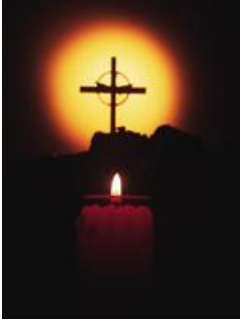


## E-Series

### Comfort Coming



**1** The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach **good news** to the poor. He has sent me to **bind up the brokenhearted**, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, **2** to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to **comfort all who mourn**, **3** and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the **oil of gladness instead of mourning**, and a **garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair**. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. —**Isaiah 61:1-3**

---

Yesterday's we talked about the difficulty and darkness of this time of year. It seemed to strike a chord with a good number of people. Despite the façades we sometimes put up, most of us don't have it all together. Our families are not perfect. Some—maybe most—of our families even “put the fun in dysfunction.” We've suffered pain and loss. And, at this time of the year, we tend to feel that pain and those losses more acutely.

This is in direct conflict with our culture's sentimentalized, idyllic notions of Christmas. Holly, jolly Christmases, chestnuts roasting on an open fire, Jack Frost nipping at noses, walking in a winter wonderland where treetops glisten and children listen to sleigh bells in the snow...all project a version of Christmas different from any I have ever experienced. They also raise expectations to a level that is guaranteed to disappoint time and again. And, in the end, they have very little to do with Christmas, really.

In fact, if these images matched our experience, Christmas would be a bigger mystery. If your family members all get along perfectly sipping hot chocolate by an open fire, or you have always been able to say, “It's a Wonderful Life,” then you don't need Christmas. The real message of Christmas is that we are broken. We, and our families, are imperfect. We can try to change that, but we can't. No amount of therapy or medication can fix us. We can read all the self-help books at Barnes and Noble and cultivate seven habits of successful people, but we'd still be in the same situation. We'd still be unable to fix our brokenness. The quicksand of our sin would still be drawing us downward.

That's exactly why we celebrate Christmas. Our comfort came (and is coming again). God saw our powerlessness to save ourselves, so God decided to do it himself. God became flesh, came to earth, and was intent on saving us.

So, if you are dreading a blue Christmas this year, if you feel enveloped by darkness, then take heart. You are the reason for Christmas. God loves *you*...God loves *us* so much that he simply would not leave us in our darkness. “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned” Isaiah 9:2.



Thankful for the Light,  
*Pastor Michael*