

## Advent 2; Dayspring

By

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This morning we're picking up where we left off. This Advent we're basing our worship around the ancient words of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." This hymn is on page 119 of our hymnal if you'd like to see it in its entirety. In our hymnal that hymn has 4 verses – one for each week of Advent. And each of those verses uses a different title for the Messiah. Last week the title was "Emmanuel."

I have to apologize to you for last week's sermon. It was an unusual sermon for me – it was a "glass-half-empty" sermon. I went on at length about what was wrong with the world. I talked about morality, politics and global disasters. At the end of that sermon I might have convinced you that the world is going "to hell in a handbasket;" that there is nothing good in the world; that life is without joy or meaning; that there is no hope – there is no reason for life.

I might have convinced you of that because there are certainly lots of people walking around these days who feel exactly that way. I often come across people who believe that the world is perched on the precipice of self-destruction; that no place is safe; that our society is so divided that maybe another civil war will break out. These are the people who believe that today's young people are the laziest, most disrespectful generation ever. These are the people who believe that every man must have committed sexual assault. These are the people who believe that one day the North Koreans are going to begin dropping nuclear bombs on us.

To those people I would suggest that they stop watching so much TV news. I might also suggest that they spend some time with the words of the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." That's where we find the words, **"O come thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here, disperse the gloomy clouds of night and death's deep shadows put to flight."**

The title used here for the Messiah is "Dayspring." This term is seldom found in the Bible. It was in common use 400 years ago, when the King James Version of the Bible was translated, but not so much today. Dayspring is found explicitly in Job 38:12 where the word is set amidst God telling Job that he was in position to judge God. <sup>12</sup> **"Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn (Dayspring) to know its place? (Job 38:12, NRSV)** Numbers 24:17 in which we find these words;

<sup>15</sup>So he uttered his oracle, saying:

**"The oracle of Balaam son of Beor,  
the oracle of the man whose eye is clear,•**

<sup>16</sup> **the oracle of one who hears the words of God,  
and knows the knowledge of the Most High,•  
who sees the vision of the Almighty,•**

**who falls down, but with his eyes uncovered:**

<sup>17</sup> **I see him, but not now;**

**I behold him, but not near—  
a star (dayspring) shall come out of Jacob,  
and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;  
it shall crush the borderlands<sup>o</sup> of Moab,  
and the territory<sup>o</sup> of all the Shethites.  
<sup>18</sup>Edom will become a possession,  
Seir a possession of its enemies,<sup>o</sup>  
while Israel does valiantly.**

The interesting thing about this last scripture is that the words belong to Balaam who had been hired by the King of the Edomites to put a curse on the Israelites as they traveled through his lands. Instead Balaam (yes, the Balaam who had a talking donkey that could see angels) offered a prophecy about someone who would come out of the Jews and defeat their enemies. But in the midst of this prophecy Balaam referred to the one who would come as a “star” or in the King James Version as a “Dayspring.”

The “dawn” or “dayspring” is that moment when it is becoming light enough that a sailor can discern the horizon. In other words, a Dayspring is the first proof that a new day is coming. To refer to the Messiah as the Dayspring is to declare that Jesus is the first proof that there is a new day coming – that the birth of Jesus is proof that the Kingdom of God is about to become real.

And of course there is no denying that the world has not been the same since the birth of Jesus. The birth of Jesus resulted in people who were committed to following in his footsteps --- which resulted in Christianity which has spread around the world. Today – 2000 years later – there are 2.1 billion people in the world who consider themselves Christian. That amounts to about a third of the world’s population. The world has not been the same since the birth of Jesus.

But those numbers leave me unsatisfied. I believe that the Messiah was born 2000 years ago and is now present in the world. I believe that the Messiah is present everywhere within the world and within each of us. I believe that through the Messiah, God is working in the world to bring about the Kingdom of God. I believe that through the Messiah, God is working in the world to bring about justice, peace, hope and love.

While I celebrate the birth of Jesus long ago, I need to see what the Messiah is doing now – in our world. The Dayspring I need to see is what God is doing now. The dawn I need to see is the Kingdom God becoming real. Today, right now, where is the dawn? I can point to lots of suffering and injustice but where is the growing Kingdom of God? Where is the Dayspring?

I suppose I might start with what’s being reported on the evening news. It would appear that in the past our society has tolerated behavior on the part of men toward women, that won’t be tolerated anymore. Amazingly rich and powerful people are losing their jobs because of their behavior toward women. Evidently since time immemorial women have lived and worked at the mercy of men who were free to do or say whatever they wanted, because, after all, “boys will be boys.” But, it would appear that there is a new expectation that women should be safe at home and at work. As a society we are closer to regarding women as being of equal worth to men. It would appear that men are having to give up some of their power.

I realize that is a small thing. I realize that this change is certainly not happening all around the world. I realize that we are not about to change the power dynamic between men and women before

New Year's. But I have to wonder if we aren't looking at the dawn. I have to wonder if the Spirit of God isn't moving through our society in a powerful and public way to make the world a better place. I have to wonder if we aren't seeing the hand of God at work in the world.

And there is Joan's nephew, Seth Prickett. Seth is a millennial – 2 years older than Chris and 1 year younger than Melissa. Seth was raised in Hillsboro across the road from Joan's parents. Seth was raised in the Forest Grove Congregational Church. He was always special. He was the child who knew how to earn money, and how to gain influence. Seth is a born politician. He has worked in the state legislature as an aide and as a lobbyist. While he is a realtor now I expect that one day he will be governor.

Seth went to college at Linfield where he was elected Student Body President his senior year. During that year, as part of a class, he went on a trip to Ghana where he and his classmates decided to raise the money to build a school. Schools in Ghana have become Seth's passion. When he came back from his first trip to Ghana he founded a nonprofit called "Framework" which raises money to build more schools in Ghana. He found out that the Ghanaian government would provide teachers if someone would provide the building. So far he has built 4 schools and is nowhere close to finished. Right now he is encouraging people to buy desks for one of the schools. You can get more information at [FrameworkInternational.org](http://FrameworkInternational.org). See what I meant about Seth being special?

But tell me something; where do dreams like that come from? What comes over people that they would begin to dream extraordinary things? Is this the Dayspring? What came over Bill Gates that he decided he wanted to use his wealth to wipe out Malaria or pinworm in Africa? Could it be that we are seeing the first rays of dawn? Could it be that through the Messiah, God is doing something wonderful?

I had a delightful time at my first meeting of the Trustees of the Disciples Seminary Foundation. DSF is now a new organization; its' been around 60 years; mostly providing scholarships to Disciple and UCC seminarians attending one of the four affiliated seminaries on the west coast. DSF has done important work but has not been very exciting. But these days that seems to be changing.

DSF believes that the future of the Disciples lies in new congregations, particularly new ethnic congregations; Latino, Black, Korean or even Pacific Islander. And so DSF has designed a program that provides a 2-year certificate in church leadership – in Spanish – that prepares persons to begin seminary. That program has been so successful that they are working on an "advanced" version.

And there is the Seedplanters Club which is for those Disciple or UCC seminarians who are interested in starting a new church. This club teaches the "ins-and outs" of new church establishment. So far 5 new congregations have been started by Seedplanters. Next fall as Claremont Theological Seminary begins offering classes in Salem, some of those Seedplanters will be moving to Oregon. How would you feel about having a Korean Disciple congregation begun in our building?

For generations seminaries have been important but boring places using the model developed in Europe in the middle ages. But here is something new. Here are programs and dreams way outside of the box. Could it be that we are seeing the dawn? Could it be that we are seeing the Dayspring? Could it be that through the Messiah God is doing something new and exciting?

Family Promise of Beaverton really is going to become a reality. We are close to having enough host congregations to begin operations. Sunset Presbyterian has committed themselves to being not

only a host church but also the Day Center where the guests will go during the day. The local stake of the Mormon Church has committed themselves to providing food and volunteers for 6 weeks a year.

The ideal is 13 host congregations who take turns hosting the guest families at night. That would mean each congregation would host only 4 weeks a year. The host congregations (like us) are responsible feeding the guests and also for building relationships with them.

In our congregation Sharon Jarman has agreed to coordinate the many people who want volunteer for the program. The best guess is that Family Promise will begin to host homeless children and their families from the Beaverton School System about the first of March. If all the plans actually come to fruition it will be the only program for homeless people in Beaverton.

How is it that the dream for a Family Promise program was born in our community? How is it that so many Christians are committed to making this program work? How is it that we have such a concern for the homeless? Could this be a Dayspring? Could it be that we are seeing the first streaks of dawn?

I could go on but you get my point. If we look closely we can see the places where God is working in the world. If we look closely we can see the places where love, faith, and generosity is breaking out. We can see the places where the world is changing. If we look closely we can see the Dayspring. Can you see it? The world is changing – slowly – too slowly for me – but some things are different now – better. Can you celebrate the steps our species is taking that make the Kingdom of God more of a reality? Can you reasons to have hope? Can you see the dawn? Do you believe in the Dayspring?

**“O come thou Dayspring,  
come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here,  
disperse the gloomy clouds of night  
and death’s deep shadows put to flight.”  
Rejoice, Rejoice, O Come, O Come, Emmanuel**