

Isaiah 9:1-7

On the Christian calendar we are in the season of Advent when we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus!

Introduction:

Have you ever been underground? Perhaps on a mining tour or in the caves? Often, when you have done the descent and wandered around a while, the guide will turn out all the lights to give you a feel for what it is like in total darkness.

If you haven't had that experience, just imagine how it would feel. Gather some words to describe the experience - frightening, helplessness, dangerous, lost, desperate???

I have here a very old miner's helmet with a light on the front. It was crucial to have it in perfect working order before going into the mines. In fact, it was a matter of life and death.

Darkness like this is physical. It can also be mental and spiritual when we don't understand or see truths and we feel lost.

'Darkness and lightness' is the analogy used by Isaiah to speak of the coming of the 'child' into the world. This passage is one of 'celebration' as pictures of farmers and soldiers are used to prophesy the Messiah's coming-----to a time of freedom.

Humility to Honour v1-2

The areas around Galilee and part of the land given to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali were not the important areas—not like Jerusalem. The unsophisticated people of the region were not 'the educated, rich people further south.

Here we are told 'in the past God humbled these lands but in the future he will honour Galilee of the Gentiles' or in another version 'they will be filled with glory'.

This land around the Sea of Tiberius or Galilee is very beautiful but seen as a 'backwater'. This is where 'the Man of Galilee' would originate. So many of our gospel events occur around this area and many of the disciples came from here. This is where Mary and Joseph grew up. Since Jesus' birth it has become famous.

Darkness to Light V2

When the lights come back on in the cave, there is relief, there is joy. We are no longer 'lost'. This verse is even stronger than our picture:

The people who walk in darkness have seen a great light, on those living in the shadow of death, a light has shone.

Death is portrayed as 'deep darkness'; it is seen as the 'final enemy' but now things will change and there will be a 'rejoicing ...a celebration'.

Heaviness to Harvest v3

The metaphor is a picture that compares the toil and hard work of a farmer to when the harvest is brought in. (There has been great distress in Gunnedah recently when the farmers had a great crop and it was ruined by the floods!) But here we see a picture of celebration as the fruits of their labours is gathered. In our churches some time ago, we would celebrate 'Harvest Festivals' and give thanks to God for his provision.

We must never lose sight of God's presence and expression in all things always...

War to Peace V4-5

The next illustration is of soldiers returning from war. In ancient times they brought all the people and possessions they had captured home with them. After the rousing welcome they then divided the spoils.

No longer did the battle rage, because it was time to celebrate. They were no longer oppressed by the enemy 'the burdens were lifted; the oppression was over'. In fact, we get an amazing picture of all the blood stained uniforms being bundled up and burnt.

What a hope it gives to us of a time when we won't have to fight the evil one any longer. The message speaks of hope of freedom from that struggle. There will be a time of victory.

The testimony of truth becoming forevermore...

Heaven to Human V6-7

"For unto us a child is born—from Messiah"

The cause for celebration is that 'a child would be born' - a king - a child with all authority who had more power than any earthly president, prime minister or governor.

What a mystery! A helpless human boy yet the Mighty God.
'The man who is God'

Thrones named:

Wonderful Counsellor (often attributed to Holy Spirit),
Everlasting Father (often attributed to God the Father), and
Prince of Peace (attributed to Jesus).

It is fascinating that the triune attributes of God are shown here in an image of Jesus.

Injustice to Fairness v7

Justice will be restored permanently and he will reign from his ancestor David's throne, honoured by the Jewish nation as their greatest King. However, David's rule was limited. Jesus' rule is perfect and permanent and changes everything.

As we look forward to Christmas once again, let us remember that this isn't just an annual ritual - this is great news.

Just as switching on a light in the mines changes everything, this message changes everything.

As changed people because of Jesus, we have a message of love to live and share.

We are in the final stages of creating our collective Mission and Vision statements. Our challenge is to be relevant 'lights' to those who don't know Jesus.

Hymn: 'Meekness & Majesty'

What a contrast between this world and the eternal plan God has before us!

We need to intentionally have a plan for how we live as lights to the world for Jesus, starting here in Kiama. This is the Mission and Vision conversation to help our focus for the next five years.

I believe the second Bible reading from Isaiah 8 speaks into our Mission and Vision - Isaiah 8:9-17.

Isaiah 8 prepares God's people for the battles we face. We have been through a variety of struggles in recent years ourselves.

What does God call us to at this time?

V9 God urges us to always be prepared for battle!

V10 Devise your strategy and propose your plans.

Whatever is before us, God is with us!

V11 The Lord is speaking to us with his strong hand upon us every step we take.

V12 Let go of the distress and darkness of conspiracies of other Kingdoms in your lives!

V13 May we fear only God for he is holy.

V14-15 At times we may stumble and fall.

We can and must pick each other up for God's purposes at KAC. Isaiah makes it clear in verses 16-17 we must wait on God and put our trust in him; our lives must testify to him as we faithfully follow him.

This is a brilliant setting to capture the update of the next steps in our five-year Mission and Vision plan.

Our Parish Council committed to three months from the commencement of September to the end November to capture what we share with you today.

Robust, engaging and productive meetings on Saturdays moved us forward steadily.

People at KAC have been praying faithfully each week on Wednesdays at 1pm. We will continue to pray! Join us!

In recent weeks I have visited numerous Bible Studies. What a privilege and joy it has been for me. The discussion about the Mission and Vision has been terrific and edifying, providing

many helpful inputs to our now evolved Mission and Vision statements for today. It was and is so encouraging to be together for God's purposes and plans.

There were opportunities after services to join this discussion, again affirming that we seek to love and serve together glorifying God. Our staff team have also provided helpful and strategic thinking to this process. This conversational process has been insightful and valuable.

We have been grappling with staff changes and adjustments in regard to fulfilling God's Mission and Vision for KAC over the coming 5 years. It took time to ascertain how to best fill staffing to grow our unified staff team in 2022; in this process we looked at staff spaces, requirements for ministry leadership and budgets.

The role description for a new staff member has been advertised this week, closing on January 7th. We seek to fill a full-time position that rebuilds and grows the children, youth and family ministries. Please pray!

Our Mission for KAC: Would you say it with me now?

To glorify God, making Jesus known as we love and serve together.

Our Vision for KAC by 2027: Would you say it with me now?

We are prayerful, intergenerational, and connected, being transformed by Jesus.

To be a prayerful people, we desire to praise God in all things. Every day is a gift from God. When we see life like this we

respond spontaneously with thanks and gratitude, regardless of circumstances. Our prayer reflects complete trust in God.

To be intergenerational we want to be welcoming of all ages and stages in our faith lives. We seek to be a 'family' and appreciate all the differences that family life encounters. We must be intentional in building ministry pathways so that, at whatever age and stage, we are loving and serving openly and in an other-centred way.

To be connected enhances our community, both inwardly and outwardly, locally and globally. Our response to sound Biblical teaching equips us to act in love and service of others, making Jesus known. We care about the person sitting next to us and we care about local and global interests and issues.

To be transformed is to desire constant outpouring of God's Spirit. As we are transformed to be more like Jesus, we will be more prayerful, more engaged with others, open to growing and deepening connections and relevant to the world in which we live.

Our vision is ultimately to see all people won for Christ. Is this for you?!

Would you be willing to do some homework to assist the next step? This week our Parish Council captured four key questions relating to the Mission and Vision God has put before us.

1. How can you prayerfully consider being involved in this Vision to build God's Kingdom here at KAC?
2. In what ways will you form connections to build God's Kingdom at KAC?

3. How will KAC look as an integrated and intergenerational community five years from now?
4. How will transformed people who are open to the working of the Holy Spirit be viewed by our local Kiama community and wider five years from now?

We will provide these four key questions for you to consider and send in your input for our next steps in formulating the content of our strategies in 2022, 2023...all the way up to the start of 2027. These will come via your computer as well as a paper version this coming week.

We will give you until Australia Day (January 26) to complete and submit your responses via hard or soft copy.

Please pray, seek Biblical guidance, share the questions in fellowship with discussion. Your responses matter!

I will work with a small Parish Council team to assess this input, capture the results and develop our outcomes for our final 2021 Parish Council in early February for authorisation.

We plan to launch our new Mission and Vision, completing the purpose and process, and sharing the full plans at our 2022 AGM. More details will be released as we approach that time and day.

Where better to turn than Isaiah 8:10 as we close in prayer:

May the Spirit of God guide our Mission and Vision at KAC as we devise our strategy and propose our plans for him.