

Expected King

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[0 : 00] Today's scripture is found in Isaiah 9, 1-7. Please follow along in your bulletin as we read this passage. But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish.

In the former time, he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. But in the latter time, he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. You have multiplied the nations.

You have increased its joy. They rejoice before you as with the joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

For the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult, and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

[1 : 21] For to us a child is born. To us a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor.

Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace. Of the increase of the increase of his government and of peace, there will be no end on the throne of David and over his kingdom.

To establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

This is the reading of God's word. Good morning. My name is Eric.

If you don't know me, I'm the youth guy here at Watermark. And as you can tell, I'm a guy, which by necessity means that I love all things war-related and battle-related.

[2 : 24] And movies with guns and knives and swords and explosions are awesome. And so when I was a kid, my friends and I, we would play a game called paintball. If you don't know what paintball is, basically everyone gets a gun.

Only instead of shooting real bullets, they shoot little balls of paint. And when you get hit, it feels like you're being punched and then paint splatters on you and you're out. And so this one day we were playing a game. It's called Storm the Castle.

A small group of guys gets a little fortress. They have to get down and defend. And the rest of the guys go out somewhere and they don't know where the castle is. And their goal is to get in and take over the castle by shooting everyone who's guarding the castle.

So I was on the team that was attacking the castle. And we're coming up and the guys in the castle had spread themselves out around the castle to try and pick us off as we came. But we stuck together as a group and we ended up taking them out one by one by one.

We found the castle and we got there and realized there were only about two guys left inside the castle. And there were about 10 or 15 of us. They had no chance. And so there's this little, short, scrawny kid.

[3 : 27] He's running in front of our group. He's actually, yeah, he runs in, up, and says, surrender! And the guys in the castle, they're like, we have no chance.

We're out. We're done. It's over. But the funny thing is, the kid who ran in there, this little, short, scrawny kid who told him to surrender, actually had no ammo left in his gun. They didn't know that, of course.

But if they had turned around, there would have been nothing that he could have done to stop them from shooting him. But they knew they were surrounded. They knew they were outnumbered. They knew even if they got this one kid out, the rest of us were going to be in there in five seconds and they were going to be done.

And as we come to today's passage, the nation of Israel is in a similar state to those two guys in that fort. There is a world superpower on its way to take them out.

And no matter how hard they try, no matter how hard they fight, they've got no chance. And they recognize this. And they say, what are we going to do?

[4 : 30] Now, throughout the Old Testament, there's a theme that occurs again and again and again and again. And this theme is, God will fight his battles for the nation of Israel.

You see this all the way throughout the Bible. You see Joshua comes into the land, the promised land, to take it over. And he looks at the walls of the city and he says, whoa, we can't take that. And God says, here's what you do. Just walk in circles for a few days around the city. On the seventh day, blow some trumpets. Walls go down. You're good. And sure enough, God fights the battles for Joshua.

The nation takes over the promised land. Or there's a man named Gideon. Gideon raises up an army because this country called Midian is oppressing the Israelites. And Gideon raises up the army to go fight against them.

And God says, hey, Gideon, you've got too many guys in your army. You need to shrink it down. God shrinks down Gideon's army to a mere 300 men to go up against tens, if not hundreds of thousands.

[5 : 32] But again, God fights the battles for his people. And Gideon's able to be successful in this battle. Or look at David, young little boy going against a huge nine-foot-tall giant.

And oh yeah, he doesn't have any armor. He doesn't have a sword. He has a sling and a few rocks. Woo! But what happens? God fights his battles.

And because God is fighting the battles for David, David's able to defeat this giant. And this theme comes up again and again and again. But here's the problem. Israel has stopped worshiping God. Israel has turned away from God. And Israel does not trust God to fight their battle for them. And so what do they do? They turn to the nation to their north, a nation called Syria.

And they say, hey, let's get together. Let's combine forces so that when this world superpower comes, we can fight against them together. And Syria says, okay, that sounds like a good plan to us.

[6 : 36] So Israel and Syria combine forces, but there's a third country they want in their alliance. It's down in the south. It's called Judah. When Israel split off, it became Israel and Judah. And Israel wants Judah in this alliance too.

Judah's not interested. So Israel and Syria say, we know how to get Judah on our side. We'll go down there and attack them and take them over. And then they'll be on our side. So Israel and Syria start coming down towards Judah.

And they're ready to launch this attack. And Israel says, maybe before we launch this attack, we should find out whether we'll win or lose. Seems reasonable.

So what do they do? They turn to fortune tellers. They turn to people who consult with the dead and ask them, are we going to win? Do we have any chance? And God's not blind.

God's not deaf. He hears what's going on. He sees what's going on. And he steps in and he says to Israel, why are you asking dead people whether you're going to win or lose?

[7 : 39] Why don't you ask me? And he says, because you've rejected me, you're going to become like these dead people that you're consulting. Your bones are going to be buried next to theirs.

You're going to be destroyed. And sure enough, when Judah saw Israel and Syria coming down to attack, Judah's king went into the temple, took all the gold out of the temple, and sent it to the king of Assyria.

Don't get that mixed up with Syria. Who was the world's superpower. And he said, here's a huge gift. Please do me a favor. Go and attack Israel and Syria. And since he had gotten lots of gold, the king of Assyria was happy to help out.

And he went in and attacked Israel and Syria, took over the capital of Syria, made Israel his subjects, and they had to pay him every year. And Israel and Syria had to pull out of their attack on Judah and go back to defend their homes.

Judah was saved. Israel became servants. And a few years later, made the king of Assyria upset, and the land got wiped out. The land got completely destroyed.

[8 : 45] The people who survived were sent off to live in foreign lands. Foreigners were brought in to live in the land of Israel. It was a time of darkness and gloom for the nation, just like God had said

it would be.

But before this time of darkness came, there was a promise that was made to Israel. A promise that although darkness is coming, it will be followed by light.

Although it's as bad as it's going to get, it's not going to stay this way forever. And God gave them this promise, and then the foreign armies came in.

And in this passage today, we have this promise. We have the promise that light will come, that Zebulun and Naphtali, those are the places in the north of Israel, the first ones that would have fallen to the invading armies.

He says, yeah, they're brought into contempt. They're being destroyed. But one day, I'm going to raise them up again. I'm going to make them glorious again. And he makes a promise of a king that's going to come, who's going to change the fortunes of the nation.

[9 : 54] He's going to bring peace. He's going to bring victory. He's going to overthrow the nations that are invading them. When it says in verse 4 of Isaiah 9, the yoke of his burden will be broken.

The Assyrians, the nation that came in, literally were known to take a yoke, a thing that held two farm animals together so they could work, and put it on the necks of the people they took captive, and force them to work like animals.

And there's a promise. This yoke will be broken. The oppressors will be overthrown. You will be free. But first, there's this time of darkness.

And this time of darkness was not a short thing. Israel was waiting for this king, waiting for this salvation. And yet, for the next 600 years or so, they were captive to one nation, after another, after another, after another.

About 600 years after this captivity began, they were under the rule of Greece. The Greek ruler came in in an attempt to try and get everyone in Israel to adopt the Greek way of life.

[11 : 18] He completely defiled the temple, and the Israelites said, that's it. We've had enough. They rose up, started a rebellion, and actually were able to kick the Greeks out of Israel.

And a lot of people thought, this is it. The time has come. The nation is being restored. But within 100 years, they were back under the control of the Romans. And this promise still stood.

But I think people started to doubt. Is it ever going to happen? Is this light ever going to come? And then one night, this baby is born.

In a small town, in the middle of nowhere. Seems pretty insignificant. But he grows up. He starts gathering a group of people around himself, teaching them.

He goes around doing miracles, and people start saying, could this be the one? The one we've been waiting for. Even his enemies, who want to disprove him, and say that he's not, have to admit, this guy does so many miracles.

[12 : 24] Like, there's no way that the guy we're waiting for, this promised one, will do more miracles than this guy himself does. And there's a hope.

This guy brings new teaching about God that makes so much clearer everything they've understood before. And there's this excitement growing, and crowds start coming to him, and start following him.

And right as the excitement reaches its peak, he turns to his closest group of friends, and says, hey, by the way, the thing that you expect of me, you know how you expect me to rise up, and restore our nation to power, and take over as king, and kick out Rome, and take over Caesar's throne, that's not what I'm doing.

I'm actually going to die. And this is shocking to his followers. One of them turns to him, and he says, no, no, no, you can't do that. You're the Messiah.

You're the promised one. You're the king. You have to save us. You have to overthrow Rome. And Jesus says to him, no, that's not what I'm here for. Another one of his followers feels so betrayed by this news that Jesus is not going to overthrow Rome, that he actually turns to the governing authorities, and says, hey, I'll sell him to you.

[13 : 45] I know you're out to get him. I know where you can find him. Give me some money. I'll connect you with him. You come in. You arrest him. Done. They felt betrayed.

They felt shocked. They felt sad because they thought this man who we put all of our hope in is not the one that we thought he was.

The problem is not that they had wrongly identified him as the one who came to fulfill these prophecies in Isaiah 9. The problem is that they were looking for Jesus to rule as a king in a

different way than he had come to rule.

They looked around and they defined their greatest problem as a nation as being the fact that they were under oppression from a foreign country. Rome is here.

Rome causes us problems. Rome needs to be gone. You deal with that. Go for it. Have fun. And Jesus looked at them and he said, yeah, Rome, very real, very big problem.

[14:58] But you got a bigger problem. Because, yeah, Rome is big and powerful, but God is bigger and more powerful. And having Rome as an enemy sucks. Having God as an enemy is worse.

And because of our disobedience, we've made ourselves enemies of God. And I can fix the problem with Rome, but that's not going to fix the problem with God.

So before we deal with Rome, let's deal with God. You know, the nation looked at this passage in Isaiah 9 and they had amazing expectations of what Jesus would do.

they looked at the promise that the land that walked in darkness would see a great light and they were like, oh, the land went into darkness when we were taken into captivity.

The light must mean that we'll be free. They looked at the promise that he would multiply the nation and increase the joy. They would rejoice and they'd be glad and divide the spoil.

[16:01] They were like, well, when we were slaves in Egypt and we left there, they gave us lots of gold as we left. I guess when we overthrow Rome, we'll take all their treasures to us. They're getting pretty excited.

They look at the promise that the battle supplies, the garments rolled in blood would be burned as fuel for the fire. They said, that means if we don't need this equipment for battle, peace is coming.

They looked at the promise of the child that would be born, the son that would be given and would have the government upon his shoulders and they said, that's the royal robes. He'll be wearing them because he will be a king.

He'll be a wonderful counselor. They would have looked at that and seen that he would be a wise military strategist. He will be mighty God.

Apparently, this term had connotations of like superhuman strength in battle. They expected him to be like Thor. Come in with your hammer and bam! It's over. All the enemies are defeated right there.

[17:07] This superhuman might that could just destroy everything and everyone that stood in the path of them as a nation being restored. They looked at the promise that he would be the everlasting father.

They thought, he'll be here. He will reign forever and he will care for us and he will be good and he will be a prince of peace. Our nation won't be filled with war and violence.

We'll have peace, finally, after all these hundreds of years of war and captivity and violence. Of his increase in his government, there will be no end.

On the throne of David and over his kingdom, now David was Israel's greatest king historically and they're saying he's going to be just like David. He's going to be like our greatest king. He's going to restore the greatness that we once had as a nation and he'll establish justice and righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

He's going to bring it, it's going to be good and it's going to last forever. It will be rejoicing forever. And they identified this as their hope and they looked for this from Jesus.

[18:20] But as Jesus came, he saw a different problem. He says, you're walking in darkness because you don't know God.

And the light that you need is a proper understanding of who God is and I'm here as God to show that to you. He said, yeah, if we divide the spoil of Rome, if we overthrow them and take all their treasures, that'll be great.

But eventually, those treasures will run out or eventually we'll die and won't be able to use them anymore. We need treasures that will last longer than that. He said, yeah, we can be free from the oppression of Rome.

We can be free from this yoke that is on us. But that doesn't free us from our greatest enemy, from death, from the sin that alienates us from God.

And when he looks at the passage about the government being on his shoulder, he knows that's not referring right now to a kingly robe.

[19 : 25] It's referring to the cross. It's not the glory of the government that awaits him right now. It's the wrath of the government. The nation was correct in assuming that the Messiah, the promised one, would come to deal with their greatest problem.

But they incorrectly identified Rome as their greatest problem. Jesus did come to deal with their greatest problem. But he saw that their greatest problem was a broken relationship with God. And he came to deal with that first and foremost. See, they expected a traditional king. They expected someone who would come in, who would rule, who would reign. And Jesus brought what we call an inverted kingdom. He didn't start at the top and work his way down. He started in the hearts of individuals. He started in the lives of common people like you and me and let his kingdom spread from there.

And because Israel and Jesus had different understandings of what their greatest need as a nation was, they ended up rejecting him as their savior and as their king.

[20 : 39] even though he was the one who had been promised. Even though he was the one who was coming for them. But that's them.

We're here. We know that Jesus came to die for us so we don't need to worry about that, right? Like, we're not gonna miss him because we have wrong expectations, are we? Maybe. Maybe we will. I think the problem of confusing our greatest need is one that goes throughout history. We can see it in the example of Israel.

We can see it in ancient Greek mythology, right? You've got King Midas. He's given one wish for anything that he wants. What does he ask for? He asks, anything that I touch, let it be turned into gold.

If you get one wish, you think to yourself, what is my greatest problem? What's the one thing that would fix that problem? I'm asking for that. When Midas is asked, what's your one wish?

[21 : 43] He thinks to himself, what's my greatest problem? I could use more money, I could use more power, what will fix that? Everything I touch turns into gold. Boom. Gold. But what happens to him?

He starts to try to eat and all this food turns into gold. He realizes, oh no, now I have a bigger problem. He tries to hug his daughter and she turns into gold. Uh-oh.

He goes back to the Greek God who he had made the wish from and he says, please, let me undo that one. And the Greek God says, okay. And Midas is allowed to reverse that wish.

But look what happens. Midas confuses his greatest need and when he gets what he thinks is his greatest need taken care of, it creates bigger problems for him.

Because he wrongly identified his greatest need, receiving his greatest desire didn't satisfy him, it left him in despair. And it's the same for us.

[22 : 42] when we wrongly identify our greatest needs in life. Receiving what we think is our greatest need doesn't satisfy us. It leads us to despair.

And I think for people in this room, we have a lot of different definitions we would give of what is our greatest need. For some of us, I just need my kids to obey. If my kids would obey, life would be happy.

For some of us, we just want to be happy. You know, as long as I'm happy, everything can go wrong in life, but at the end of the day, it's all good. For some of us, we want security.

You know, as long as I have my millions in the bank, I can lose my job and it's okay because I can still support myself. For some of us, we just want this feeling of peace inside us.

For some of us, we just want to be able to go to bed at night and know that we are good people. And no matter what wrong stuff happens in the world, I can sleep well because I know that I did the right thing.

[23 : 49] And as we look at these things, we identify them as our greatest needs. And while all of these things are good things, when we identify them as our greatest need, it creates problems.

When we wrongly identify our greatest need, it leads to despair because either we get that thing that we think is our greatest need and realize that it can't really satisfy us like we thought it could. Or we beg and plead with God, please give this to me and we don't get it and we think that God is weak or withholding from us. So whether we get what we want or we don't get it, we end up in despair because either we have what we want and we're not satisfied or we don't have it and we blame God.

And if we take a passage like this one in Isaiah 9 and approach it with a wrong understanding of what our need is, it's not going to give us hope. It's going to make us confused.

It's going to make us angry. Right? We look, he's going to be the wonderful counselor. Yeah. Well, why don't you fix me? Come on, God. If you're this wonderful counselor, why don't you fix my problems?

[24 : 56] You're the mighty God. Why aren't you dealing with this stuff in my life? Why can't I find the contentment in the things that I want? Are you really that mighty? Is it all just a big joke?

Are you actually pretty weak and you're just afraid to tell us? You look at things like everlasting father. I mean, for me, if I go based on feelings, a lot of times it feels more like I'm an orphan of God than a son of God.

And in those times, I look at a passage like this, I'm like, Everlasting Father, what is this? Why aren't you there? Why don't I feel you? I look at the example that my earthly father has given of taking care of me and being there for me when I need him.

And I say, God, I can see my earthly father. He's there when I need him. He takes care of stuff if he's able to. Where are you during this time? And then I look at this promise that he's the prince of peace and I'm like, why am I so anxious?

Why am I so restless? Where's this peace that you're promising? In the darkest moments, I even start to question is peace even possible in such a messed up and broken world?

[26 : 12] I'm guessing that I'm not the only one who ever feels this way. I'm guessing I'm not the only one who ever looks at a passage like this and says, I see these amazing promises but where are they in my life?

I think it's a pretty common thing actually. And as I look at the passage like this in this way, I realize that my problem is the same problem as Israel, right?

Israel in Jesus' day wanted Rome gone instead of wanting to deal with their biggest problem in their life. I look at these things like having peace inside or feeling good about my relationship with God, having warm fuzzy feelings in my heart and I say, those are my Rome's.

I want them gone. I don't want to deal with the deeper stuff. But God looks at me and he says, no Eric, I love you. I'm not going to deal with these secondary issues until we've dealt with the primary stuff first.

And as we look at this passage, when God starts to deal with the problems of the nation and of us, at the start of the solution, it's in verse 6.

[27 : 22] It says, to us, a child is born. To us, a son is given. There's a baby. It's a simple thing. Babies are born every day.

There's something special about this one. A child is born. A son is given. And like Paul Tripp said last week, you know, we can look at this and see that a child is born.

We can see that a son is given. But there's a couple important words that we miss if we say that. Because if you look at the verse, it says, to us, a child is born. To us, a son is given.

This baby that was born was born for us. He wasn't just sent into the world to deal with an abstract problem. He was sent to us. He was sent for us. God knows that the problem starts in our hearts.

So he sent a savior that could deal with our sin. God knows that our problem is an intensely personal problem of sin. And so he sends an intensely personal savior for that, for us.

[28 : 26] God knows that the things that I struggle with are not just abstract sins out there. He knows that there are sins in me. And so he sends a savior for me.

God knows that the problems in the world that bother us aren't just problems out there abstract. They're our problems. And so he sends a savior for us.

He sends a baby for us. Jesus isn't out there as this abstract wonderful counselor, as this abstract mighty God, an abstract everlasting father, an abstract prince of peace.

He sent for us and that makes him our wonderful counselor. It makes him our mighty God, our everlasting father, our prince of peace.

And as long as I am focused on myself, on my expectations of God, I miss this. The way I finally am freed from these feelings of despair and of feeling lost isn't by continually focusing on me and my need and what I think is wrong in my life, but by turning and looking at God and looking at the ways that he has said he's going to work.

[29 : 48] As long as the focus is on me, I can't see God. But when I focus on God, I'm able to see him. I'm able to see who I am in light of him. And it's only when I put my focus on God that I'm able

to experience what he's doing in my life.

Just like Israel, there is a promise, yes, that one day he will come, that one day he will literally rule the nations. He will literally bring a kingdom and reign of peace. He will literally reign forever and bring joy and glory and it's going to be awesome.

But when Jesus first came, when he was first born as this baby, he didn't come for royal robes. He came for a cross. He didn't come to overthrow Rome right then and there.

He came to deal with bigger problems. He came to deal with the fact that you and me are sinners. That you and me are separated from God. That you and me have started a rebellion against God in our hearts.

And that as long as we are fighting in this rebellion, we won't have freedom. And he came and looked at you and me. And he said, yeah, you have lots of problems.

[31 : 11] But this is the big one. This is where it starts. I'm going to deal with this one first. And then we'll deal with the rest. As he did that, as he came, as the government fell upon his shoulders, as he was hung on the cross, as he bled and died, he accomplished a victory greater than any victory over Rome he could have ever won.

And as a son was given to us, as he died on that cross, as he rose again, we were given proof, tangible proof rooted in historical fact that God does love us, that God is for us, that even when I can't feel it, that even when I read this passage and I think, where are you?

Why can I not feel it? That God's there. That God's for us. That God has shown his love for us once for all in the cross. That the blood of Jesus speaks way louder than any feelings in my heart of lostness.

That when I look and I can't feel him, I know he hasn't abandoned me. I know he hasn't abandoned us.

because for us, a child has been born. For us, a son has been given.

[32 : 46] And he's probably not going to work in the ways that most of us would want him to work. It's not always going to be warm and fuzzy. At times, it's going to be painful because he's dealing with our deepest issues in our hearts.

And at least for me, having to recognize how messed up I am so that he can deal with my brokenness is never a fun experience. It's never easy.

It's never comfortable. But it's always good. It always brings life. So back in the day, Israel missed Jesus because they were expecting a king who would work according to their definition.

They were expecting a king who would come in and rule and deal with what they thought was their greatest issues. But they had identified their greatest issues wrongly.

And today, we have this promise and we see the fulfillment partially of this promise and we still wait for the day when Jesus is going to come back and he's going to fix everything once for all fully.

[34 : 01] But we have the assurance that a baby has been born, that a son has been born and not just born but born for us. And that he has borne our sin, our sin on his shoulders.

And that he is our wonderful counselor, our mighty God, our everlasting father, our prince of peace. watermark, let's not miss him because we're looking for what we want rather than what he wants for us.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for your promises and for hope and for this promise that the darkness will not reign forever but that light will shine.

we thank you for this baby, for Jesus who was born, who came, who had the government laid upon his shoulders and who willingly bore that for us.

[35 : 11] We pray that as we go throughout our weeks and lives that we would have a proper understanding of the work that he's doing in our lives, that we wouldn't try and fit him into our expectations, but that we would see clearly who you are, what you're doing through him and rely on him and his work in our lives.

Thank you, God. We love you. In Jesus' name. Amen. God has been taking us on a journey of what it means to connect what we do here on a Sunday morning.

Again, the worship the music, the singing, the sermon, the reading of God's word, connecting that with what we do outside the walls of this room.

Some people call it a lifestyle of worship, worship as a way of living. And something that struck me that was shared recently, I think it was Paul Tripp, he said, worship, in its essence, is finding our identity and being so closely aligned to God that our day-to-day, our breathing, our living is all

worship to him.

It's being so aligned to God that we begin to see how he sees the city of Hong Kong, sees the people around us, that we're not blind to the needs, that we can see the social brokenness, we can see the children that are hurting, and we can know his heartbeat and his love for all of Hong Kong, no matter how unlovable someone is next to me.

[36 : 57] And out of our community here, out of Watermark Community Church, we've seen grassroots movements of people who've heard that resounding call to be an agent of justice and love throughout Hong Kong.

And the amazing thing is that even within our church, we have ambassadors. You might have seen these maybe 15, 20 kids that, to be completely honest, in a church like this sometimes stick out like a sore thumb, but God doesn't see any sore thumbs.

He sees children no matter where they're from. And these 15 or 20 kids, they're from the South Asian community in Hong Kong, more specifically, mainly the Nepali community.

They, in Hong Kong, this community has been very much marginalized. They've been subject to be a lot of disempowerment, just chronic poverty and a cycle of poverty that's really oppressed them. And the amazing thing is that God has placed these lights, these little ambassadors in our community to be a part of Watermark Church and also to show us how amazing God is in doing this work throughout Hong Kong.

[38 : 02] So I want to invite Edmund and Alan up here. And Edmund and Alan, they've known each other for a while. Edmund's been serving with a ministry called Inner City Ministries and they serve this specific community group within Hong Kong.

And Alan has also, I guess, been a beneficiary of that but now he's also an ambassador of that because he's growing up and he's seen what God's been doing through that. So I don't want to introduce you anymore.

I want to let you do the talking. Okay, buddy? Maybe just tell everyone your name, your full name and how old are you? My name is Alan Grung and I'm 13 years old.

So Alan, how long have I known you for? For almost four years. Okay, and can you tell me a little bit about how you were like when we first met you?

I used to be very naughty and selfish. I used to get caught by the police three or four times. You got caught by the police three or four times. How old were you?

[39 : 06] Around eight or seven. Seven or eight, right? Yeah. Okay, and why did you get caught by the police? Fighting with others, playing BB gun fights, playing water balloon when the city got to not to play.

And can you tell me how do you feel when you got caught by the police at such a young age? I didn't care. I just wanted to have fun. That's it. And how late would you stay out?

I remember you stayed out really late, right? Yeah, until three or four a.m. So this is three or four a.m. when you were eight? Yes. Okay. How did you come to know about ICM?

I started knowing Caroline and others by my sister because she knows about Caroline and ICM more better than me. She started to know Caroline and ICM since she was really young.

So she taught me how to go there and know Caroline. And can you tell me more about Caroline and I? Caroline, she cares about us and loves us. And then sometimes he gives some kind of cards to hand in to others to know about God so they can come in ICM with us.

[40 : 11] And sometimes he cooks for us also. Cooks for us also so when we don't have enough parking money or when we're hungry. Okay. And you still go to ICM a lot right now, right?

Yes. Why? Because it's the safest place I know. There's so many friends I can talk to, talk about God and plenty. In my regular home there's so many gangsters and addicts there.

That's why. Okay. And you talk to her about Jesus, right? Yes. So why don't you tell us about Jesus? That Jesus is our Messiah. He died for us on the cross and we are sinful and and he's the only hope to go to heaven and have good relationship with him.

Thank you for sharing. Okay. Thanks. Actually, Alan, I have one more question for you. You were telling me yesterday, you're not off the hook yet, man.

You told me yesterday and it was really cool. You were telling me what, you know, where would you be maybe today on a Sunday morning or this week if you hadn't, if God hadn't touched you and worked through you through ICM.

[41 : 16] Do you think you could tell maybe share a little bit about that? What do you think? Maybe I would win Jill. Maybe in, I don't know. Higher, okay.

And I guess Edmund, having been a part of this ministry and working with Alan as little brother Aaron and all the other kids, what do you see as ways that we can respond to what God's doing through Inner City?

When I look at Watermark, I see a church that's very, very abundantly blessed, not just in our resources but also just how God has sought each one of us out.

It's very obvious from the character of the people here and just the family, the family feel that this church has. I think one of the best ways to respond to our calling as Christians here is to continue to respond and expand this family that we've built here, which is also one of the main reasons why we felt God calling us to bring all the kids to Watermark in the first place.

To expand the family, to act as older brothers and sisters, mentors, and even fathers and mothers to a lot of these kids. In ICM, there's actually a really big need for more committed mentors who can come out weekly just to seek them out where they're at to really seek and save the loss.

[42 : 44] To invest in relationships, to care, and to talk through life with a lot of these guys who just simply don't have the chance to talk to anybody. And in terms of resources, we know that ICM, as Alan said, is a home, is a safe place for a lot of these kids.

The staff there are basically mothers and fathers to a lot of them. and we need to be able to empower them with resources. Currently, ICM uses about 130,000 every month to run the family ministries, to do parenting classes, to run the vocational ministries, as well as tutoring ministries of the kids.

But each month, we fall short by about 50,000 each month as a regular donation basis. So anything really helps, actually, both financially as well as just expanding your hearts towards these kids and the families there.

Thanks, Edmund. And the leaders have decided, I mentioned this last week, but basically, leading up to next Sunday, December 8th, and that entire week, devoting all our tithes and offerings, everything that's received by Watermark, will go to ministries like St. Barnabas that I brought up last Sunday, and inner city ministries, as well as church planting.

So please be praying about that and just ask for God to show you even more of his heart and his heartbeat for the city of Hong Kong. Join with me as I pray for us and for inner city.

[44 : 20] Father, thank you. Yeah, where do I start, God? Thank you so much for this ministry and for giving us not just biological children, but spiritual children, Lord, even from places that we would least expect, you know, places like the Nepali community in Hong Kong and people in the poorest of places and the most desperate of places, Lord.

You bring them to us and make them our spiritual children, Lord. So, God, I pray for all the people here, Lord, no matter, you know, whether we're just so caught up in our own biological families and just really wanting obedience in the family and order, Lord, I also pray that we would open our eyes to see the spiritual children.

God, I pray for those of us who are yearning for sons and daughters in their family, but for whatever reason, they don't have it, Lord. I pray that you would open their eyes to see spiritual children, Lord, spiritual sons and daughters that you put in our care.

God, I pray for singles, Lord. I pray for all the 20, 25, 30-year-olds like me, Lord, that, you know, you just help me to suck it up and stop being a 30-year-old adolescent and be a 30-year-old father, Lord, of a spiritual child.

So, God, thank you for that privilege. Thank you for what you're doing through ICM. Thank you that no one is a sore thumb to you. No one is beneath, Lord, you, and you came to die for all.

[46 : 00] You came for us from the least to the greatest, Lord. We're all the same in your sight. Help us to see that, to experience that, and just know how loving you are, Lord, that we can be a church.

We can be parents, Lord, to Alan and Aaron and all the other kids, Lord, and even more and beyond Cyberport, beyond Pauplem, all throughout Hong Kong. God, empower us with your spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen. God. When we started the church, we asked ourselves a lot of questions. One of the questions we asked ourselves was, what would happen if the church no longer existed? If the church was not here any longer, would the community feel that?

Would they realize there was once a group of people who loved the Lord and loved Hong Kong here, but they're no longer here anymore? We kept asking ourselves the question, what would it look like to be missed? When we started the church, we got a lot of tension sometimes because people would come in and just be honest, you know, often we come in and we're, I'm a consumer. [47 : 13] We're consumers. And we come in and sometimes we say things like, so where's the 20 mission trips you're going to send me on this year? And what are things going to look like? And how can I consume what you're going to give me?

And that was a tension. I think we all struggle with that, right? And we didn't do the 20 mission trips in the year because we prayed and we knew that God had things in Hong Kong that he wanted us to do as the family of God.

And so we've spent going on this journey and praying and asking God to show us to the community groups and through individuals who have a heart for this amazing city. And so we've been waiting and looking and praying and community groups have been going out and doing things and it's amazing to see what they've been doing.

And so we've realized that our mission trip is Hong Kong right now. Our workplace and our families and our homes and where we eat dim sum and the Nepalese kids and all these places we're hoping and praying about planting churches in.

So next Sunday when you come in you'll see this red offering this special offering envelope and the elders and the leaders have caught together and as a step of faith we've done this a couple times with church planners and we've said hey everything that comes in we're yeah we have a budget we need to work but we trust that God is bigger than that.

[48 : 25] So everything that comes in next week we will give out to these missions that we've been identifying. So just so you think about that and pray about what has God called you to do? What is it called to do to not look like a consumer?

What does it look like to be part of the family of God and reaching out to these amazing people and opportunities that God is bringing to us? Watermark as a church family.