



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

### I. The World is a Dark place

#### A. Evil and suffering

1. Violence, injustice, abuse of power, homelessness, refugees fleeing oppression, family discord
2. Ignorance

#### B. Where should we look for help? (Ps. 121:1-2)

**1. “I lift up my eyes to the mountains — where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth” (Ps. 121:1-2)**

2. The Living Bible renders it: “Shall I look to the mountain gods for help? No! My help is from [the LORD] who made the mountains!” (Ps. 121:1-2 Living Bible)

– “Mountains & high places were commonly associated with deities [pagan gods] in the ancient Near East... We suggest that... Ps. 121:1-2 asks a rhetorical question... ‘From which mountain does my help come?’ [In the OT context,] the answer is obvious: ‘the mountain of the LORD.’” [R. A. Jacobson, et. al., Psalms, p. 896]

C. Where are you turning? – Who are the “gods” that people are looking to – the so-called experts to solve our problems?

***21?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.?22?Then they***

***will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness. Isa. 8:21-22***

1. Looking to scholars, scientists, politicians, celebrities, social media influencers (what qualifies them to give advice?)
2. Looking to wealth, financial markets
3. Looking to technology, our own intellect

D. Nobel Prizes every year

1. Peace Prize – what is the result?  
Who will get it this year?  
Ethiopia 2019

2. Platitudes that have not produced any positive results:

- a. “We need to work together for world peace and unity.”
- b. “We can overcome poverty, injustice, violence, war...”

E. The belief that we can save ourselves has only left people remaining in darkness

## II. What is the hope?

A. First honest realization – things really are this bad – we can’t heal or save ourselves

B. But God gave the hope – **Isa. 9:2**

***The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; a light has dawned on those living in the land of darkness.***

Quoted at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in **Matt: 4:16**

***the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.***

C. What was the great light?

***John 1:9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.***

What was coming into the world?

***Isa. 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.***

1. A child is born, a son is given – he will be called Mighty God, Everlasting Father  
– Both a human and God
2. He is born as a human yet he is God, the eternal – both human and divine

## D. As a human he became one of us

## 1. Knowing and experiencing human life

- Born in poverty, disadvantaged, social and political oppression
- Family life, hard work, poverty, suffering humility, rejection, despair
- He became enmeshed in our human condition, knowing our darkness

## 2. Yet at the same time he came as light, to be the light, the unique light

**John 8:12 Jesus spoke to them again: “I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.”**

## E. What does Jesus as light bring?

## 1. He brings light to darkness

## 2. As light He produces life – living things need light to grow, to produce life

- It results in fruit in our own life, goodness,

## 3. As light He helps us see what is true and what is real

- What is the truth we need to know, concerning Christ, concerning the bible

## 4. Clarity to who God is, what God is doing, and where God is leading us

## 5. As light He brings beauty and joy

- God is the real beauty and real joy

**“All joy is really found in God, and anything you do enjoy is derivative, because what you are really looking for is him, whether you know it or not. Timothy Keller**

- Jesus brings new life to spiritual death

- Jesus heals our spiritual blindness– when people enter a relationship with Jesus, we see things from a different perspective

- “He is the light when all other lights go out.”

**III. How to receive this light?**

## A. Jesus, the Son has been given as a gift – Isa. 9:6

## B. Receiving this gift requires swallowing our pride.

## C. Real meaning of Christmas –

## 1. We are lost, unable to save ourselves

## 2. Only the death of the Son of God, Jesus, the child born, the son given for us can save us.

3. Admit we are sinners

D. After the quote of Isaiah in Matt 4:16, what follows in v. 17

***From then on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near.” Matt. 4:17***

***“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” Mark 1:15***

- Repent, admit wrong, make a 180 change in direction
- Make this a Christmas to remember – receive Jesus as your light.
- Repent and believe the gospel.