

Advent 2018

His Name Shall Be...
Wonderful Counselor

Isaiah 9:6

1. *Emotional*

2. *Governmental*

3. *Legal*

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West Valley Church
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You made it! You survived the Fall, you've survived Thanksgiving with the stress of meal prep and entertaining and putting up with your uncle who always wants to argue politics at the table. You've survived "Black Friday" with the traffic and crowds with your sanity intact and your shopping list filled (right?). You got all your Christmas decorations up, lit the candles and put your feet up. You are now ready to relax and enjoy the Advent season.

We're here to help you do that! There are special things going on in every Sunday morning service during this month, along with special events that you can attend, be blessed by, participate in, and invite your friends to. And our Sunday series for this month is called, "He Shall Be ..."

We will be looking at the birth announcement for Jesus. Most birth announcements are sent in the mail *after* the baby is born, but in Jesus' case, one of his birth announcements was given about 750 years *before* he was born, by the prophet Isaiah:

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.

Of the greatness 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. (Isaiah 9:6-7, niv)

During this Advent month we will be digging a little deeper into what those names meant about Jesus, what he came to do, and what that means for us. Of course, these are not the only names for Jesus; but we will just be looking at Isaiah's birth announcement for Jesus. The preacher Billy Sunday once said, "There are two

hundred and fifty-six names given in the Bible for the Lord Jesus Christ, and I suppose this was because He was infinitely beyond all that any one name could express.”¹

Knowing Jesus’ different names is important, because names in Scripture identified the character of the person. So keep in mind that these names we are looking at tell us about Jesus – who he is, what motivates him, and what he will do in our lives.

This is Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. Not just another prophet. Not just another Rabbi. Not just another wonder-worker. He was the one they had been waiting for: the Son of David and Abraham’s chosen seed; the one to deliver us from captivity; the goal of the Mosaic law; Yahweh in the flesh; the one to establish God’s reign and rule; the one to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, freedom to the prisoners and proclaim Good News to the poor; the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world.

This Jesus was the Creator come to earth and the beginning of a New Creation. He embodied the covenant, fulfilled the commandments, and reversed the curse. This Jesus is the Christ that God spoke of to the Serpent; the Christ prefigured to Noah in the flood; the Christ promised to Abraham; the Christ prophesied through Balaam before the Moabites; the Christ guaranteed to Moses before he died; the Christ promised to David when he was king; the Christ revealed to Isaiah as a Suffering Servant; the Christ predicted through the Prophets and prepared for through John the Baptist.

This Christ is not a reflection of the current mood or the projection of our own desires. He is our Lord and God. He is the Father’s Son, Savior of the world, and sacrifice for our sins—more loving, more holy, and more wonderfully terrifying than we ever thought possible. This is the one who is the Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.²

On this first day of Advent, let’s explore what it means that Jesus is “Wonderful Counselor.”

The name “counselor” has three different meanings, which we will look at, but the name “wonderful” is consistent with all three descriptions of “counselor.” So let’s start by understanding what Isaiah meant when he said that Jesus would be “wonderful” as a counselor.

“Wonderful Counselor” combines the idea of doing something “wonderful and extraordinary and miraculous” (*pele*) with the skill of being a counselor. What this means is that this child, Jesus, will have a life that will demonstrate “miraculous acts of God” as a counselor.

¹ Billy Sunday in a sermon, “Wonderful,” quoted in *The Real Billy Sunday*. Christianity Today, Vol. 33, no. 2.

² Used by Permission Kevin DeYoung, “Who Do You Say That I Am?” from his *DeYoung, Restless, and Reformed* blog (posted 6-10-09)

God himself is the source of all miraculous events, so it means that as Jesus carries out this character or nature of a counselor, he will do so as God.

One thing that is very interesting, by the way, is that if you take the two Hebrew words for “wonderful” – pele - and “counselor,” – sar – and put them together, they sound similar to the name of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III. That was the Assyrian overlord who Jewish King Ahaz trusted to save them in the Syro-Ephraimite War instead of trusting God! God is reminding them of what happens when they don’t trust in him, and that the coming child-God-King will be greater than anything else they might put their trust in.³

So as we look at these aspects of Jesus as counselor, just remember that in each case, Jesus is greater than any other counselor we might trust, and that what Jesus will do for us in these ways is miraculous – beyond natural; it is supernatural. So one of the meanings of the name “counselor” is someone who gives...

1. ***Emotional***

...assistance when a person is undergoing mental or emotional stress—Jesus excels in this meaning. Remember, Jesus is a “*wonderful* counselor,” meaning he is a miraculous and supernatural counselor. So the emotional assistance Jesus can give us is beyond what is humanly possible.

If you were struggling with discouragement or depression, you might seek the help of a “counselor,” wouldn’t you? At least I hope you would. That person may be your pastor, or a psychologist or even a good friend.

Whoever you go to for emotional counsel, a good counselor is “one who can understand your problems and competently provide you with guidance toward a workable solution.”

I’ve had numerous emotional counselors over the years, from mentors to friends to psychiatrists and psychologists. In fact, I’m seeing a psychologist these days as part of treatment at the pain clinic for my headaches that I deal with from the car accident. She helps me to put the pain into the right context, and to manage my response to it so that it doesn’t overwhelm me more than it already does. I’m grateful for the counselor who is helping me.

Years ago there were no psychologists and therapists. Often in those days folks would seek out the counsel of their ministers who pointed them to Christ. If you had a problem, you went to your pastor or some spiritual advisor, like a strong believer or someone who was wise in their faith and in God’s Word. But you know, in the final analysis, no mere human has all the answers for the problems of the soul. Don’t misunderstand me: all healing comes from God, so we *should* go to doctors and counselors. But we also know that emotional counselors deal with the mind and emotions and even the body’s physiology; Jesus deals with the Spirit, the

³ Gary V. Smith, [Isaiah 1–39](#), ed. E. Ray Clendenen, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 240–241.

deepest part of who we are, and that permeates out into every other part of us. Jesus is uniquely, miraculously, qualified to do this.

Last summer we spent Sundays going through the book of Hebrews, and you might remember a passage of Scripture that says:

“Therefore, it was necessary for him (*Jesus*) to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, (*in other words, to become a human, as Jesus did when he was born to Mary...Why? The writer of Hebrews continues*) so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.” (Hebrews 2:17-18, nlt)

Since Jesus Himself was tempted and tested, He knows what we’re going through, and He’s able to HELP us – to counsel us – in those times of tempting and testing.

A couple of chapters later it goes on to say:

“So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.” (Hebrews 4:14-16, nlt)

Jesus will help us when we need it most! These verses tell us there was Someone who was born into OUR world who understands every problem, temptation and difficulty we have ever had. We’ll celebrate His birthday in just few weeks!

In fact, among other things, Christmas should be a reminder that we have Someone who cares because He understands.

Does Jesus know the answer to your problem? I saw a little desk plaque on someone’s desk that said, “I know the answers; it’s the questions I don’t understand.” Jesus, as our counselor, both understands and knows how to fix your problems and struggles—no matter what they are, *and* He knows how to get you THROUGH your problems. He not only knows the ANSWERS, He knows the QUESTIONS.

Help comes with Christmas. Do you need help this Christmas season in some problem or spiritual matter? There’s no one who UNDERSTANDS like Jesus. There’s no one who CARES like Jesus. And there is no one who CAN HELP you like Jesus. That’s one of our goals during the “Comfort and Joy” service tomorrow evening; it’s not only to give you permission to grieve during Christmas, but to help us turn to Jesus with our struggle.

Of course you should go to a counselor if you need to, but ultimately, NO ONE understands or can help you like someone who has been where you’ve been—and Jesus has “been there” wherever you are right now in your life.

So go to HIM with your need for encouragement and solace and help.

Second, notice that the word “counselor” has a...

2. **Governmental**

...perspective and Jesus is a wonderful counselor in that sense too!

You’ll frequently read about a counselor to the President. A counselor in this respect is AN ADVISOR. Now, granted, it is our hope that the President would surround himself or herself with advisors who are more than “yes men” and “yes women,” and not fire them when they disagree.

Abraham Lincoln was a master at this. There’s a New York Times best-selling book about President Lincoln, written by Doris Kearns Goodwin that I read years ago, and it’s called “Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln.” In fact, the movie “Lincoln” that came out a few years ago was based on this historic non-fiction work. At one point she writes, “That Lincoln, after winning the presidency, made the unprecedented decision to incorporate his eminent rivals into his political family, the cabinet, was evidence of a profound self-confidence and a first indication of what would prove to others a most unexpected greatness.”⁴ Lincoln knew he needed advisors.

When the President of the United States is faced with a problem, he or she has almost instant access to some of the finest minds and resources the world has to offer. Virtually all the president has to do is pick up the phone and ask a question and instantly a resource is accessed to provide whatever knowledge is needed. You just hope the president would listen to advisors. The book of Proverbs from the Old Testament reminds us:

“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.”
(Proverbs 15:22, niv)

Well, I want you to know that you and I have access to a greater resource advisor than the President of the United States. We have access to GOD HIMSELF—the wisest person in the universe.

How can we access this incredible counselor?

In Romans 12:2, Paul says:

“And don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”
(Romans 12:2, nlt)

You see, the process of accessing God’s wise counsel is when our minds are transformed and renewed from faulty, worldly, thinking to spiritual thinking. We

⁴ Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (Simon & Schuster, New York, NY, 2006) pg xvi

receive that through reading, and studying, and memorizing and meditating on the Word of God.

When you need advice, it's good to have advisors, and friends, and so on. Just make sure they don't lead you in a direction that is contrary to God's supernatural, wonderful Word!

Psalms 1:1-2 says:

“Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night.” (Psalm 1:1-2, nlt)

The greatest advisor of all is God, who gives us His godly counsel in His Word.

So spend time in God's Word. THAT is where the answers to your questions are. THAT is where you will find counsel for life, for all the decisions you need to make, and for all that you will face.

There's one other meaning of a counselor that this verse has in mind, and that is...

3. Legal

...counsel – that of an advocate—of which Jesus is again wonderfully, supernaturally, miraculously qualified.

There are times in our lives when we need legal counsel. I know that was true for us after my car accident. The person who caused the accident was uninsured and didn't have the resources to be responsible for what he did. On top of that, our insurance was talking about closing the case and even coming after us to be reimbursed for what they had already expended on us – even though it was all in our current (and, we found out, inadequate) coverage. We didn't know what to do, where to go, or what our options were. We had gone to one attorney who told us that there just wasn't enough “meat on the bone” for him to represent us.

At our wits end, and at the prompting of a friend, we tried one more attorney, and that one agreed to represent us. Not only that, they would get paid when we got paid, even though they weren't going to get a lot of money out of it. I asked him, “Why would you represent us, when you and I both know that you aren't going to make as much money from this case as you would with a different case?” He looked me in the eye and said, “Sometimes it's just the right thing to do.” Maybe you've seen the commercial I agreed to do for that attorney – that's why I agreed to do that for them – they provided legal counsel for us because it was the right thing to do, even though they could have spent their time working on a different case that would've made them more money. To have legal counsel who knows the laws and can represent us is an incredible relief and very helpful.

When it comes to our spiritual condition, I'm afraid we are in far worse condition than contending with insurance and reckless motorists. I'm afraid that you and I

have committed crimes against God himself; we have broken his laws. The Bible says that all of us are guilty:

“Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious ideal.” (Romans 3:23, tlb)

...and...

“Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” (James 2:10, niv)

This is horribly bad news; we need an attorney! Christmas is the celebration that our wonderful counselor has arrived:

“Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:2, niv)

Because of what Jesus has done for us, we can be free from sinning and the guilt that came with it. The Apostle John wrote:

“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” (I John 2:1-2, niv)

Praise God, we have an advocate with the Judge! His name is “Jesus Christ the righteous one,” verse one tells us.

When we sin, our sin is covered by what Jesus did when He died on the cross. How do we know that?

Verse two says, “[speaking of “Jesus Christ the righteous one” as verse one calls him] He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” If you remember from our series this fall, the word “atonement” means that what Jesus did for us by dying on the cross and paying the price for our sins is what brings us to “at-one-ment” with God.

Aren’t you glad you have an advocate – an attorney – who represents you with the Father? Where would we be without the one who paid the guilty sentence in our place, the one who stands in our place, before the Father?

Praise God for our advocate before the Father—Jesus Christ, the righteous!

Pray:

1. *Emotional counselor*
2. *Governmental advisor*
3. *Legal advocate*