

In the Name of Jesus

Midweek Advent Service #1 – December 4, 2019 (Prince of Peace, Loveland)

Sermon Text: Isaiah 9:6 – UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN: HIS NAME WILL BE CALLED WONDERFUL, COUNSELOR

Scripture Reading:

Hymns: 66, 106 (1,4-7), 89 (1,5), 275

The patriarchs and prophets longed to see,
Lord Jesus Christ, Your blest nativity.
As once You came to stable rude and bare,
Come to our yearning hearts, and kindle there
Faith's warming glow, that we may greet You then
With head uplifted, when You come again. Amen.

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulder; and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

In the name of Jesus, our Savior, dear midweek Advent worshipers:

The prophet Isaiah, who penned our text, is sometimes referred to as “the Evangelist of the Old Testament.” That word “evangelist” means “teller of good news.” That is a fitting name for Isaiah because that’s what he does in his book. All the prophets testify of the Good News of the Savior to come. But none speak so clearly and fully of Jesus and His grand work of redemption as does Isaiah.

In the three Wednesday services we will conduct at Prince of Peace this year (Lord-willing), we will zero in on the familiar prophecy recorded in our text: Isaiah 9, verse 6. We will discuss the names Isaiah ascribes to the coming future King. Tonight we consider the first two names Isaiah ascribes to Jesus in this verse: **Wonderful** and **Counselor**. We’ll see why they are truly fitting names for the Infant whose birth we will celebrate on December 25th.

1.

First: **“Wonderful.”** Why is *that* a good for the manger Child? I’m sure there were people present in Bethlehem on the first Christmas night who, on hearing the shepherds’ report of what had happened, and hurried to the stable to check things out for themselves, may stepped into the stable where the Baby lay and said: “What’s so wonderful about *this*?! Why did the shepherds make such a big deal out of this birth? All we see is a humble Jewish man with his humble Jewish wife. Oxen, cattle, sheep, straw. The unpleasant odor of filthy farm animals hanging in the air. There’s nothing here that should lead us to think something *wonderful* has occurred! The tiny Infant lying in a manger (of all places!) couldn’t be anyone special!”

The irony of it all is that the very manner in which this Baby made His entrance into the world is the key to understanding why He was Wonderful. God caused Him to be born in

poverty ... with oxen standing by ... without any worldly hype or hoopla ... to an unremarkable Jewish maiden ... to show that the work this Child was to perform was going to be *highly remarkable*. No, He would not be considered great by the world. He wouldn't rise to earthly heights of grandeur. His greatness would not consist in His being waited on hand and foot by others, but by living His life in humble service to all the world!

- As the Good Shepherd ... He would lay down His life for the sheep ...
- As the Heavenly Physician ... He would bring healing to the sin-sick souls of men ...
- As the King of kings, He would fight and defeat Satan, rescue people from the yawning pit of hell, bringing them life to the full.
- **“Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and His kingdom, to order and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever” (Isaiah 9:7).**

That is what the shepherds perceived with their eyes of faith as they gazed down on the Little One wrapped in swaddling clothes. Imagine the excitement that welled up in their hearts ... that must have been evident in their voices and in their facial expressions ... as they exited the stable and went out and “told it on the mountain” that the Savior was born ... make known abroad the good news saying that was told them concerning this *wonderful* Child.

To them ... and to all whom the Holy Spirit has given grace to understand these blessed truths it isn't difficult, isn't it, to comprehend why Isaiah prophesied that the Baby who as to be born at Bethlehem would be called *Wonderful*.

**The everlasting Son Incarnate deigns to be;
Himself a servant's form puts on To set His servants free.**

**To this vale of tears He comes, Here to serve in sadness,
That with Him in heaven's fair homes We may reign in gladness.**

We are rich for He was poor, Is that not a wonder!

2.

The next name Isaiah ascribes to Jesus is equally fitting. **“His name will be called *Counselor*.”** Why is that a fitting name? Because the message the Christ was to proclaim to the world would be the most soothing, comforting, impacting-lives-in-a-positive-way message that no other counselor or psychologist or psychiatrist could ever proclaim. To hearts burdened with guilt for their sinfulness ... to consciences haunted by a sense of their utter unworthiness in the sight of Almighty God ... to souls distressed and fearful over the prospect of spending eternity in the sorrows of hell apart from God because of their lost condition ... He would counsel with the sweet message:

- **“Come to Me, you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).**

- **“Come now, and let us reason together,” says the LORD, “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).**
- **“Repent and turn to God so your sins may be wiped out and times of refreshing may come from the Lord” (Acts 3:19).**

Remember how Jesus told the paralyzed man whom He saw was worried sick by his sins: **“Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you” (Matthew 9:2).** To the woman of ill repute who came into the house where Jesus was having dinner, washed His feet with repentant tears: **“Go in peace. Your faith has saved you” (Luke 7:50).** To the woman caught in the act of adultery hauled in before Jesus by Pharisees, yearning for a word of forgiveness: **“Woman, where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you?” She said: “No one, Lord.” And He said: “Neither do I. Go (in peace) and sin no more” (John 8:10-11).**

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This is the kind counseling work which the evangelist of the Old Testament predicted the Messiah would do. He would speak truthfully about sin, labeling it for what it is, a grievous affront against the majesty of God, deserving of His severe punishment. Unlike counselors and psychologists of our day who like to minimize the guilt of sin, sugarcoat it, dull the edges of the Commandments, assist counselees to overcome their guilt-feelings by denying sin’s reality and its wages (which never works). In each counseling session Jesus had with people He made clear the breaking of God’s law is a deadly serious thing. But He always was eager to administer to contrite hearts the healing balm of His forgiveness. That’s why He made a point of associating with society’s outcasts. Not to condone their lifestyle but to lift them up with His life-directing, soul-refreshing Word! To tell them the truth: **“The wages of sin is death ... but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus your Lord” (Romans 6:23).**

That’s the same wonderful counsel Jesus offers us today. So we too might be comforted by the news that God has accomplished our rescue through His Son. The chasm of sin that stood between us and our God has been bridged over. A highway, smooth and wide, leading all the way to heaven has been constructed for us by the tiny manger Child who would let nails and spear pierce Him through and bear the cross for me and you.

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As we draw near to Christmas, may our hearts be filled with thanksgiving to God for making these Gospel truths known and blessing us with the faith of the shepherds. Praise Him for His gift of a Savior whose birth Isaiah prophesied in these golden words: **“Unto a Child is born. His Name shall be called ... WONDERFUL, COUNSELOR.”** Amen!