

January 2010

An Eternal Hope for Present Challenges

"Because this people have rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah

... therefore the Lord is about to bring against them the mighty floodwaters of the River, the king of Assyria with all his pomp. ...Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land, O Immanuel!"

Isaiah 7:14-15; 8:6-8

As the theme for our Christmas Advent series began to coalesce in my heart, I felt a deep sense of the Lord's leading and excitement about the security He sought for us to know as a daily reality. Our Lord is an amazing God to love and to serve. The story of Christmas is absolutely amazing in His mercy toward a rebellious creation; giving His own Son as an expression of love to a race of people that may or may not receive His offer of love. What a chance He took – that His love would be enough to warm a human heart to freely love Him *"because He first loved us."* (1 John 4:19)

Reunited again with our Creator and Father, we have the promise of His presence with us forever in eternity and now throughout our lifetime. (Hebrews 13:5) God with us –the promise of His presence to be with us today and forever. Our current year ends with significant challenges. Socially we are divided as to how we should address everything from immigration to climate change to health care. Politically, we continue to see our leadership flounder due to the inability to govern self before seeking to govern nationally. Their extremely poor credibility is sad, disheartening and a call to prayer. Economically, our entire globe is facing the debt crisis which is coming to bear after years of spending beyond our means. Many families are facing the challenge of unemployment and less income. My assessment isn't to point a finger of self-righteousness and declare that, "it's all their fault -they should have known better" because I am neither innocent, exempt, nor one who has answers for these very real issues facing us. I have restated what we already know in order to offer what I believe to be a "now" word for the New Life Family.

When the prophet recorded these "now" words to the Israelites, there were two very important realities that are applicable for us today. First, they were given another warning of what was ahead for them and secondly, they were given a promise. Both were spoken through the prophets with the yearning of His heart to be with them. God's heart for His people then, is His heart for people today. He warned them with an ache in His heart for them to turn fully back to Him again. The promise of Immanuel still stands today. As we look ahead to 2010, let's look around to see God's faithful hand sustaining and keeping us. If we look for His hand, we will see His activity and be filled with hope. Let's look ahead with the firm and assuring hope

that Jesus is King, that His reign means peace, and that His promise of being with us and of rest for our heart still stands today. Jesus' words remain our "bread" for today, "*Don't let your hearts be troubled, trust me. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome.*" (John 14:1; 16:33) With our hand in His, we have a secure future and hope.