certainly there are places overwhelmed with violence, oppression, and poverty around our world. But we needn’t look far at all to see individuals around us who need help, who are heartbroken, downtrodden, hungry and under-resourced.
- In what ways might we be like those walking in darkness in this season?
  - Discuss together how Christians, and particularly your group, may find themselves in moments of this kind of need, anxieties, cynicism, or purposelessness. Facilitator, you may want to have an example ready. This is not intended to stir up artificial complaint, but rather to acknowledge that—but for the grace of God—there is despair and darkness.

The prophet begins the passage by speaking of the “humbling” of Zebulun and Naphtali. These are 2 of the 12 Israelite tribes, who had both been conquered by the Assyrians—a particularly violent and cruel people who the Lord used (and then judged) to respond to Israel’s wickedness, including their own violence and exploitation. Isaiah is not omitting, downplaying, or apologizing on God’s behalf for this judgement, but he joins the Lord in proclaiming “there will be no more gloom.”

- In this instance, the Lord is clear that he has brought judgement on Israel, but that the judgement is intended to be redeemed. What does this tell us about the character of God as judge?
  - That the Lord will not let sinfulness—especially the kinds of sinfulness that destroy ourselves and others—go on indefinitely without his discipline. But the goal of putting an end to evil is that it will be replaced with goodness, obedience, righteousness, and flourishing. The Lord redeems us.
- What examples come to mind when you think of God’s discipline? Can you describe a time when the Lord has disrupted sinfulness and replaced it with goodness?
- In vv. 3-5, Isaiah describes the effects of the light; what are they?
  - Receive all answers, including that the nation is enlarged, joy is increased, burdens are shattered, the yoke of the oppressor is broken, and warriors will no longer need their boots and their protection from battle.

Imagine together what it might be like to have experienced the troubles listed in these passages: oppression, violence, and the destruction of your city. Consider what fears and anxieties you would have; what such events would mean for your day-to-day life.

- What do you imagine it might be like to live in such a bleak reality and yet be told that the gloom will not last?
  - Imagine together how you would receive such news. Do you think you might find it hard to believe? Would it bring you hope? You may even consider taking it a step further and imagine what it might be like to see all these terrible things repaired, restored by God’s help.

Verses 6 and 7 describe what that light will be. They are familiar verses, and it is easy to read them and not really appreciate the weight of them (or perhaps to be tempted to hum Handel’s Messiah!). When Isaiah prophesied these things (he lived from 740 – 681 BC), Assyria was the superpower of the day, and Jerusalem was ever under the threat of being conquered and put under the real of the Assyrians (which happened in 586 BC).

- If you were living in Isaiah’s time, and you heard prophecies about this radically different kind of ruler, how do you think you might respond? What difference might it make to have a king that ruled in the ways Isaiah described?
  - Receive all answers. It is easy to say, living in 2022, that of course we know that these verses describe Jesus. But if we had been a Jew living in Judah at the time, we might have expected a warrior – leading the government, his kingdom would have no end. Jesus is radically different than what they likely expected, but he does fulfill these incredible promises; in part now, and eventually in full upon his return.

Let’s read together some passages from the Gospels and consider how they help us read this passage from Isaiah.

Have your group read Matthew 4:12-17, Luke 1:32, and John 8:12.

- What context does Isaiah give to these passages? Conversely, how do these Gospel passages help us better appreciate the passage in Isaiah?
  - Receive your group's insights. This is our opportunity to "allow the Bible to interpret itself."
- Isaiah 9:6 lists several titles; titles Christians confess of Jesus. Which of these titles most resonates with you?
  - Receive all answers. This might be a chance for your group to share more personally about where they are in their faith walk.
  - Consider asking "Which of these titles least resonates with you, or you don't understand?"
- Isaiah spoke of the Lord shattering the yoke that burdened Midian. Is there a burden that is weighing you down that you need the Lord to shatter?
  - This question will lead us into our prayer and ministry time. It can be a rhetorical question for your group to prayerfully consider individually, or you can use this as an opportunity to share your burdens with one another.

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## PRAYER AND MINISTRY:

This passage promises hope in the midst of despair, God's present help in our needs and burdens, Light that pierces through the darkness. Consider sharing with each other what ways you need to know, see, or experience Jesus, the Light of the world, today.

Thank each person for sharing and pray as a group that the Lord would hear and respond to our needs. If you have a larger group, consider breaking into groups of 2 or 3.

# Advent Celebration

## Isaiah 42:1-9

### FACILITATORS:

### WEEK 2

Today we will observe how the prophet Isaiah's words in the 42nd chapter are fulfilled in Jesus' first coming, and how we have hope for the ultimate fulfillment of every longing in Jesus and his second coming. Don't be afraid to take some time to discuss the multiple layers in this text; both those that point to Jesus' earthly ministry and those portions that are yet to be fulfilled. However, be sure to point to the sure hope we have in the fulfillment of Jesus' promises because of the "down-payment" he made in his death and resurrection.

Our study offers 3 additional passages from the New Testament to help us interact with this passage from Isaiah. Consider bookmarking these passages ahead of time if you'd like to save the group some time hunting for them.

### INTRODUCTION FOR THE GROUP:

Today, we are continuing to unpack some of the texts of the prophet Isaiah in this holy and expectant time of waiting known as Advent. As we await the coming of Christ—both in his incarnation at Christmas and in his appearing at the glorious new creation—we will dig into how Isaiah foretells of this long-awaited one, and how Jesus fulfills these longings in the collective hearts of humanity.

### OPENING QUESTIONS:

- Think back to our Celebration of Advent worship service this Sunday. What is one part of the service that has stuck with you? Why?
- What is one of your favorite songs of the holiday season? Why?
- Our culture celebrates what we might call a "secular Christmas." The church celebrates what we might call a "sacred Christmas." What differences do you note between the two?
  - Accept all answers; focus on the feel-good nature of the secular season, and Santa/reindeer, in contrast to the humble beginning of new life in Jesus that yet brings hope to the weary world in the church's celebration.

Many churches (including our own, at times!) put more emphasis on celebrating Christmas this time of year than in observing Advent.



- What do you think is the difference between celebrating Christmas and Advent (if there is one)? If so, what do you think we stand to lose not celebrating Advent?
  - Advent is the expectation for the coming of Christ (from the Latin for "arrival"), both through Jesus' incarnation and in his anticipated second coming; Christmas is the celebration of his already-arrived. In the present age, we simultaneously receive and live in the Kingdom breaking into our lives because of the life of Jesus, but we also continue to hold out hope (just like the Israelites in the time of Isaiah) in Jesus coming to restore, redeem, and rule over the whole earth.

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## OPENING PRAYER:

*God, we find ourselves once again in the midst of preparations for the Christmas season. As we await that glorious day, tune our hearts to this moment, where we meet with you. Come now, even as we await your coming this Advent. By your Spirit's power, orient our hearts more and more toward the sure and certain hope we have in your appearing. Amen.*

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## SCRIPTURE:

Have someone read our Scripture for today in Isaiah 42:1-9. Be sure to thank them for reading.

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## DISCUSSION:

Let's spend some time in the first four verses.

- What qualities do you notice to be true about the servant of God in Isaiah 42:1-4, especially surprising ones?
  - Accept all answers; focus on the implications that God's Spirit is upon him, he emphasizes justice, his way of servitude seems to be that of sacrifice rather than domination.

Have someone read Matthew 3:13-17.

- How does this Gospel passage use Isaiah 42 to describe Jesus?
  - The gospel writer uses similar verbiage to that of Isaiah, demonstrating God's pleasure and delight in Jesus; the Spirit of God came and rested on Jesus as symbolism of his anointing. When the Gospels use these sermons to describe Jesus, they are presenting further evidence (in their own proclamations) that Jesus is the final resolution to the needs and hopes of God's people.
- Turning now to the second part of the passage, Isaiah 42:5-7, what are some actions that the servant is going to engage in?
  - Accept all answers; focus on the covenant-keeping and perhaps point back to our covenant series; also focus on light, sight, and freedom.

Have someone read Luke 4:14-21.



- In what ways do we see Jesus' words in this passage as a fulfillment of the words in Isaiah 42? How does Jesus enact this in his earthly ministry?
  - Note that the passage Jesus read from in Luke 4 is from Isaiah 61, but our passage in chapter 42 bears a similar sentiment.
- In what ways do you see Jesus having already fulfilled some of this prophecy in our present age? Individually? Systemically?
- In what way do you see a longing for this prophecy yet to be fulfilled? Individually? Systemically?
- How does living in this "already and not-yet" age affect us? How does it influence how we might pray?
  - We have been offered the grace of forgiveness and reconciliation with God; we have been gifted the Holy Spirit, who transforms us and beckons us into the will and ways of the Lord. Sometimes we experience liberation from the chains of sin or disease, and yet, the world is still filled with troubles and disease and sin, and so we eagerly await Christ's return.
  - We can therefore pray (as we're told to) with boldness and anticipation, while knowing that sometimes our prayers are answered with a "not yet."

Have someone read 1 Corinthians 15:20-26

- What assurance does this provide for the longings we have named that are yet unresolved?
  - We may focus on the truth that Jesus' resurrection from the dead ushered in the dawn of the new creation. Things are even now being made new, as the Lord proclaimed all the way back in the days of Isaiah. And one day, we will know the new creation in its fullness and perfection. Thanks be to God!

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## PRAYER AND MINISTRY:

A moment ago, we named some situations in which we see that God's justice, peace, and good reign is yet to be fulfilled. Let's take some time now to lift these situations to the Lord, and invite the Spirit to work in them.

*Perhaps your group may think of other situations they want to bring before God. Close with a prayer of assurance and hope in Jesus' name.*

# Light to the Islands & the Distant Lands

## Isaiah 49:1-7

### FACILITATORS:

### WEEK 3

In today's discussion we are reading from Isaiah chapter 49. It is believed that these poems were composed/collected during Israel's exile. They anticipate the restoration of Israel by the work of "the servant." As we'll discuss, the New Testament authors identify Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecies about "the servant." Interpreting Jesus in the place of "the servant" gives us important insight into how Jesus was received, and who he was (e.g. the King of kings).

### INTRODUCTION FOR THE GROUP:

This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of Advent, and our 3<sup>rd</sup> discussion in our Light to the Nations series. In our previous passages we've considered what darkness looks like, in the world of the prophet Isaiah, in the world around us, and in our own lives. We've heard how the authors of the New Testament have found Jesus to be the fulfillment of the longings and hopes of Israel and, in fact, all of humanity—a righteous, just, King who will rule in generosity, love, and peace.

Today's passage discusses the glorious, reparative, saving activity of "the servant." We will explore together how God's promise of redemption not only promises the unlikely—the restoration of the tribes of Israel—but even more; that the servant would take on a role of King of kings, for whom kings would stand (in honor) and princes would bow down.

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### OPENING QUESTIONS:

- Name a favorite movie or book that ends with an unexpected twist. Do you prefer stories that have an unexpected ending or those that are predictable? Why?

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### OPENING PRAYER:

*Pray something like this: Lord, thank you for bringing us back together today. We ask that you guide our hearts and minds as we study your word and celebrate your coming this Advent season.*

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### SCRIPTURE:

Have someone read Isaiah 49:1-7. Thank them for reading.

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## DISCUSSION:

- Who do you think is the servant speaking in this passage?
  - Isaiah, like all of the books of the prophets, can be understood on many levels. Those hearing these words at the time Isaiah spoke them would have understood the servant was Isaiah himself, or the nation of Israel.
  - The New Testament routinely uses these prophecies, and specifically Isaiah's servant, to describe and discuss Jesus. As followers of Jesus, we can now look to this passage and appreciate these prophecies anticipated and are fulfilled in Christ's coming.
- In what ways does this prophetic passage describe the life and work of Jesus?
  - Receive all observations.

Have someone read Isaiah 48:20-21.

<sup>20</sup> *Leave Babylon,  
flee from the Babylonians!  
Announce this with shouts of joy  
and proclaim it.  
Send it out to the ends of the earth;  
say, "The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob."*  
<sup>21</sup> *They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts;  
he made water flow for them from the rock;  
he split the rock  
and water gushed out.*

The Israelites have just been released from their captivity in Babylon and the faithful ones are returning home.

- How does the context of this passage help you understand more about the circumstances and character of this servant in the day of Isaiah?
  - Although we can now look to this passage as speaking of Jesus, knowing that the Israelites have just been released from Babylon to return home we can also understand that the servant is the nation Israel. Israel is being called once again, like they were called when they were freed from Egypt, to be a light to the nations.

In verse 3 we read: He said to me, "*You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor.*" Jesus, the servant, is the new servant from the nation of Israel—fulfilling the longings and prophecies from centuries before. As Christians we are called to continue the work of Christ.

- How do we as workers of Christ, "display God's splendor"?
  - Other translations use the phrase "show my glory" and "I will be glorified". The Hebrew verb used here means to burst forth and become visible. God's glory is God made visible in the world through how we love and serve others

- In verse 2, we hear that the servant is a sword “**hidden** in the shadow of his hand” and an arrow “**concealed** in his quiver. What do you think is the significance of the servant being hidden and concealed?
  - We are reminded again that God uses the most unlikely people (Rahab, Ruth, Mary, David, Saul) to carry out His purposes.
  - Because the most unlikely people are used, it once again brings God the glory. It is His splendor that is revealed through our own weaknesses.

In v. 6 we read: “*It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.*” The Israelites must have been ecstatic that they have been freed from their captivity in Babylon but that is not all that God had in store. His plans were much bigger.

- Imagining we are Israelites in exile, ruled over by Gentiles and striving to retain our identity as Jews in a foreign land, do you think the notion of being a light to the Gentiles would be a welcome prophecy? Would you want to be a light to your captors/oppressors?
- How does being a light to the world, even our enemies, foreshadow the work of Jesus?
  - Most clearly we remember Jesus forgiving his crucifiers from the cross. Christ died for our sakes even when we were his enemies, that we would be reconciled and forgiven.
- How might we be a light to even those we consider our enemies? What might prevent us from being a light to our enemies?
- Can you think of a time when God answered a prayer in a way you hoped? Did you realize later that God was doing something bigger than you could have imagined with that answered prayer?
  - Accept all answers. You might circle back to the opening question about movies/books with an unexpected ending. The movie could have ended with Israel being freed from Babylon and returning home, but God had a bigger story to tell. The story could have ended with Jesus dying on the cross, but God had an unexpected twist in store. He is risen!

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## PRAYER AND MINISTRY:

Take time this week in prayer to ask God what He has in store for you next as individuals and as a small group. What larger story is God calling you up into?

# Light Filling the Earth

## Isaiah 60:1-3, 19-22; Isaiah 66:17-24

### FACILITATORS:

### WEEK 4

Today's readings come from a collection of passages in Isaiah 60 and 66. The discussion will focus on these passages particularly, but, if you'd like to read Isaiah 60 in its entirety, please feel free to do so (as the whole chapter will give more texture to the discussion, and, it's usually the case that when a New Testament author quotes a verse from the Old Testament, they intend the reader to remember and apply the whole passage from which the verse was pulled).

Our prayer and ministry time for this discussion invites the group to pray for specific global missionaries by using the World Mission Prayer League prayer list. You may want to go to the sight ahead of the group and pull a few items to pray for from the list.

### INTRODUCTION FOR THE GROUP:

This is the final week of Advent, and our final discussion from the book of Isaiah. In this series we're exploring how Jesus came to earth—fully human and fully God—and shone through the darkness of the world, so that, in the words of Paul, *"all of us with unveiled faces, reflecting like bright mirrors the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same likeness, from one degree of radiant holiness to another, even as derived from the Lord the Spirit."* This incredible gift, given to the whole world, is the hope and peace for everyone, and it is our joy to share and celebrate this incredible news with the world.

Today's passage reminds us that, as we wait for Christ's return, we continue on in the project of spreading Jesus' Gospel to a world full of darkness but longing for the Light.

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### OPENING QUESTIONS:

- What is at the top of your Christmas list this year? What gift are you most excited to give someone else (avoiding any spoilers for those in the room)?
- Have you ever heard a story from a Christian in a different country (or perhaps a missionary) that stuck with you? How so?

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### OPENING PRAYER:

*Pray something like this: Lord it is our pleasure to be with one another and with you today. Lead us in this time we're sharing together and reveal yourself to us. Amen.*

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## SCRIPTURE:

Our discussion today focuses on a collection of verses from two of Isaiah's poetic sermons, capturing the bookends of chapter 60, and a portion of chapter 66.

Have members of the group read Isaiah 60:1-3, 60:19-22, and 66:17-24

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## DISCUSSION:

- What verses, details, or images stand out from you from this passage? What questions do you have about these passages?
  - Allow your group to identify what stood out to them. As you continue through the discussion ahead, emphasize the things that were noticed and point them out. If there's a question you feel confident in answering, feel free; or if you don't know the answer, or if it's a question that can be pondered over the course of the discussion, table it and return to it some other time.

It's believed that these passages may have been composed after Israel's return from Exile, at which point they would have returned to their homeland in Judah and Jerusalem, but still anticipating the Day of the Lord, when the promises God spoke over them would come to pass; promises like those we've encountered in these verses.

- Our reading begins with the diagnosis that "darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples." In what ways do you imagine that was true in the time of Israel's immediate return from Exile?
  - Though the Israelites were released to reclaim Judah and Jerusalem at this time, it took more than 100 years for the full "return to Zion" to take place, and even then Solomon's temple had been destroyed. There would continue to be war, and famine, and sickness. And the promise that God's people would bless the whole world through Israel was a long way from being realized.
- In what ways does darkness cover the earth and its people even now?
  - Your group is likely not to struggle with ways that darkness exists in our present world. In addition to thinking of the darkness in our own city or nation, encourage the group to think of the pains of people across the world. You may mention countries or groups of people in crisis or under oppression; you might mention those who have no access to the hope and peace of the Gospel.

We have previously spoken about how we currently live in an era where Christ has come and, through his life, death, and resurrection he has reconciled us with God, forgiven our sins, defeated death, and filled us with the transforming Holy Spirit that makes us the family of God together. But the promises we read about in these passages—specifically those about sorrow ending forever—have clearly not yet come to pass. That is a major reason we celebrate Advent. Advent celebrates the finished work of Christ while also believing in, and longing for, God's light to shine on the whole world and for all sin and sorrow to be no more.

- Do you believe that these promises from God, about sin and sorrow being entirely wiped away from the world, influence those who hear them? How so?
  - Consider with your group how the promises of a fully healed world make us feel, but also how those promises effect the way we live our lives.
  - Do we cling to those promises in the face of trouble? Do we see peace and reconciliation as virtue that we will work towards, empowered by the Holy Spirit? Perhaps, because we believe God's light will shine to all nations, we are compelled to share the Gospel near and far?
- Have you ever known a Christian whose life was such a great witness to Jesus that you were drawn to them? Someone who acted like Jesus in a way that blessed you?
  - Use this as an opportunity to share with the group about someone who has blessed you by imitating Christ; maybe someone who has made you want to be more like Jesus because of them.
  - This might be a great opportunity to honor someone in your group who has influenced your faith because of their words or behavior.
- What might it look like for God's people to have the Lord's glory over them? To shine God's light so brightly that it draws the world to the Lord?
  - Discuss practical ways that your small group or our church community might be a blessing to those around us, an oasis that beckons others to come and brings water into the desert.
  - You might also discuss ways that missionaries and growing churches across the world might bless the people around them.

In Isaiah 66:19, the Lord proclaims, *"I will send some of those who survive to the nations [...] and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations."* This has been true since the day of Pentecost, and it continues to be the active mission of God's people today: to spread the Gospel of God's glory throughout the world.

- In what ways do Christians spread the Gospel today?
  - Near and far, in word and in deed, Christians bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus. Consider together some different venues or activities where we share the liberating, forgiving, restoring, resurrecting power of Christ. Be as specific as you can be.
- What obstacles, external or internal, prevent Christians from spreading the Gospel?
  - Receive all answers. There are several countries around the world that prohibit Christian evangelism. There are individuals who, for many reasons, would receive the upside-down nature of the Gospel (the last will be first, the poor in spirit will be blessed, etc.) as threatening news. We may fear what others might think of us if we were honest about our faith. It's also the case that sometimes Christians behave in ways that make our faith sound like something awful rather than the incredible news it is.



- How can we support and encourage other Christians, near and far, in spreading Christ's Gospel in word and deed?
    - There are many great answer here, but consider that we can train people to share their testimonies, we can pray for each other, we can help each other notice God's many graces in our lives, we can relationally and financially support missionaries, etc.
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## **PRAYER AND MINISTRY:**

Invite the group to consider to prayerfully reflect on the many ways Jesus' Gospel may be shared in the world, and how we participate in spreading it. Ask the Lord, "What might you have me do that I'm not doing to spread your name?" Spend time praying a blessing of God's favor, protection, and peace for those on mission for God, including missionaries around the world.

You may also take this opportunity to pray specifically for some of the people on mission for the Gospel around the world, using the World Mission Prayer League's list of ways to pray:

[Ways to Pray • The Prayer League \(wmpl.org\)](https://www.wmpl.org)