

### Advent 3 – Isaiah 9:2-7 – And His Name will be Called

“What’s in a name?” That famous question comes from Shakespeare’s play Romeo and Juliet. In the story, Juliet asks, “What’s in a name?” because she’s not able to tell her family about her love for Romeo. Juliet is from the Capulet family and Romeo, who she loves, is from the rival Montague family. The play is set during the Italian Renaissance. It was a time of intrigue and danger, a time when family rivalries were often violent. It wasn’t safe for Juliet, with the name Capulet, and Romeo, with the name Montague, to let their families know about their love for one another.

So “what’s in a name?” From Juliet’s perspective, Romeo’s family name is the reason their love is forbidden. She’s asking, how significant can a name really be? She goes on to say that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet. In other words, wouldn’t Romeo be the same person without the name Montague? And without that name, couldn’t the two lovers marry openly?

Juliet is right about the unfairness of the circumstances that she and Romeo find themselves in. And while it’s true of a rose that you could call it anything and it would still smell sweet...is it really so simple when it comes to a person? Can you simply remove the name Montague from a person – and remove all that comes with being a part of that family? See fair or not, a name becomes knit together with relationships and history and expectations. And that’s the real reason that Romeo and Juliet can’t let their families know about their love. The problem isn’t so much the name Montague or Capulet. It’s everything that comes with those names. It’s everything they represent.

Names have significance. We find that idea again and again in the Bible. Ecclesiastes 7 verse 1 is an example. It tells us that “A good name is better than precious ointment.” Now in our day, ointment might be practical. It might help with healing your skin. But in ancient Israel, ointment was *valuable*. It was *precious*. More than just medicinal, it was also used to anoint people’s heads during times of celebration. And it was used to anoint the deceased. Ointment was worth a lot of money in the ancient world, but it was precious because of its connection to the richest human experiences, times of rejoicing and times of mourning.

And yet, “a good name” we are told, “is better than precious ointment” (or a good ointment). So a name is to be greatly valued. A good name could be a great blessing. On the other hand, the wrong name – and all that’s comes with it – can bring great anguish. That’s what Romeo and Juliet discovered.

So when we read **Isaiah 9:6** and we hear the words “And His name will be called...” it’s as if great trumpets are sounding. These words should catch our attention because names are important in the Bible. I’ll read the whole verse:

#### Isaiah 9:6

**For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.**

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. These four names will be our focus today. Last week we took a wide view and considered at some length, the historical background of the early chapters of the book of Isaiah. This week we're going to take a more focused approach. We won't covering as much breadth, but we'll be looking into these four names with some depth. In fact, you could sum up the whole message for today with the four names for our Lord Jesus that you just heard: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

To that end, I'll be as concise as I can with the context. If you've been with us the last couple of weeks, you'll recall that Isaiah is God's prophet. He's preaching truth to God's people during a time of great sin and division. Our reading today began in Isaiah 9:2 with: **The people who walk in darkness**. This is a fair description for God's people at this time, about 700 years before the birth of Jesus. The nation of Israel at this time is divided into a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom known as Judah. By the time Isaiah preaches, the kingdom has been divided for about 200 years. So in this time of darkness and division and sin, the message of a future hope was especially profound.

**The people who walk in darkness...will see a great light;  
Those who live in a dark land,  
The light will shine on them.  
You shall multiply the nation,  
You shall increase their gladness;  
They will be glad in Your presence  
As with the gladness of harvest,  
As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.**

Then the verses that follow, 4 and 5, demonstrate God's power in victory. God will ultimately be victorious over the enemies that oppress His people Israel. You'll hear a mention of the battle of Midian. It's a battle mentioned in the book of Numbers. We're not going to take the time to look at it closely today. But what the battle of Midian demonstrated was God's great power to deliver His people to victory when they were greatly outnumbered. This mention of the battle of Midian sets the stage for the promise of **the child who will be born, the son who will be given**. Because it's through this child – this child who is called by four names - that God will deliver everlasting victory to his people.

Here are verses **4 and 5**

**For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders,  
(In other words, the Lord will destroy the burden that lies upon His people)  
The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian.**

**For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult,  
And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.**

Two weeks ago we considered that that light of Jesus enters into a world overwhelmed with sinful darkness. Last week, we looked at how the promise of Immanuel was delivered to a wicked king during a troubled time in the history of God's people. The arrival of the promise found in **Isaiah 9, verses 6 and 7** follows this same pattern. See just as light chose to enter our darkness and just as the promise of Immanuel, meaning *God with us*, came to us when our hearts were far from God...likewise, the promised child of verse 6 appears against a backdrop of warrior's boots in battle. The promise arrives set against a cloak that is rolled in blood and then burned.

It's a dramatic entrance. And one desperately needed in our tumultuous world. **(Ver. 6 and 7)**

**For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;  
And the government will rest on His shoulders;  
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father,  
Prince of Peace.  
There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,  
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness  
From then on and forevermore.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.**

Wow, what's in a name? Back in verse 4 we had an image of a yoke bearing down on God's people. In verse 5, a battle raged. But suddenly the promise of a child named Wonderful Counselor enters the picture. A child named Mighty God. Named Eternal Father. Named Prince of Peace...and now what happens? **Verse 7**

**There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace.**

We began with oppression, violence and chaos and through this child, we arrive at a peaceful government without end. We have to know more about this child.

Wonderful Counselor

Let's start with the first of the four names, Wonderful Counselor. Now in another chapter **Isaiah, in 28:29** we get a clue as to how significant this name might be.

**Isaiah 28:29** refers to God's work to refine his people. The Lord helps us to grow to spiritual maturity through great challenge. And here's what it says. Chapter 28, verse 29.

**This (the work that God is doing in us) also comes from the Lord of hosts,  
who has made His counsel wonderful and His wisdom great.**

Did you catch a couple of familiar words there? We are told that the Lord of hosts, the Lord over all the unseen angelic beings and powers, in other words – His counsel is wonderful. That sounds a lot like Wonderful Counselor. These words provide a strong connection between Isaiah 9:6 and Isaiah 28:29. This is a strong indication that this Son is more than an ordinary Son, it's a clue that the Lord of hosts has chosen to reveal himself on earth as a child, as a son.

Something else to keep in mind with the name Wonderful Counselor. In the Bible, the word *wonder* is commonly associated with miracles. Now, words change over time and in our day the word “wonderful” often just means something like “nice”. Think of something you might hear like, “The weather outside is *wonderful*” (Whether or not you’d consider that true this morning, that’s a common example of how the word is used today). “The weather’s nice outside”. Wonderful can more or less mean “nice”, right? “How was lunch?” “It was wonderful.” In other words, the word “wonderful” is pretty tame in our day. It doesn’t necessarily pack a lot of power or significance.

But again, in the Bible “wonder” meant much more than “nice or pleasant”. In the Bible, something *wonderful* is something that causes people to be amazed or astonished. So this Son who comes to offer us counsel is not merely “nice and pleasant”. In fact, we are going to be *amazed and awestruck* by His counsel.

And we find people *awestruck* by the counsel of the Son, Jesus Christ, in **Mark 1:22**. Mark 1:22 describes the response of people in the synagogue to Jesus. In other words, this is the response of people who are familiar with God’s word. Here’s what it says in **Mark 1:22**

**And they were astonished at his teaching, for He taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.**

Jesus, the Son, brings *wonderful counsel* in his teaching. People respond to Jesus’ words with astonishment and wonder. People are awestruck that a man ordinary in appearance could teach with such authority, unlike any teacher they’ve heard before.

Now, with His teaching and counsel, Jesus offers more than authority and a power to leave people awestruck. We can consider the compassion he showed in John chapter 9. That’s where he shows compassion to parents of a man born blind, and where he heals the man as well. We can recall the mercy Jesus showed to the Samaritan woman at the well in John chapter 4. For the sake of time we’re not going to take a deep look at those examples today. But I mention them to make clear that while Jesus’ wonderful counsel *is* astonishing and does demonstrate his great authority, this counselor is also a reservoir of deep compassion. He eases weary hearts. He heals. He reaches out and grants dignity to those who society calls unworthy.

Wonderful counsel brings all of those qualities together. And no one is more worthy of the title Wonderful Counselor than Jesus Christ.

## Mighty God

Our next name for Jesus the Son is Mighty God. Now it's profound that God chose to reveal this name, or this title for Jesus 700 years before His birth. Because really any number of people born over the years could be said to be wonderful counselors. But declaring a child to be Mighty God raises the stakes quite a bit.

And, there are many places in the Bible we could look to that confirm the Son Jesus is, truly, the Mighty God. The first three verses of John's gospel come to mind as one of the clearest examples.

**John 1:1-3** are as follows

**In the beginning was the Word (the Word, in this case, refers to Jesus), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.**

Isaiah 9 points forward to a child, to a son who will be called Mighty God. John chapter 1 affirms that Jesus, the Word, is the Mighty God. In perfect agreement with God His Father and God the Spirit, Jesus created our world. All things came into being through Him.

The Bible records many other examples of Jesus' power. I mentioned His power to heal earlier. Mark chapter 6 records His power to calm a storm. Again and again, in the New Testament, we see a fulfillment of the promise made in Isaiah with this name Mighty God. Jesus is, clearly, and unmistakably, the Mighty God.

## Eternal Father

He is also, as we find with our next name, the Eternal Father. Now Mighty God gave us plenty of clarity, I think, as far as the identity of Jesus. Judaism and Christianity have always been crystal clear that there is only one God. **Deuteronomy 6:4** declares this very plainly:

**Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!**

So giving the name Mighty God to Jesus the Son leaves no doubt as to who He is. And yet somehow naming Him Eternal Father seems to stretch and strain our minds even a bit more. And that's especially true if we reflect again on the beginning of Isaiah 9:6. "A child will be born to us, a son will be given to us...(I'm going to skip just a bit now for emphasis)...and His name will be called...Eternal Father. A Son will be given to us...and His name will be called Eternal Father. It's actually a little jarring when we remove some of the words in the middle and pare it down to that. A Son will be named Eternal Father. And let's not lose sight of how jarring this truth is. Let's not cease to be started by this, let's not stop marveling at it. Just as we've seen with our other examples, the New Testament affirms, it declares that Jesus is one with the

Eternal Father. As odd as it may sound to name a Son a Father, the Bible affirms this. In **John 10:30**, Jesus says plainly and simply:

**I and the Father are one.**

**John 14:11** expands on this stunning idea a bit. This is what Jesus says in **John 14:11**

**Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me.**

And in an abundance of His love, the Lord welcomes His people into this stunning relationship with the Father and the Son. In **John 17:21**, Jesus asks

**That they may all be one** (He's referring to His people) Jesus is asking **that** (His people) **may all be one** (and He goes on) **even as you, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.**

So marvel at the fact that the Son in Isaiah 9 is named Eternal Father. And marvel at the fact that Jesus the Son is in the Father and that the Father is in the Son. And don't forget to marvel that the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son welcome mere human beings into the rich love of their relationship. And the Lord welcomes us in for eternity.

By the grace of God. Through faith in the Son who died for our sins and rose from the grave, we can enjoy the fullness of God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit – we can enjoy the loving embrace of the One True God – for all of eternity. Again, Jesus says:

**Even as you, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us.**

So as you take time in the coming weeks, as you set aside time to enjoy the presence of Jesus. Be sure to reflect on this heavenly trinity that is yours to enjoy in Christ. As you take time to adore Jesus. Last week we sang the well known line from the carol, *O Come Let Us Adore Him!* Set time aside simply to adore Jesus the Son. Embrace the Eternal Father. Enjoy the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Our triune God, three yet one, draws us into His presence. And His is a presence we should always set time aside to enjoy, especially in this season.

### Prince of Peace

And I hope very much that you can find joy and peace in this season. I took time out when I was preparing this message to pray for each of you personally. And I asked the Lord that He would help you to find a deep and rich peace in Him this Christmas season. Holidays come with all the ordinary pressures and challenges of life. And sometimes pile even more pressures on top of the ordinary. Christmas in particular is often bound to a lot of expectations. And sometimes those can be hard to fulfill. So I'm praying for each of you that you will find a deep peace in the Lord this Christmas season, even if the day to day challenges and to-dos don't look like peace on the surface.

And it's a good time to be praying for that peace because we find that our fourth name for Jesus in Isaiah 9:6 is Prince of Peace. And peace is something that we long for all the more in times when it seems to be in short supply.

Furthermore, the relationship between Jesus and peace can be a little bit confusing. Now in part that's because our day-to-day lives as Christians don't feel like we're just floating along on a cloud. It's not as if from the day you become a Christian that you're able to respond to everything that comes your way in perfect peace. That's part of it. But the relationship between Jesus and peace can also be confusing because of some of the things that the Bible says.

**Matthew 10:34** gives us a clear example of this. This is Jesus speaking to his disciples. And here's what He says in **Matthew 10:34**

**Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household.**

So how could a man who the Bible calls the Prince of Peace say something like that? Well, in a world that is under the influence of sin, faith in Jesus will result in opposition. Sometimes, sadly, that opposition, can even take place within a family. If that weighs particularly heavily on you, if you can relate to tension in your own life, even within your own family, you are not alone. Jesus Himself experienced this. At the beginning of His ministry, His own family was very skeptical of Him. The initial doubt of Jesus' own family comes up a number of times in the New Testament. Jesus speaks to it in **Mark 6:4** when He says that

**"A prophet is not without honor (in other words, a prophet *is* honored) except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household."**

If you feel an absence of peace this Christmas season because of tension with someone in your family. Or even maybe because of opposition to your faith within your family. If you feel that, it's a really hard and difficult thing, for sure. But understand that Jesus knew that feeling too. Continue to pray faithfully for your family members. God may open their eyes to the truth, just as He ultimately did with Jesus' own family members.

And also know that the Prince of Peace offers us peace *even* in the midst of the strains that come with our relationships, whether they involve family or anyone else. That's why in **Philippians 4:7**, the apostle Paul can assure believers that

**The peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

Isaiah can rightly call Jesus the Prince of Peace because the peace he brings surpasses all comprehension. Even in the midst of life's tensions and challenges, Jesus can bring you peace

by guarding your heart and mind simply in *who He is*. He will guard your heart and mind in His presence and in His power.

And of course, there's another reason why Jesus is called the Prince of Peace. We've spent a lot of time today on Isaiah 9:6 because that's where these powerful names are found: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. And then consider what comes next in **verse 7**:

**There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace.**

There will be no end to the increase of Jesus' government, in other words, no end to the increase of his righteous reign, or of peace. And I think this truth is reflected in our present day, as Jesus' kingdom expands and grows through the faithful response of His people...it also points to a glorious day that is yet to come.

Because while it is possible to know a profound peace in the Lord Jesus Christ right here and now. While it's possible to know this peace in the midst of all the uncertainty and difficulties we face. While this peace is available presently, Jesus is not done bringing peace to His people. He's not content with just this kind of peace we can know right now.

Because one day this child born to us in a manger 2000 years ago is going to return. And when He does, He'll have another title that's not mentioned in Isaiah 9:6. **King**. The precious child who came into this world declared Wonderful Counselor, declared Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. He will return one day as King. And when he does, his triumph over evil will be total and complete. And **Philippians 2:10** reminds us that when the King returns, every knee will bow before Him. And so now is the time to decide. When our wonderful, mighty, eternal king returns, are you going to be kneeling down before Him as your judge or as your savior? Because for now, we still have time to contemplate the claims of the Bible. What does it mean that Jesus is a Wonderful Counselor? What does it mean to say He brings peace? We have the grace to weigh these questions right now and to consider how we might respond to them. But a day is coming when the fate and future of every person will be sealed.

And at that point those who have rejected Jesus will never know peace. All they will ever know from that point forward will be God's wrath against their sin. But those who have humbled themselves before Jesus and admitted their need for His forgiveness, those who have faithfully persisted by His grace, those saints will know true and lasting peace.

Revelation chapter 21 gives us a glimpse of the peace that can be forever ours in Jesus. And it is just a glimpse. As powerful as these words are, they can't fully convey what it will be like to worship and know Jesus forever. But they give us a taste. And I hope it's a taste that excites you. Because as Isaiah reminds us, there will be *no end* to the reign of the Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the reign of the true King.

**Revelation 21**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready for a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be any crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

Then one of the angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.

Let's pray together.