

**Broad Series:** Grounded (The life of Jesus in four parts, Exploring Jesus as the incarnation of God in the created world, and how that gives salvation an earth grounding.)

**Series Part 1:** Dirty Hands (Jesus' role in creation and creating anew.)

**Sermon #2:** "Seeable God"

**Scripture:** Isaiah 9:1-7

**Text:** Isaiah 7:14 "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

**Sermon Blurb:** Sometimes it seems like God is far off, distant, aloof. We struggle day by day, "messing around in the mud," and we wonder if God even cares. God is the almighty, who created all things. But at Christmas we discover that God also notices...that God comes to us—among us...and that God helps us. This Sunday we'll look back deep into the Old Testament prophecies foretelling of a God who gets down into the mud...even our mud!

**Gathering Song:** *Christmas Is Coming* - Choir

**Welcome:** Pastor David

**Greeting Time:** *Share your favorite Christmas carol.*

**Christmas Celebration:** *Christmas through the Ages*

Kid's Perspective

Song: *Happy Birthday Jesus* -Kid's Choir

Advent Candle Lighting/Prayers

Please note: Children will remain in service today so families can enjoy our Christmas celebration together.

Parent's Perspective

Songs: *Joy to the World*

*Angels We Have Heard on High*

*Away in a Manger*

Grandparent's Perspective

Song: *Angels from the Realms of Glory/Emmanuel* -Sanctify

Closing: Darrell B.

**Message:** "Grounded: Dirty Hands" -Pastor David

**PP#1:** Grounded: Dirty Hands

Seeable God

Isaiah 7:14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

Yes, God came into the dirt. Christmas is about Immanuel, that God is with us. But not just God near us. God as one among us. God came down to the dirt, and God took on a body of dirt.

Grounded - A God of Dirty Hands. Seeable God. Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

**PP#2:** *Image of Mary & Joseph with dirty faces.*

Mary and Joseph were people of the dirt. Dirt poor, they were forgotten people, really. They lived close to the earth, in a cave in Nazareth with a dirt floor. Joseph worked every day with soiled hands and Mary slogged in mud whenever it rained. Their feet got dirty as they walked to Bethlehem along dusty roads. They coughed dust in their lungs, and when they touched their faces, they left smudges. In Bethlehem they ended up in the stable, with animals, and straw, and feed, and, oh yeah, dirt.

The cool thing about Mary and Joseph, is that we can see ourselves in them. Common. Usual. Like all people, they came from dust, and to dust they returned. Lives connected to the ground, to creation, a part of creation.

**PP#3:** *Image for the God forming of creation.*

God made all things, all of creation, all people. God spoke, and it happened. God's Word created all things. "In the beginning the Word was with God, and the Word was God." God's Word was not creation. God's Word made creation.

But God got His hands dirty. He reached down into the clay and shaped people. He breathed into them and they breathed life.

Dirt is clean, my father used to say, "There's nothing wrong with good, clean dirt." God made dirt, and saw that it was good. God and people talked together, walked together on the ground. People were at peace, and whole.

But the dirt..got...dirty: in sin, I mean. People stopped listening to the Word that created them, the Word of life. They decided it was better to listen to their own way. But they didn't understand that it also took them away from their Creator. Now the dirt on which they lived, the dirt from which they were made, became their bondage. They were grounded, stuck in the mud, unable to be whole again.

**PP#4:** *An image of a small silhouette of a person against the expanse of a vast sky.*

God seemed so far off, distant. Somewhere out there, in the heavens, past the seeable sky. But they? Their feet were planted, tied to the ground.

We are like Mary and Joseph. We live our lives in the dirt. We are stuck in the life we can see, in the way things are. We come from dust, and to dust we shall return. When we die, we are returned to the earth. The ground is our bondage.

Our faces are smeared. We strive, we toil, we sweat. But we are still grounded, like an eagle with a broken wing. We cannot see the face of our Creator. We are left in the blackness.

**PP#5:** "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned." -Isaiah 9:2

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." -Isaiah 7:14

But in the darkness, a Word speaks. "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned." What does this mean? At creation, the Word separated light from darkness. Now the Word brings promise of a light dawning!

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” Something will happen. A miracle. A new light dawns, and a baby is born. God with us. Can it be?

We are dirty. Our faces are smudged, and turned down. We know that sin in us, that bent to self we struggle against. We know how so much stronger that darkness is within us, that anger, that bent to hate and violence, that hopelessness. And we wonder if we will ever see God.

**PP#6:** “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.” -Micah 5:2

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. Isaiah 11:1

The Word speaks again. “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah [EFF-ra-thah], who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.” A promised one coming? Showing up among the least, the forgotten, the usual?

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.” The tree that was cut down sprouts new life? A promised one...coming to bring light, life, hope!

**PP#7:** Isaiah 9 (CEB)

1 Nonetheless, those who were in distress won't be exhausted. At an earlier time, God cursed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but later He glorified the way of the sea, the far side of the Jordan, and the Galilee of the nations.

2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.  
On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.

The Word of God spoke in the beginning, bringing life. The Word of God spoke again, through the prophets of old, promising a new beginning, renewed life. Created people, dirty with sin and grounded, hear the Word. It is the promise of God who comes to reconcile people back to Himself, restoring the life intended at creation. The Word of God speaks again, now, at Christmas.

Isaiah chapter 9 speaks God's Word to a downtrodden people. The land which at one point believed it was cursed with the absence of God, now hears of a new beginning, a new light.

Verse 1, “Nonetheless, those who were in distress won't be exhausted. At an earlier time, God cursed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but later He glorified the way of the sea, the far side of the Jordan, and the Galilee of the nations.” God's people had turned away from God, and they were cursed by not having God close by. But He did not stay far away. He comes close! He brings down His glory, on earth, on the West side of the Jordan River, in a place called Galilee. He comes to the dirt. A Light for all the nations.

Verse 2, “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.”

Those with down-turned, smudged faces, see a glimmer of hope. We are not stuck in darkness. A light dawns.

**PP#8:** Isaiah 9 (CEB)

- 3 You have made the nation great; you have increased its joy.  
     They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest,  
     as those who divide plunder rejoice.
- 4 As on the day of Midian, you've shattered the yoke that burdened them,  
     the staff on their shoulders, and the rod of their oppressor.
- 5 Because every boot of the thundering warriors,  
     and every garment rolled in blood will be burned, fuel for the fire.

Hope breaks out in poetic verse. Verse 3, "You have made the nation great; you have increased its joy. They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest, as those who divide plunder rejoice. As on the day of Midian, you've shattered the yoke that burdened them, the staff on their shoulders, and the rod of their oppressor. Because every boot of the thundering warriors, and every garment rolled in blood will be burned, fuel for the fire."

**PP#9:** Isaiah 9 (CEB)

- 6 A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and authority will be on His shoulders.  
     He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
- 7 There will be vast authority and endless peace for David's throne and for His kingdom,  
     establishing and sustaining it with justice and righteousness now and forever.  
 The zeal of the Lord of heavenly forces will do this.

What causes this joy leaping in the heart? What is this hope based on? Verse 6 "A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and authority will be on His shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be vast authority and endless peace for David's throne and for His kingdom, establishing and sustaining it with justice and righteousness now and forever. The zeal of the Lord of heavenly forces will do this."

**PP#10:** *Image of the Bethlehem creche, with a sense of wonder.*

God does not stay far off. He does not remain distant. He comes to those stuck on the ground. He comes not just *to* us. He comes not just *near* us. This is the miracle: God the Creator, comes as one of us. The Word who spoke dirt into existence, appears in a body made from dirt, as a baby, born to a dirty couple, in a dirty place, in a dirty world, to a dirty people. Born "to us...given to us!"

Do you hear this, grounded people? You, with your smudged faces turned down to the ground: do you hear this? A child is born *to you!* The Word of God, given to you! He can chase away the darkness in your life. He can bring new life to you!

This is God's zeal! This is God's passion! This is God's love for us! The Word comes as the person of Jesus. He comes as our Wonderful Counselor, our Mighty God, our Eternal Father, our Prince of Peace. He comes bringing a kingdom that will never end, righteousness forever!

God, who at creation put His hands in the dirt, comes at Christmas, with hands of dirt, to take the dirty hands of us, His people, and lead us back to close relationship with our Creator.

Now we can see our God. The Light has dawned. We have a seeable God.

So, we are now grounded—not stuck or bound to the earth—but grounded: finally made whole, complete, as we were created, resting in peace in the Word who came as Immanuel.

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.”

Merry Christmas!

**Giving Tree:** Teresa G.

**Offering:** Cavatina String Quartet

**Closing Song:** *Peace on Earth* -Choir

**Benediction:** Pastor David