

Sermon preached at Woodbury Community Church, Woodbury, MN on Saturday,  
December 24, 2011, by Rev. Brian D. Schulenburg

**ISAIAH 9:6-7**

6 For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
7 Of the increase of his government and peace  
there will be no end.  
He will reign on David's throne  
and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it  
with justice and righteousness  
from that time on and forever.  
The zeal of the LORD Almighty  
will accomplish this.

**WHEN HOPE WAS BORN #4**  
**WHAT JESUS TEACHES US ABOUT HOPE**

I was probably 13 or 14 years old when it happened. I call it the Christmas of my discontent. My parents always made Christmas a special occasion. They blessed each one of their children with more than any of us deserved. I used to love helping my Mom wrap the presents that she had purchased for her five kids and my Dad. I loved shopping with my Dad as he picked out items for my Mom. He would get so excited as he would purchase the love of his life gifts that he knew that she would appreciate.

As much as I enjoyed watching my parents buy and wrap presents, I have to admit, I really loved receiving presents. I was more than a little bit selfish as a teenage boy. That 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> Christmas of my life was like every other Christmas. The Schulenburg boys woke up early, anticipating the joy of unwrapped gifts. We woke our parents up. We opened our stockings, and then we unwrapped our family gifts. I recall that for whatever reason, on that particular Christmas, I was not pleased with the gifts that I received. I remember feeling that my brothers had received better gifts. I was jealous and mad, and in my anger I threw a temper tantrum over my gifts. As a young teenage boy I got up from the family room, slammed my room door, cried and made a general fool out of myself because I wasn't content with the gifts that I received. The gifts were all great gifts. The problem wasn't the gifts; the problem was the one who was receiving the gifts. Somehow they didn't meet my expectations. They weren't fun enough, or cool enough, or whatever else. I had become spoiled and lost the true meaning of Christmas.

This Christmas you have been given a precious gift. In fact, it is the perfect gift for every season. And, like the teenage version of me, you may not recognize just how precious

that gift is. It could be that you feel the gift isn't complete. You might think it's just not enough. You might think the gift isn't practical. You might not like the demands that the gift makes of you. Some gifts do that, don't they? We purchase our kids a puppy, and have no idea at the time just how much work that puppy will be. As Minnesotans and Wisconsinians we dream of having a boat and when we get the boat find out just how much work it is to maintain. We like the gifts. But, be sure of the fact that the gifts make some demands upon us.

Matt Woodly, a father of four, talks about buying his children a swing set, about 15 years ago, as an early Christmas present, "It was an extra long metal set with two swings, a two-seater swinging bench, a slide, monkey bars, and a series of hanging rings. He thought the time invested in putting it together would be a great way to show them his love. Besides, it was cheap, and it was made in Germany. He reasoned, "You can't beat German engineering!"

Well, after purchasing, hauling, dragging, and opening the 200-pound box, Matt was suddenly overwhelmed by the sheer number of parts and the complexity of the instructions. Based on his eye-popping assessment, he would have to assemble about 10,000 tiny screws, washers, nuts and bolts, wing-nuts, more washers, plastic pieces, metal bars, and metal chains. They provided an English translation of the instructions, but unfortunately there were no pictures or diagrams -- just convoluted, technical instructions apparently written by scientists for experts in mechanical engineering.

Matt said, 'It was too complicated for an ordinary, non-engineer like me.' So with help from some mechanically-inclined friends, Matt finally managed to assemble the whole thing, but he had a few dozen leftover parts. It is little wonder, then, that his 34 pound son made the entire swing set shake and wobble."<sup>1</sup> One father figured out that if he followed the manufacturer's suggested guidelines, assuming that his swing set lasted the twenty years that it was warranted for, he would spend he would spend almost two days of his life tightening the screws of set. Talk about a demanding gift! And you know what? Some of us feel that way about Christ. We know that Jesus is supposed to be the greatest gift of all time, but following Him kind of cramps our style. We'll follow to a point, but this whole Lordship thing, that He demands feels a little much.

Listen, Jesus' demands are good for us. They bring hope where there is hopelessness. They bring meaning to a life that if just lived for this world, will never satisfy. Jesus, the prophesied Messiah is the great hope for you and me.

Six hundred years before He was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote these words about Jesus. 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/sermon-illustration-sermon-central-staff-stories-78733.asp>

Four names are given to Messiah in the book of Isaiah . . . Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.

Let's look first at His name, "Wonderful Counselor."

## 1. Wonderful Counselor

What do you think of when you think of the word "counselor?"

If you are like most people, you recognize that a counselor is someone we see for their wisdom. You wouldn't seek counsel from a fool. There is recognition in this text that Messiah is wise. He is a wonderful counselor.

Matthew Rogers writes that the word "wonderful" refers to the acts of God as being incomprehensible, marvelous or miraculous. 'Counselor' carries with it the ideas of one who determines upon a plan of action and carries it out.<sup>2</sup>

The idea is that the hope for the nation of Judah was this "Wonderful Counselor" whose plans, purposes, designs and decrees for his people would be marvelous.

So, is Jesus your Wonderful Counselor? Is He the first one that you go to when you need an advisor? Great leaders throughout history have recognized the value of advisors. Every President of the United States has surrounded himself with a team of presidential advisors. The President looks for top experts in a variety of fields to advise him on the decisions of the day.

I've been reading a lot about President Lincoln lately. He is admired for the fact that he didn't surround himself with "yes men." Some of Lincoln's greatest political rivals were put in prominent positions in his administration, because he needed to hear their point of view. He needed people to tell him the things he didn't want to hear.

This man, who knew the importance of great counsel, recognized that his greatest counsel came not from man, but from God. When asked if God was on the side of America, Lincoln said, "Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right"

When someone looks for a good counselor they look for someone who is wise, someone who is understanding, and someone who really cares. Jesus is all of that and more.

a. He is wise - Job 12:13 tells us, "13 To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his."

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.sermoncentral.com/print\\_friendly.asp?ContributorID=&SermonID=41584](http://www.sermoncentral.com/print_friendly.asp?ContributorID=&SermonID=41584)

b. He is understanding – Hebrews 4:15 tells us, “15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.”

c. He is someone who cares – 1 Peter 5:7 tells us, “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

So, when we have to face any decision in our life, we know Jesus, our best gift, is also our Wonderful Counselor. Jesus stands ready to advise us and give us the direction we need. He ought to be the first advisor that we go to. He knows what direction is best for our life. So, are we listening?

There is a second title that Isaiah gave to the Messiah. It is Mighty God.

## 2. Mighty God

The picture here is of God as our Divine Mighty Warrior.

Kings in the Ancient Near East World were not merely men who sat on a throne and ruled. They led the army to battle. The future Messiah would be a warrior king and He would be God, and that very name carried with it the expectation of power.

Rogers writes, “Many people with a limited exposure to Jesus Christ, view him simply as someone very meek and mild. Someone kind and gentle. Someone who turned the other cheek, and when the soldiers beat him, and made him carry his cross, he did not resist. And all those things are true. But the larger picture of Christ in the Bible is one of ‘Mighty Warrior. . .’”<sup>3</sup>

I talk to people all of the time who don’t seem to recognize that we live in a world where there is a very real spiritual battle going on. All over Scripture we read the evidence of our adversary, the devil and his hoard of demons. In Ephesians 6:12, Paul wrote, “12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

To the church at Corinth, Paul wrote, “3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.” (2 Corinthians 10:3)

John, prophesied in Revelation 17:14 that “14 They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings – and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

Despite everything that Satan throws at Him, Christ is our Mighty Warrior. He has already triumphed over Satan, and He will continue to give us the victory as we rely upon Him. Are you struggling with temptation? Do you have issues controlling your

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.sermoncentral.com/print\\_friendly.asp?ContributorID=&SermonID=41584](http://www.sermoncentral.com/print_friendly.asp?ContributorID=&SermonID=41584)

temper? Are you cheating your home by giving too much time at work? Are you dealing with laziness? Are you in the clutches of an addiction? Jesus Christ, our Mighty God, can deliver you from anything the enemy, or you yourself bring your way.

What a beautiful promise of hope this Christmas season. That is your God! Jesus is our Mighty God. Isaiah tells us that He is also our Everlasting Father.

### **3. Everlasting Father**

Those who struggle with their earthly fathers sometimes struggle with the picture of the Father God in Scripture. Isaiah is speaking of Jesus in this verse. So, we don't want to confuse "Father" in Isaiah 9:6 with God the Father. But, it is a picture of a God who cares. There is an enduring, loving, compassionate, providing fatherly care that is offered by Messiah to His people. When combined with the word "Everlasting," we see a God whose cares for His people, and Whose Kingdom will know no end. We can count on Jesus being our forever Compassionate Provider.

It was His compassion that Jesus was known for in the New Testament.

In Matthew 9:36 we read, "36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

We see Jesus' showing parental love in Matthew 23:37, "37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."

Do you believe that Jesus really cares for you? Are we willing to allow Him to play the parental role in your life? Are you willing to trust Him for your needs?

I know that this is the toughest one for me. Maybe it's a man thing, but I want to trust in myself. I want to believe that I can make enough money to take care of any need that may arise in my life. I want to believe that I am all that I need when it comes to protecting my family and me. I want to give myself a whole lot more credit than I deserve when things are going well, and I want to reserve the right to complain to God when things aren't quite going my way. That's not really an option, is it? Jesus is our Everlasting Father.

There is a final title for the Messiah that is given to us in Isaiah 9:6. And that is "Prince of Peace."

### **4. Prince of Peace**

In Israel, "Shalom," is a common greeting. It's the Hebrew word for Peace. Jesus is our Prince of Peace, our Shalom. He is the one who brings peace to the broken relationship that man has with God. He is our Life Calmer.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 5:1, “1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Do you have peace with God today? In the midst of this crazy, chaotic life that we live, are you experiencing any peace? Or does your life feel like a Black Friday mob full of stress barreling down on you. Listen, apart from God, life makes no sense. You were created by Him to have fellowship with Him. Try to live your life apart from Him and you will be miserable.

When Jesus arrived on planet earth, the angels rejoiced. In Luke 2:14 we read the words of the angels to a group of shepherds, “14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

What are you struggling with today? Where do you need Jesus to bring peace into your life? Do you believe that he can do it?

In Luke 2:11, the angels had another name for Christ. It’s Savior.

## **5. Savior**

11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

Is Jesus your Savior today? If not, why not trust Him with your life.

When I was in college, a guest speaker came to our school and preached about who Jesus is. He is the greatest gift the world has ever received, but He is so much more. He is Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, the Savior of the world, King of Kings and Lord of Lords; but He is so much more. I recently found what I believe is part of the text that the preacher that I heard in college said. I want to conclude this Christmas Eve message with his words. Maybe they will help you understand Christ even better.

“If you want to know what God looks like take a good look at Jesus. Jesus Christ shines through the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation. He is the answer to all of humanity’s problems. He is the full revelation of the Creator, and you see His face in all the pages of the Scripture.

In the Book of Genesis He is the Seed of a woman. In the Book of Exodus, He is the Passover Lamb. In Leviticus, He is the High Priest. In Numbers, He is the Smitten Rock. In Deuteronomy, He is the Prophet. In Joshua, He is the Captain of the Lord of hosts. In Judges, He is the Great and Final Judge. In Ruth, He is the Heavenly Kinsman. In Samuel, He is the Anointed One. In the Book of Kings, He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. In Chronicles, He is the Glory of the temple of God. In Ezra, He is the Teacher who comes from God. In Nehemiah, He is the Rebuilder of broken lives. In

Esther, He is the Protector of His people. In Job, He is the only Comforter in times of trouble. In the Book of Psalms, He is the Good Shepherd. In Proverbs, He is the Wisdom of God. In Ecclesiastes, He is the Preacher of the Kingdom of God. In the Song of Solomon, He is the Bridegroom who's coming back soon to His Bride, the Church. In Isaiah, He is the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. In Jeremiah, He is the Potter that shapes the clay of our lives into the image of God. In Lamentations, He is the Weeping Prophet. In Ezekiel, He is the Wheel in the middle of the wheel.

In Daniel, He is the Son of Man who's coming in the clouds—He's also the fourth member in the fiery furnace. In Hosea, He is the Love of God for a backslider. In Joel, He is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. In Amos, He is the Author of judgment and of mercy. In Obadiah, He is the God of vengeance. In Jonah, He is the Salvation of the Lord. In Micah, He is the great Intercessor. In Nahum, He is the Stronghold in the day of trouble. In Habakkuk, He is the God of mercy. In Zephaniah, He is the Establisher of the Kingdom of God upon the earth. In Haggai, He is the Desire of All Nations. In Zechariah, He is the Branch of Joseph, or Jehovah. In Malachi, He is the Refiner's Fire, the Son of Righteousness that shall rise over all the world with healing at His wings. That's only in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, in Matthew, He's the kingly Messiah. In Mark, He's the Miracle Worker. In Luke, He's the Great Physician. In John, He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. In Acts, He is the Risen Lord. In Romans, He's our Justification. In Corinthians, He is our Purification and Sanctification. In Galatians, He is our Liberation. In Ephesians, He's our Perfection. In Philippians, He is our Joy. In Colossians, He's the Head of the Body, the Church. In Thessalonians, He's the Coming Lord. In Timothy, He's the Judge of all men. In Titus, He's the Redeemer of the world. In Philemon, he's the Friend who sticks to you closer than a brother. In Hebrews, He's the Author and the Finisher of our faith. In James, He's the Healer of all nations. In Peter, He is the Chief Shepherd and the Bishop of our souls. In John, He's the Word of God. In Jude, He is Coming with ten thousands of His saints to judge the earth. In Revelation, He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of Jesse, the Lamb of God, the Word of God, King of kings and Lord of lords."<sup>4</sup>

That's our God! That's the gift that was given to you at Christmas! I hope you'll trust Him as your Savior and Lord today!

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.leadingtheway.org/site/DocServer/SpecOffer\\_WPC.pdf?docID=1682](http://www.leadingtheway.org/site/DocServer/SpecOffer_WPC.pdf?docID=1682)