

Tear Open The Heavens

ILLUMINATE

Isaiah 64:1-9

EXPLORING THE SERMON

- * What did you hear?
- * What did you think or feel about what you heard?
- * What is one thing you can take away from the sermon this week?

KEY VERSES

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence (v.1) because you hid yourself we transgressed (v.5)

Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people. (v.9)

Through this ILLUMINATE series which will guide us through Advent, we build to the moment on Christmas Eve when we hold the Christ candle high, declaring that the light has come into the world and darkness cannot overcome it. The point of Advent is not to gloss over the darkness, as it is the darkness that makes the light so glorious. The darkness in our world and in our lives is real and we have all struggled to some degree this year, be it betrayal, a diagnosis, feeling left out, or other - we can face this darkness because it has lost already. **What darkness do you need to face as we journey through Advent?**

Isaiah sees the impact of sin, and begs God to come down: "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down" (v.1). Twice in our passage Isaiah admits that there is darkness and sin, and is bold enough to blame God for it: "because you hid yourself we transgressed" (v.5). **Can you remember a time in your life when you felt like God was hiding, silent, or absent from you? How do we reconcile God as "good" in the midst of these times?**

Isaiah goes on to remind us that even when darkness is overwhelming we can trust that God never hides from us: "God has come down, the mountains quaking at his presence" (v.3). Using past tense, he reminds us to examine how God has shown up in the past, tying the connection between memory and hope when darkness overwhelms. **From what darkness has God delivered you this past year?**

The last two verses portray a beautiful, ultimate hope of why we can trust in God's light without trying to escape: "do not be angry and remember our iniquity forever, and consider we are all your people" (v.9). Because of our relationship with our loving Father, we are claimed, loved, and belong to Him, and therefore do not have to escape the darkness. **Who are the people in your life with whom you did not doubt your connection or belonging (parent, grandparent, coach, mentor)? How did they give you a sense of hope and remind you of your value?**