



Archbishop of Sydney

13 December 2023

Dear brothers and sisters,

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 Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

The birth of children is typically associated with joy. The joy of new parents in the precious gift entrusted to them by God, the joy of grandparents in the promise of new generations, the joy of a new life brought into being and full of possibility. But the child of whom the prophet Isaiah speaks heralds much more than is usually contemplated in a newborn nestled in its mother's arms.

From the child's names we learn his supreme qualification for ruling - he is Wonderful Counsellor. We learn of his immense power and divine person - he is the Mighty God. We learn of the tender relationship he enjoys with the people whom he loves - he is the Everlasting Father. We learn of the society his rule creates - he is the Prince of Peace who presides in justice and righteousness.

Matthew records that the ministry of Jesus begins 'in Zebulun and Naphtali' to fulfil what was said by the prophet Isaiah: 'on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned' (Isaiah 9:2). The light dawns in the child of Isaiah's song, the child born in Bethlehem who grown as a man begins his ministry with words that set captives free, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' (Matthew 4:17)

Perhaps it is the nightly pictures of former cities reduced to rubble, desperate and confused children and their distraught parents, and the seemingly ubiquitous natural disasters, gut-wrenching crimes of violence and the rising financial pressure on many, that make this year one in which we especially feel parched for good news.

The child in the manger, the man by the sea in Galilee, speaks to us. God has not forgotten us, we are not alone, we are loved.

Thank you for all you are doing to make known in your neighbourhoods and spheres of ministry the glory and goodness of the light that dawns in Jesus. He remains the very best of news, and the world longs for such hope.

Amidst the rush of preparations for Christmas services and efforts to bring the message of Christmas to your communities, I hope and pray that there is still opportunity for you to wonder at the Child, born of Mary, heralded by angels, worshipped by shepherds and wise men. I hope you will have a joyous celebration with loved ones, and at least a few good days (or weeks!) of rest and refreshment over summer.

Cailey and I wish you and those you love, a happy and wonder-filled Christmas.

In Christ

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