

## THE HOPE OF CHRISTMAS: Wonderful Counselor<sup>i</sup> Isaiah 9:6-7

### INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is good to see you here today. If you are a guest with us, we want to say a very special welcome to you. I'd love the opportunity to get to know you more. You can help us connect with you by texting the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mount Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you send that keyword, a link will be sent back to you and that will take you to a short form. When you submit that form, it notifies me, and I look forward to following up with you.

Or feel free to swing by our information center located in the fellowship area. There we have a gift we would love to put in your hands as a way of saying thank you for being our guest today. We are thrilled you have chosen to worship with us today.

### SERIES OVERVIEW:

Today we continue our we've called The Hope of Christmas. So far, we've talked through a promise foretold, and a promise fulfilled. Today we are taking a turn in our series as we are going to take the next couple weeks to look at the names of the Messiah mentioned in correlation to Isaiah's prophecy. As I have said before, hope has a name, and we are going to see this over the next few messages. Today we are going to look at Wonder Counselor. Christmas Eve, this Saturday, we will look at a Mighty God, and then on Christmas Day we are going to see that Jesus provides everlasting hope.

With that said, I want to invite you to take your bibles and turn with me to the Old Testament book of Isaiah as we look at the name, "Wonderful Counselor."

### **ILLUSTRATION: Naming Children<sup>ii</sup>**

I know those of you who have recently had children, the whole naming process can be a challenge. What do you name your child? The people you've dated before you got married, those names are out of question, right? Or if there is someone from your childhood who was a jerk, their name is out of question. If your parents struggle pronouncing the name, well you can't go with that one.

Then you have to worry about nick names and names that can be taken as something different. You have to think through things. For example, if your last

name is Mann, you don't want to name your daughter Anita. Or if your last name is Price, Lois might not be a good fit. Anita Mann and Lois Price? Some of you will get it later.

By the time we got to our third child, Reece, we didn't have a name pre-picked. Our oldest, Carsyn, is a name that both Cathy and I liked. Drew is named after his two grandfathers. But for Reece we couldn't decide what to name him. So, I'll tell you what we did.

I was a Student Minister at the time, so I had a brilliant idea. Let's have our students name our child. Let me just tell you, that's not a good idea. We had been bouncing around a few names so I created ballots with those names on the ballot. But I also had a space for a write in name in case they came up with something that we hadn't thought of.

Well, the junior and senior guys teamed up with the Junior and senior girls and all wrote in the same name. When we tabulated the results, guess what name had won? A write in, Rasheed. Now, no offense to Pastor Paul Rashid who joins us from Pakistan each week. But Rasheed is not a common name here in the States, so that was not really an option. So, we settled on Reece.

You know, in biblical days and times, names and titles were very important. And these names given to the Messiah, who we know to be Jesus, in Isaiah's prophecy some 700 years before the birth of Christ, has tremendous meaning.

So, let's begin our time today by looking at the names Isaiah gives for the Messiah in the chapter 9 passage. You read along in your copy of God's Word. Isaiah 9:6 and 7. *<sup>6</sup>For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name [singular, hold that thought in your mind] shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup>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.*

### BACKGROUND:

I want to give us just a little bit of background on what is happening in this passage as I believe it will provide even more insight.

At the time of Isaiah's writing, the Jews were living in a lot of turmoil and fear. The Northern kingdom of Israel had been invaded by the Assyrians, ultimately leading to the fall of that northern kingdom. Many of the people living in that region were taken captive and deported to foreign lands.<sup>iii</sup> Well, Isaiah's prophecy of a coming Savior built anticipation and filled the people with hope.

Isaiah is often called the "Gospel of the Old Testament,"<sup>iv</sup> because of the Good News that it predicts. The term "gospel," means that, good news. The list of names Isaiah mentions in verse 6 of chapter 9, each one is significant and has a hopeful focus.

In verse 6, remember, Isaiah says that His name, singular, shall be called, then he gives a list of multiple names. So, we should view these, not as names, but more as titles.<sup>v</sup> This was common in the ancient world for kings to be named with a series of titles. And what's interesting here is that scholars debate whether there are four, five or even six different titles listed here. But our title of study this morning is, "Wonderful Counselor." Jesus is a wonderful counselor.

### **MESSAGE:**

So, let's begin our study today by breaking those two words down. First,

#### **1) Wonder<sup>vi</sup>**

There are certain words in the English language that we tend to devalue. Wonderful is one of those words. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the term, "wonderful," means marvelous, astonishing. Think about that for a moment. The reason we have lost the value of the word is because we overuse it and apply it to contexts that are not truly worthy of the word.

For example, we will say things like, "I had a wonderful day," or, "I had a wonderful lunch." I've said those things a ton. But think about what we are saying. "My lunch was so amazing, so marvelous, I was astonished, awestruck. You know, that sandwich was so wonderful it left me speechless." Now, I've had some good sandwiches but I'm not sure any sandwich has left me speechless. What about you?

The Hebrew word translated as, "wonderful," in Isaiah 9:6 is a word that carries the meaning of supernatural awestruck, provoking awe.<sup>vii</sup> It's a word to say when there are no words to say.

Let me give you a couple examples of this in the Scriptures to see if we can wrap our minds around it. Psalm 118:23 says, *"<sup>23</sup>This is the Lord's doing; it is **marvelous** in our eyes."* The word translated as, "marvelous," here is the same word translated as, "wonderful," in Isaiah 9.<sup>viii</sup>

Let me give you another example. In Exodus 15:11, Moses says, *"<sup>11</sup>Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing **wonders**?"* Again, the same word as in Isaiah 9. When God does something that only He can do, it is something beyond our ability to understand. It is too wonderful to comprehend.

Because this title is given to Jesus, the conclusion we come to is that even His coming is a marvelous wonder of which there are no words. That was the case at Jesus' birth. Look at Luke 2, beginning in verse 15, for just a second.

*"<sup>15</sup>When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."<sup>16</sup>And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. <sup>17</sup>And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. <sup>18</sup>And all who heard it **wondered** at what the shepherds told them."* It is a word that has the exact same meaning.

To have wonderful as a title carries the idea of that which is supernatural or even divine.<sup>ix</sup> It is yet again a reference to Jesus being Emmanuel, God with us, God incarnate, God in flesh.

And I think, in many ways, Christmas has become too familiar to us. Just like the word wonderful is too familiar. We have lost the full understanding of what Christmas means. When was the last time we were awestruck, speechless, over the birth of Christ?

One commentator I read this week put it this way, *"The Old Testament usage of this word [wonderful] compels us to the conclusion that it here designates the Messiah, not merely as someone extraordinary, but as one who in his very person and being is a wonder. He is that which surpasses human thought and power; he is God himself."<sup>x</sup> May we never lose the wonder of Christmas.*

I want to talk practically for just a second. I feel like we are all like, "Yes and amen," to that. But what is a practical way we can hold onto the wonder of

Christmas? What if you became a little more intentional with your family time at Christmas? More than just open gifts, what if you set the stage for why we open gifts? Here's an idea for you to consider.

Before opening gifts with your family, read the Christmas story in Luke 2, verses 1-20. But more than read it, act it out, even if it's just acting by reading a script. There are 6 characters in the Luke 2 account of the Christmas story. A narrator, angel, shepherds, heavenly hosts, and Mary and Joseph. Give a role to as many as 6 people. If you don't have 6 in your family, have people play a couple roles. When the narrator comes to a person's role, let them act it out. Give an award to the best actor. My hunch is that your family will have fun, but also a slightly different take on Christmas because of that activity.

Jesus has wonder. Secondly, Jesus has...

## 2) Wisdom.

The full title here for the Messiah is a Wonderful Counselor. What do we typically think of when we hear the word counselor? We usually picture a therapist asking us questions and taking notes. We have different types of counselors today. There are financial counselors, marriage counselors, and so forth and so on.

The word translated as Counselor is a word that means to give advice, to guide.<sup>xi</sup> The idea is that a counselor was one that possessed wisdom.

In Old Testament days, a counselor was someone who served on a king's cabinet. They gave strategic advice concerning matters like war, political campaigns, or even business ventures. They provided advice about the best course of action to take for whatever the circumstances were. In order to serve in that capacity, they had to have a great deal of wisdom.

The Proverbs are full of verses that talk about the importance of wisdom and even seeking the wisdom of others. For example, Proverbs 11:14 says, *"<sup>14</sup>Where there is no **guidance** [wisdom], a people falls, but in an abundance of **counselors** there is safety.* Also in Proverbs 15:22. *<sup>22</sup>Without **counsel** plans fail, but with many **advisers** they succeed.* You see the idea here.

Now, remember, Isaiah's prophecy here is about the Messiah, who we know to be Jesus. So, this is a title that is ultimately assigned to Jesus. It is obvious in

the gospel accounts that Jesus demonstrated wisdom during His earthly ministry. In Luke 2:52, we see how those surrounding Jesus viewed him as a teenager. It says, *"<sup>52</sup>And Jesus increased in **wisdom** and in stature and in favor with God and man."* And then when He began teaching in the synagogues, do you remember what they said of Him? Mark 6:2. *<sup>2</sup>And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is the **wisdom** given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands?"*

I think it is important to point out here that there is a difference between the wisdom of this world and the wisdom that comes from Heaven. Remember, the term wonderful carries the idea of being supernatural, heavenly. James 5:15-17 says, *"<sup>15</sup>This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, **but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.** <sup>16</sup>For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. <sup>17</sup>But **the wisdom from above** is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere."* James is clear about the difference between earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom.

Here's a truth, Jesus is more than just wise; He is the source of ALL wisdom. And because that is the case, we must allow Him to be our guide, our counselor. How has Jesus been a guide for you? I can look back on my life and see evidence of The Lord guiding me. Surrounding me with friends in my teenage years that encouraged me down the right paths instead of paths that led to destruction. In my calling to ministry, He guided me, prompted me, and led me. Jesus has convicted me of how I treat my family and others. He corrects me when I allow my thoughts to lead me down an ungodly path. Jesus is truly a wonderful counselor. That's the case for me and I know He desires to be that for you.

So, we've talked about the wonder and the wisdom. Now, in the time we have left, let's talk through the...

## 3) Weight.

When I say weight, I am referring to how Jesus being a Wonderful Counselor should land on us. I want us to feel that, understand that this morning. When you put the two words of this title together, Wonderful Counselor, we understand that Jesus is a supreme advisor that amazes us.

You know, one of the reasons why Jesus is a Wonderful Counselor is because He understands what we are going through.<sup>xii</sup> Hebrews 4:15 tells us, *“<sup>15</sup>For we do not have a high priest [Jesus being our High Priest] **who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses**, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”* Listen, whatever your weakness, whatever your struggle, Jesus has felt the weight of that as well. He’s been through what you’re going through. And He has overcome it. Jesus understands your hurt, your pain, your struggle. Therefore, we need to trust the Wonderful Counselor in all things. The question, then, is how do we do that? Two things. First, ...

#### A) Listen to the Counselor’s Voice.<sup>xiii</sup>

There are all kinds of voices claiming to be a source of wisdom and truth. But as believers in Jesus, it is our responsibility to tune out the wisdom of this world and listen solely to The Counselor’s voice.

In Mark chapter 9, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up on a mountain and He revealed His glory to them, He transfigured Himself. And in the midst of that, God spoke. Mark 9:7. *“<sup>7</sup>And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; **listen to him.**”* I heard one Pastor say, if there’s any three words God wants to say to you today, it’s listen to Jesus. I love that.

In January, I am excited about a new teaching series that we are going to launch. We are going to work our way through the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel. One of the major themes in 1 Samuel is learning to hear God. If there is ever a day and time in which God’s people need to tune out the voices of the world and tune into The Lord, it is now. Amen?!

Listen to the Counselor’s voice, and secondly, ...

#### B) Be obedient to The Counselor.

It is one thing to listen to The Lord and a whole other thing to be obedient to Him. Again, James provides insight here. James 1:22-25. *<sup>22</sup>But **be doers of the word, and not hearers only**, deceiving yourselves. <sup>23</sup>For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. <sup>24</sup>For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. <sup>25</sup>But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, **being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts**, he will be blessed in his doing.*

We need to also understand that hearing and doing what The Lord is asking of us means that sometimes we won’t like what we are being asked to do. Conviction of the Holy Spirit goes against the desires of our flesh. God loves us so much that He tells us what we need to hear even though it’s not what we want to hear. Amen or ouch?!

But because what Jesus speaks to us is truth and wisdom and from Heaven, we would do good to follow that. He is a Wonderful Counselor.

#### CONCLUSION:

Do you know Him as that? To be able to know Jesus as a Wonderful Counselor, you have to have a relationship with Him.

You might ask, “Pastor Chris, how do I have a relationship with Jesus?” Well, the Bible says that we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. As a result, our sin has isolated us from God. To be reconciled to The Lord, our sin must be removed. For this reason, God sent Jesus, His one and only Son, to become the once and for all sacrifice paying the penalty of our sin. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, *“<sup>21</sup>For our sake [for our good] **he** [being God] **made him** [Jesus] **to be sin who knew no sin** [how? On the cross Jesus became our sin. Why?], **so that in him** [Jesus] **we might become the righteousness of God.**”* Righteous being that we are made right with God.

How do we become right with God? Scriptures says that by God’s grace, through faith and trust in the person and work of Jesus, we are forgiven of our sin. It is then that we are born again unto a relationship with Jesus.

Have you been born again? If not, today can be the day of salvation for you. Our elders will be here at the front to receive you and share with you how you can begin a relationship with Jesus.

Perhaps you are here today, and you are in need of a Wonderful Counselor. The trials of life have mounted for you. Perhaps its medical, financial, spiritual, relational, or maybe you’ve fallen on hard times. We would love to pray with you as well.

I’m going to pray, we will stand and sing, and let’s respond to the promptings of The Lord on our hearts. [PRAY]

## ENDNOTES:

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<sup>i</sup> Works consulted in preparation of this message: Alistair Begg, “Wonderful Counselor – Part One,” posted by Truth For Life, December 2, 2007, accessed online: <https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/wonderful-counselor-pt-1/>; Got Questions, “What does it mean that Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor (Isaiah 9:6),” published by gotquestions.org, accessed online: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Wonderful-Counselor.html>; Michael Youssef, “Wonderful Counselor,” article published by Leading The Way, December 15, 2021, accessed online: <https://www.ltw.org/read/my-devotional/2021/12/wonderful-counselor/>; J.D. Greear, “Hope Has A Name: Wonderful Counselor,” sermon preached at Summit Church, accessed online: <https://summitchurch.com/GetFile.ashx?Guid=4b5f9981-bc21-4740-8773-b9c43ec9a797>; Craig Groeschel, “He Shall Be Called #1,” sermon preached at Life Church, accessed online: <https://open.life.church/resources/1304-he-will-be-called/>; Brian Hedges, “Wonderful Counselor,” sermon preached at Redeemer Church in Niles, MI on November 28, 2021, accessed online: <https://redeemer.ch/sermons/wonderful-counselor/>; Todd Wilson, “The Gift of the Son: Wonderful Counselor,” published by Preaching Today, accessed online: <https://www.preachingtoday.com/sermons/sermons/2016/december/gift-of-son-wonderful-counselor.html>.

<sup>ii</sup> Inspiration for this illustration came from Craig Groeschel’s message.

<sup>iii</sup> Historical background mentioned by Brian Hedges.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> Mentioned by all sources considered.

<sup>vi</sup> Outline inspired by Brian Hedges’ sermon outline.

<sup>vii</sup> Strong’s Concordance, 6382.

<sup>viii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>ix</sup> Brian Hedges.

<sup>x</sup> Edward J. Young, “The Book of Isaiah,” published by Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, 1965.

<sup>xi</sup> Strong’s Concordance, 3289.

<sup>xii</sup> Craig Groeschel.

<sup>xiii</sup> Application points borrowed from Craig Groeschel’s sermon.