

Sermon: Wonderful Counselor

Text: Isaiah 9:6-7 ESV

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Introduction: About 2700 years ago, a prophet by the name of Isaiah told us darkness and despair will melt away with the coming of the Messiah. Both for Jew and Christian one verse in **Isaiah 9** points us to God's solution for all of man's trouble. The difference, of course, is some Jews are still waiting while others have given up entirely that God will act in history to redeem his people. Christians, though, recognize that this prophecy has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, Son of David, Son of man and Son of God. Because God is indescribable there are hundreds of names given to us in an attempt to tell Who he is. There are four names for God in the one verse we are looking at this morning.

People can go to great lengths in picking names for their children. Some will use biblical names from the OT like our grandson's name, Elijah or others like Joseph, Joshua, and Jacob, Rachel, Sara and many others. From the NT there is Peter, James, John, Paul, Mary, Elizabeth and maybe even Phoebe. Judas is still not real popular.

All names mean something. Edward means wealthy guardian, and even strong as a boar; John's name means The Lord (Jehovah, Yahweh) is gracious; Gary goes back to *spear carrier*, i.e., *mighty warrior*. Names usually are meant to reflect a positive idea especially today.

Amoz reflected his hope for the future when he named his son *Isaiah* which means "The Lord saves." Mary and Joseph, 700 years later had the same hope. They named their son, Jesus, which means exactly the same thing: "The Lord saves."

Especially back then, a name was supposed to speak to a person's character or occupation. Even in the common names of Baker, Butcher, Farmer, Smith, Tanner and so forth we see it.

Each week in Advent we are going to look at one of the four names for Jesus in just one verse in Isaiah. We are overhearing a part of an original song:

Isaiah 9:6 ESV 6 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.

The first name in our text that we are looking at is: *Wonderful Counselor*. Some of the older versions of Scripture would separate this name into two names, but to keep the pairings together and address what I think is just one name, let us begin. We want to explore what is meant by “wonderful” and also look at how God in Jesus is our “Counselor.”

I. Jesus Is Wonderful!

The Hebrew word that is here translated “wonderful” or “marvelous” occurs 81 times in the Old Testament. It speaks to the supernatural deeds of God on man’s behalf. It begins early with the promise of *another* son, made to Abraham.

Genesis 18:14 ESV ¹⁴ Is anything too hard[**wonderful**] for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.”

Later we hear an incredible announcement by the angel - the promise of a child to Mary: **Luke 1:34-37 ESV** ³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin [**I do not know a man**]?” ³⁵ And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born[**of you**] will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Even though the means by which the Messiah is to be born is miraculous,

A. He is like us (human).

For to us a child is born, The Ancient of Days has come to us as a baby. The Father has become the child. This is what is known as the incarnation of God. He became flesh and dwelt (lived) among his people John tells us (**John 1:14 ESV**).

“All religions and philosophies which deny the reality or the significance of the material, the fleshly and earthbound, are themselves denied. Moses at the burning bush was told to take off his shoes because the ground on which he stood was holy ground (**Exodus 3:5**), and incarnation means that all ground is holy ground because God not only made it, but walked on it, ate and slept and worked and died on it. If we are saved anywhere, we are saved here. - Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking*, p. 52

It is this earth and our fleshly bodies that will be transformed and raised imperishable (**I Corinthians 15:42**) and not because of a phantom who appeared, but a child who was born, grew up and then *really* died because he loved us, and then was raised by the power of God. This is quite an announcement Isaiah makes!

(Ravi Zacharias) One has said: “The Son wasn’t born, the Son eternally existed; the child was born, the Son was given.”

B. He is for us (gift).

to us a son is given, The gift of this male child is for us, i.e., for our advantage and help. He was conceived in love, delivered to us at just the right time, and God’s plan for His Son has been eternal.

Listen to the benediction toward the close of the Hebrew letter:

Hebrews 13:20-21 ESV ²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Every gift from God is meant to be a blessing to us and to his praise and glory. Every gift from God is meant to be shared.

God gives us this male child to see how we will receive his gift for us. Throughout Jesus’ ministry it is children who are used as examples of faith and acceptance.

Mark 9:36-37 ESV ³⁶ And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”

Jesus has become a child again!

We must accept the Gift to be accepted by the Giver.

**C. He is above us (supernatural).
and the government will be on his shoulders.**

Even though we are introduced to the Messiah as a child, make no mistake - He is above all in authority and power. He is God! The Great "I AM."

If we are, indeed, his people, we will not be found like one of his enemies - "under his feet." He will carry us like sheep across his shoulders.

Until the world submits to the only true Sovereign, there will be no peace. Until God's supremacy is recognized, man will continue to seek his own advantage over the well-being of others. Israel has learned many hard lessons in her history when she had run after other gods and walked away from Yahweh. The rest of mankind is not immune to God's justice either.

The other part of this compound title is:

II. Jesus Is Counselor!

And he will be called Wonderful Counselor,

A. He has divine wisdom.

The Psalmist declares: **Psalm 16:7a ESV** ^{7a} I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; ... and Isaiah states: **Isaiah 28:29 ESV** ²⁹ This also comes from the Lord of hosts; he is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom. - parallel

The wisdom of our "wonderful counselor" can be compared to what man may pursue. King Ahaz of Isaiah's time refused to trust in God. He made human alliances, listened to mediums and spiritists, rejected God's law and counsel through Isaiah - and paid the price.

Even in the examples of our finest minds, if God is left out, we are doomed. Even Solomon, reckoned to be the wisest man in ancient times, finally understood that running after anything or anyone other than God produces despair. He wrote a book called Ecclesiastes. He concludes the book this way:

Ecclesiastes 12:8 ESV ⁸ Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.

Footnotes: In Ecclesiastes 1:2 The Hebrew term *hebel*, translated vanity or vain, refers concretely to a "mist," "vapor," or "mere breath," and metaphorically to something that is fleeting or elusive (with different nuances depending on the context). It appears five times in **1:2**. **Ecclesiastes 12:8** (3 times in our verse).

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 ESV ¹³ The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

God's wisdom embodied in his Word and in his Messiah, is perfect. Seven hundred years after Isaiah, Jesus would begin his ministry in the very area of Israel in Galilee where Isaiah had ministered.

John 8:12 ESV ¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Jesus makes it clear that he has fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy: **Isaiah 9:2 ESV** ² 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.

Our "wonderful counselor" has come. Paul shares with the church:

II Corinthians 4:6 ESV ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is not only well-intentioned:

B. He is capable of helping us.

He is our *King*. He is perfect in his decrees. He is almighty and is interested in every aspect of our lives. "When life caves in, you do not need reasons, you need comfort. You don't need answers, you need *Someone*. And Jesus does not [always] come to us with an explanation. He comes to us with His presence. (Bob Benson, Sermon Central).

Our "wonderful counselor" is *eternal*. He is not out of office in one or two terms. He is always there and available for us. He will never leave us or forsake us. In fact, like any good ruler, he is *our* servant. This ministry is performed out of love rather than the position of a lower rank.

Isaiah 9:7 ESV ⁷ 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.

Our "Wonderful Counselor" helps us with our burdens. He enters into the process of making us whole and well again. He never gives poor advice. He will never lead us wrong. We need to recognize the truthfulness of Jesus' words:

Matthew 11:29-30 ESV 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Conclusion: In a world that is, many times, just out for itself; isn't it wonderful to know we have a God who is for us? He has helped us in the past. He is helping us still. He will ultimately save us from ourselves and to His glory. It is no wonder the angels were full of joy at Jesus' birth.

Isaiah 7:14 ESV 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 (which means “God is with us).”

God will be *with* us; and *for* those of us who love Him, and that is wonderful! I want to share with you this morning by reading a tribute called *Indescribable Christ* by Pastor Shadrach Meshach Lockridge.

“He’s enduringly strong, He’s entirely sincere, He’s eternally steadfast. He’s immortally graceful. He’s imperially powerful. He’s impartially merciful. He’s God’s Son. He’s a sinner’s Savior. He’s the centerpiece of civilization. He stands alone in Himself. He’s unparalleled. He’s unprecedented. He’s supreme. He’s preeminent. Do you know Him?

He’s the loftiest idea in literature. He’s the highest idea in philosophy. He’s the fundamental truth in theology. He’s the miracle of the age. He’s the only one able to supply all of our needs simultaneously. He supplies strength for the weak. He’s available for the tempted and the tried. He sympathizes, and He saves. He guards and He guides. He heals the sick, He cleans the lepers. He forgives sinners, He discharges debtors, He delivers captives, He defends the feeble, He blesses the young, He serves the unfortunate, He regards the aged, He rewards the diligent, He beautifies the meek. Do you know Him?

Well, my king is the King of knowledge, He’s the well-spring of wisdom, He’s the doorway of deliverance, He’s the pathway of peace, He’s the roadway of righteousness, He’s the highway of holiness, He’s the gateway of glory, He’s the master of the mighty, He’s the captain of the conquerors, He’s the head of the heroes, He’s the leader of the legislators, He’s the overseer of the overcomers, He’s the governor of governors, He’s the prince of princes, He’s the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Do you know Him?

His life is matchless. His goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting. His love never changes. His word is enough. His grace is sufficient. His reign is righteous. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Well, I wish I could describe Him to you. But He's indescribable. Yes, He's incomprehensible. He's invincible, He's irresistible. I'm trying to tell you, the heavens cannot contain Him, let alone a man explain Him. You can't get Him out of your mind. You can't get Him off of your hands. You can't outlive Him, and you can't live without Him. Well, the Pharisees couldn't stand Him, but they found out they couldn't stop Him. Pilate couldn't find any fault in Him. Herod couldn't kill Him. Death couldn't handle Him and the grave couldn't hold Him. That's my King!

He always has been, and He always will be. I'm talking about He [who] had no predecessor and He [who] has no successor. There was nobody before Him and there will be nobody after Him. You can't impeach Him, and He's not going to resign. Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, and ever, and ever, and ever. How long is that? And ever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and when you get through with all of the forevers, then 'Amen.' Oh, I wish I could describe Him to you!"