

## Something Special

Series: Just Want We Needed

Isaiah 9:6; Luke 2:1-20

December 24, 2016

Christmas Eve. It's a special night. A night that we celebrate the birth of a baby. Of course, the birth of a baby is always special. New life. So precious. So delicate. So fragile. Endless possibilities. A wide open future. Will they become a doctor? An athlete? Someone who discovers the cure to cancer? A teacher? Heaven forbid, a preacher.

But on Christmas Eve, we celebrate the birth of the Christ child, the Son of God come to earth. And unlike most newborn babies where we don't know if they will be right handed or left handed, a singer or a screecher, a dog or cat person, who and what this Christ child would be was announced even before He was born.

When Mary was told the news, the angel said, "He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"<sup>1</sup>

When Joseph was told, the angel said, "For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."<sup>2</sup>

There was another announcement of this special baby's birth, but this one came hundreds of years before, and was pronounced through the prophet Isaiah:

*The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine... For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*<sup>3</sup>

Isaiah tells us that this child born this night will change everything. He will turn our darkness, no matter how deep, into light.

And this child will be called four things because of what He does.

First, **Wonderful Counselor**.

The term "Wonderful" refers to the acts of God as being incomprehensible, marvelous or miraculous. This use of "wonderful" comes closer in meaning to something like "supernatural" or beyond human ability<sup>4</sup>.

I'm certain that tomorrow morning, many children will find some action figures under the tree. Myra and I bought some wrestling action figures for a boy we know once. He loved wrestling.

But the real action figure – the one who's not fake or made up or some fantasy – is the One that was born in a manger this night, and He was supernatural:

- He healed the blind, the lame, the deaf.
- He caused storms to cease and demons to flee.
- He raised people from the dead.

That's supernatural. That's Wonderful.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 1:32-33 (NLT)

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 1:20-21 (NLT)

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 9:2,6 (NLT)

<sup>4</sup> Compare Judges 13:18

Isaiah also uses the term “Counselor”, which carries with it the idea of one who determines upon a plan of action and carries it out.

He is to be our Wonderful Counselor. This is the intimate personal Savior, who offers us wisdom, insight and advice.

We all need a counselor at one time or another. We solicit the advice of friends or family.

But Jesus has the credentials to be our counselor because He is completely trustworthy and wise. And as a Wonderful Counselor, He is understanding. The writer of Hebrews said, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin.”<sup>5</sup> Jesus understands because He has been through the things you are going through.

He is a Wonderful Counselor because He is someone who really cares. The Bible says, “Give all your worries and cares to [Him], for He cares about you.”<sup>6</sup>

The Wonderful Counselor hears our every problem, every anxiety, every fear. The intimate Jesus holds our hand when we are lonely or hurting, offers us His shoulder to cry on when we are sad. The Wonderful Counselor is the Jesus who “walks with me and talks with me.”

We can count on Jesus to be our Wonderful Counselor.

The second title Isaiah gives the Messiah is “**Mighty God.**” This term is applied to God several times in the Old Testament.<sup>7</sup> In it is an expectation of power. The word “mighty” was commonly associated with warfare and has to do with the strength and vitality of a successful warrior. And calling this child “God” is a prophecy regarding the divinity of Jesus Christ. He will be the all-powerful God himself!

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 God.” We sing the chorus:

*Savior, He can move the mountains*

*My God is mighty to save, He is mighty to save.*

Our true enemy is Satan and the unseen powers of evil that have permeated every level of existence in our world. Christ is the Mighty God who has defeated and conquered these powers through His work on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. Christ is our victorious king who has already triumphed over the evil powers of this world!

*Forever, Author of Salvation*

*He rose and conquered the grave*

*Jesus conquered the grave*

Because of this, we can expect Jesus to continue to give us victory over our struggles. As a “Mighty God”, He will deliver us safely from the wars we wage against the embarrassing temptations we have a difficult time getting under control. Have any of

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<sup>5</sup> Hebrews 4:15 (New International Version)

<sup>6</sup> 1 Peter 5:7 (New Living Translation, Second Edition)

<sup>7</sup> Deuteronomy 10:17; Isaiah 10:21; Jeremiah 32:18

those? I sure do. He will deliver us from laziness, bad habits, confrontations with family, and confrontations with people with whom we do business. He is the Mighty God!

The third title Isaiah gives is **Everlasting Father**. This was not a common reference for God in Hebrew tradition, but the image itself implies a concern for the helpless and a genuine caring that sometimes must take the form of discipline for the people. “Everlasting” points to a promise of kingdom that will never end.<sup>8</sup> “Father” refers to the enduring, compassionate, fatherly care of the Messiah to his people.

The Gospel writer Matthew records, “When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”<sup>9</sup>

The Gospel of Luke tells us this story:

*In one of the villages, Jesus met a man with an advanced case of leprosy. When the man saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground, begging to be healed. “Lord,” he said, “if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean.” Jesus reached out and touched him. “I am willing,” he said. “Be healed!” And instantly the leprosy disappeared.<sup>10</sup>*

Jesus provides the care we need and promises to be the protector of our lives. We can count on Jesus to be our Everlasting Father.

There’s one last title given in this verse: **Prince of Peace**. A “Prince” is a leader, military commander or noble. “Peace” is the world “shalom” which means the absence of strife, completion, fulfillment or wholeness resulting in unimpaired relationships.

You see, Jesus has first brought peace to a once broken relationship with God. Romans 5:1 says:

*“Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.”<sup>11</sup>*

This peace is part of God’s great Christmas present: a completely unimpaired relationship with God. What once was broken by sin and impossible to restore, has been completed by Jesus Christ, on the cross he cried, “It is finished!” Peace with God!

He also provides “peace on earth.” That’s what the angels announced to the shepherds on the night Christ was born.

*“Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”<sup>12</sup>*

Peace in the midst of the most chaotic times of Christmas. Jesus comes to give us peace in the midst of the things we cannot control. Peace on earth... including the space of it that you and I occupy!

This Messiah, God’s gift to us is a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. It’s just what we needed.

The question tonight is this: will you allow this Child – this Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace – into your life. Will you come out of the darkness and into His light? Will you accept His gift for you?

Pastor Mark Beard tells the following story:

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<sup>8</sup> See Isaiah 9:7

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 9:36 (New Living Translation, Second Edition)

<sup>10</sup> Luke 5:12-13 (NLT)

<sup>11</sup> Romans 5:1 (New Living Translation, Second Edition)

<sup>12</sup> Luke 2:14 (New Living Translation, Second Edition)

I first noticed him as he shuffled past me while making his way through the crowd of excited children swarming around the room at the school for deaf and blind children outside Saigon, Vietnam. He moved slow, but steady. His arms and legs were twisted and drawn in such a way that made it impossible for him to maneuver quickly through all the activity. As he passed by me, I noticed a single golden-brown teddy bear dangled limply from the tight clutch of one hand – flopping up and down with each movement he made.

He was different among those who were different. He did not fit among those who did not fit with others.

Seeing he had only one gift and the other children embracing many, I remembered a nearby bag of toys, and with the intent of getting the boy more toys to enjoy, I turned from him and made my way through the crowd. Filling my hands with gifts, I turned back only to find that the boy was gone.

I knew I had seen him. He was just there. So, I began to search the room for him. He was nowhere to be found. Outside in the courtyard I searched. He was not there. Where had he gone? “He could not have moved that quickly,” I thought. But he had.

Doing my best to communicate with people who spoke another language or with those who spoke not at all, I tried to ask where the boy had gone. Nothing but confused stares were given. Finally, in desperation, I mimed the way in which he walked and the way in which his arms were bent and pointed to a boy nearby. Some of the deaf children, watching my poor attempt to communicate, suddenly responded with wide-eyed enthusiasm and smiles and motioned for me to stay there and wait. Then, running from the room in different directions they set off in search of the boy, only to return empty-handed and apparently bewildered about his whereabouts.

The message was quickly relayed to other children and to the teachers, each responding as if they knew where to find him. Finally, a rapid tapping on my arm and a pointed finger directed my attention down the sidewalk to the boy I sought being led arm-in-arm by one of the teachers. He shuffled as quickly as he could, apparently excited by the prospect that someone was looking for him.

“Why had he left and returned to his dorm room with only one gift when so many were available?” I questioned in my mind. Later, I thought about how his physical limitation – coupled with his other limitations – perhaps had been a deciding factor in choosing to take what he could and go. Perhaps he had been overwhelmed by the excitement and quick movements of the other children as they ran from place to place with hands and arms filled with gifts and indulged themselves in the Christmas-morning-like atmosphere? Maybe he thought no one would miss him, or worse, that no one would care if he stayed.

In contrast to the other children, he had just one hand that he could control enough to grasp a single stuffed bear. With that he would have to be content. Maybe, in his mind, having received anything at all is better than possessing nothing at all. Better to take what little he could hold and slip silently away. Better to assume what was for others was not for him than to lose what little he had been given. Even in the act of receiving gifts he must have felt out of place.

Alone in his dorm room, he had no idea that someone was looking for him and wanting to give him more. But, as I filled his pocket with toy cars and gave more to others to be carried for him, he knew there was more for him.

This human condition is seen more often than one might think. Lost among the masses, ready to receive and hoping to receive so much, are those who live their lives expecting to be overlooked – expecting to be left out. Their “infirmity” is that they feel different and inadequate. They do not fit or at least they feel as if they do not fit. For them, it is easier to fade away, to slip out of the room, to assume that the happiness and gifts of life are for others – not for us.

But there is One who searches for us. It is too late to hide ourselves. It is needless to hide our weaknesses. He has seen us in all our frailty. He knows us for what we are and it does not matter to him. We cannot escape Him. We can only fail to respond to His call. With Him, our receiving is only about our response to Him and what is being offered, which is far more than we can ever imagine.

Something special was born on this night, and you can receive His gift for you.