

## **Advent 3 – Dec 13/20 - Cultivating Joy – Isaiah 9:1-7**

1. It was Blaise Pascal who said “All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man.” Does this quote resonate with reality? Why or why not?

### **Read Isaiah 9:1-7**

2. (vs. 3) Isaiah’s promise includes joy, a joy far beyond anything we can possibly imagine. On the heels of the promise come 3 affirmations that all begin with the word “for”. These are the reasons we can have a joy beyond imagining. What are those reasons?
3. (vs. 6) On the heels of that first quote Blaise Pascal adds “There was once in man a true happiness of which there now remains to him only; the mark and empty trace, which he in vain tries to fill from all his surroundings... but these are all inadequate, because the infinite abyss can only be filled by an infinite and immutable Object, that is to say, only by God Himself.” This seems to be what Isaiah affirms in vs. 6 – that God increases our joy by making himself known in Jesus as Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. What do think each of these titles mean and how can knowing God in Jesus as these things increase our joy?
4. Our joy is not just in knowing God, it is also rooted in a future hope. The “for” statements of vs. 4 and 5, and the continuation of the last “for” statement in vs. 7 speak of a future hope of a messianic kingdom of beauty, peace, righteousness and justice. How can having our joy located in such a future hope help us to navigate our present circumstances?
5. In vs. 3 Isaiah speaks of God’s activity in giving us joy (you have increased it’s joy), as well as our participation in that joy (they rejoice before you). How can our rejoicing, our life of praise and worship deepen us in the joy that God gives us in Jesus, in the future we have in Him?