

# **NAMING THE CHILD – WONDERFUL COUNSELOR**

***Isaiah 9:1-7***

**Sermon for Peace Church**

**November 30, 2008**

**PURPOSE** – To call people to put their hopes in Jesus by naming Him the “Wonderful Counselor”.

**MAIN IDEA** – We put hope in Jesus through the act of “naming” Him our Wonderful Counselor

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Let’s open our Bibles to Isaiah 9 (p. 1072)

1. Here’s the MOST IMPORTANT Biblical teaching on hope.

DEEPER than anything we ever hope FOR, the focus of Christian hope is WHO I hope IN.

(i) It’s very natural to hope FOR circumstance & situation:

- We hope FOR meaningful vocations / godly spouses for our children
- We hope FOR economic stability for our nation
- We hope for SHALOM in our world
- We hope FOR many things in our personal lives.

A. But here’s what Lewis Smedes says about those hopes:

*One day every circumstance, every situation we’re hoping FOR, is going to wear out, give out, fall apart, melt down, or go away. (Health goes, jobs go, family changes, churches come & go.) When that happens, the question is about your deeper hope .... Your foundational hope ... it’s about your fall-back hope when all your other hopes pass.*

(ii) Therefore what the Bible teaches is to hope IN THE LORD.

- Our foundational hope is IN a PERSON ...  
... and not because He’ll be able to give us this THING or that SITUATION we were hoping FOR – (for those things will eventually pass) ...

We put our hope IN THE LORD HIMSELF ...

... Because we know Him, we trust Him, and we LOVE HIM

2. This call to put our foundational hope IN A PERSON / in THE LORD is reflected in this Scripture passage:

***Read Isaiah 9:1-7***

## **II. ISAIAH 9 BACKGROUND**

1. These words were originally written around 700 B.C..

It was a time when the mighty nation of Assyria was ENCROACHING upon Israel in the north and Judah in the south. (God's people were at that time a divided kingdom.) The Assyrians were a fierce nation. In 722, they CRUSHED Israel in the north – in the land of Zebulun and Naphatali (those tribes were part of Israel, north, near the Sea of Galilee). Israel's defeat was a measure of judgment from God for its sin.

Isaiah was a prophet to the nation of Judah in the south. They too feared the Assyrian power. What CIRCUMSTANCE would their life in the future hold? Would they be destroyed & taken captive?

(i) Into that uncertainty, Isaiah is given from God a WORD OF HOPE:

Beyond the judgment that has come upon Israel, beyond the judgment that will eventually come upon Judah (not by the Assyrians, but by the Babylonians 140 years later), beyond that DARKNESS a light will dawn.

= God's not finished with His people ... THERE'S HOPE

A. In fact, that HOPE will first arise in the Galilee area (v. 4) – the VERY SAME area that was first plunged into the darkness of judgment.

B. Not only will that hope first arise in Galilee, it will “shatter the yoke that burdens God's people” (v. 4); it will abolish the trappings of war (v. 5 – the boot & garment will be fuel for the fire).

2. And here's what this hope is all about: A PERSON, A CHILD, GOD WITH US

- The hopes of the people of God are always IN THE LORD

*“For to us a CHILD is born, to us a SON is given ... and the government of God's Shalom will be on his shoulders.”*

Deeper than anything we ever hope FOR, as God's people ...

... we put our hope IN this RULER / this SON / this CHILD

And HOW do we express our hope in this Son to be born among us?

... BY NAMING THE CHILD: “And he will be called ...

“Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”

### III. NAMING THE CHILD

That is our theme this Advent Season: NAMING THE CHILD

Our hope is in the Lord – and the way that we EXPRESS that hope, LAY CLAIM to that hope, put PERSONAL OWNERSHIP in that hope is by NAMING this child to be born among us!

1. NAMING THE CHILD - In order to better understand this, please open your gray hymnals to # 352.

In most cultures through history, including Hebrew-Biblical culture, naming a child is DEEPLY SIGNIFICANT ACT.

- It still is in present day Western culture, but we sometimes choose names simply because we like the SOUND of them, or because we affiliate them with someone. (I.e. Jordan – popular in the 90’s when there was a basketball player in this area with that name.)

Sometimes people are at a loss for what to name their child and come up with something immediate & creative.

I.e. – I once heard an interview with a college athlete whose name was NOSMO KING (Smith). Interview – “Where’d you get that name?” ... Mom wasn’t sure what to name me – so she looked around her room in the hospital for ideas – saw a sign in the hallway: NO SMOKING.

2. In Biblical culture, and many others through time & place, that’s not how things were done. Naming is a family & COMMUNITY ACT – expressing HOPES & ASPIRATIONS for that child.

(i) This hymn is a reflection of that. “That Boy-Child of Mary”, was written by a Scottish missionary to MALAWI, AFRICA, Tom Colvin. In African culture, names have meanings.

Here’s a commentary on this song from Reformed Worship Journal: *A special naming ceremony takes place in Malawi, usually 8 days after the child is born. Members gather from both sides of the family, along with friends. All who congregate anticipate this festive*

*celebration with joy and plentiful food. After everyone has assembled, the father announces the names for this child that have been collected from both sides of the family and explains the meaning of each name. Some names come from the day of the week on which the child was born, or the child's placement in the family; others are Biblical names, personal attributes, expressions of family hopes, the locale of the child's birth – its place / GROUNDING in the world. A child may have more than 15 names bestowed upon him or her on this occasion, **all of which help to define the IDENTITY of the newborn and his or her relationship with the community.***

- A. Colvin recognized the power of this African “naming-ceremony” for gospel work. So he wrote this baby-naming song to a Malawian tune. The refrain identifies the PLACE of his birth, because for Africans & Hebrews, PLACE of birth has meaning: **Read (sing)**
- B. The Stanzas give us a FEEL for a naming ceremony. **READ STANZAS**

Stanza 1 – What shall we name Him? ...

Stanza 2 – What are His names? ... His name is Jesus

Stanza 3 – What are our hopes?

Stanza 4 – His identity? ...

Stanza 5 – Our response? ....

3. Naming the Child - we want to catch the spirit of this ceremony each Sunday of Advent, here at Peace Church.

(i) Now most naming ceremonies are held AFTER a child has been born (like the Malawian), BUT NOT ALL!

A. One person from our Worship Planning Team gave me this note about Isaiah 9:6 – *“In Egyptian royal culture, CORONATION names were picked out and announced well before the child's birth.”* ... ANTICIPATING THE NATURE OF HIS REIGN!

(ii) In our naming ceremony we're doing BOTH!

Jesus HAS BEEN BORN – by naming Him we're expressing our hopes in Him. He is with us.

But the purpose of Advent is also to build ANTICIPATION for his birth at Christmas AND His coming again to CLOSE this age!

A. So in our Advent services, we're both celebrating (putting our hopes IN the Lord) AND ANTICIPATING his coming again ... ALL BY “NAMING THE CHILD”.

4. What shall we call this child who draws us together here in this place?

Well, the SCRIPTURES give MANY NAMES & TITLES for us to COLLECT & USE ... AND personally STAKE our hopes in this child!

The ones we'll focus on this Advent are those from our passage:

Let's call Him – WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD,  
EVERLASTING FATHER, the PRINCE OF PEACE!

... Today, let's NAME HIM our "WONDERFUL COUNSELOR"

#### IV. WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

1. The Hebrew word translated "wonderful" literally means, "beyond comprehension".

It is the same word used when The Angel of the Lord met Manoah, Samson's father, to confirm that his wife was miraculously pregnant with Samson. And Manoah asked, "What is your name – that we might honor you when your word comes true?"

The angel – a theophany (appearance of God in the Old Covenant) – said, "Why do you ask my name? It is ... BEYOND UNDERSTANDING!"

= It is WONDERFUL ... FULL of WONDER

A. It is the "beyond" of the God who does BEYOND all we ask or imagine (Eph. 3) in prayer.

B. It is the BEYOND of Romans 11 – When Paul marvels at God's way of grafting the whole world into salvation: *"O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and his paths BEYOND tracing out!"*

This child does things in this age BEYOND what we are able to understand, able to see, able to do, to ask or imagine! He is WONDER – FULL!!!

2. Some translations have that as a separate name for the child. Others, like the NIV, tie the adjective to the second title – COUNSELOR – like the other pairs of words we'll look at in the weeks to come. He is the wonderful COUNSELOR.

- This world is often a CONFUSING & OVERWHELMING place. We need COUNSEL.

Plus, there are so many competing voices to say: Here's your problem, here's my solution!

WE NEED SOMEONE TO LEAD US THROUGH THE FOG of this age.

(i) Today, let's name this child our wonderful COUNSELOR – the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

THERE ARE 2 QUALITIES TO A GOOD COUNSELOR:

A. One is SYMPATHY.

This child knows our temptations, our struggles, our challenges.

I.e. – There's nothing that compares to the counsel of one whose "been there" – who has faced the challenges you have in BUILDING MINISTRY ... and ...

Who knows your struggles – physically, emotionally, in grief & pain, rejection, loss.

*"He was despised & rejected by men" – Isaiah 53 – "a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering."*

B. The other quality is WISDOM – the ability to SPEAK TRUTH into your life.

*"He was tempted in all ways, as we are" – Hebrews 4 – "yet was without sin."*

That QUALIFIES Him to speak truth. He didn't CAVE. He knows the paths of true life through this age.

Today He counsels us by His Word & Spirit, "who takes what BELONGS to Jesus (Jn. 16) and makes it known to us!"

He is the wonderful counselor. He'll shoot straight with you – He'll tell us our sin – but do it with a heart of mercy!

(ii) He is the Counselor who turned Zacchaeus from a small-minded, selfish tax collector into a generous, joyful, kingdom-seeker.

He's the Counselor who freed Mary Magdalene from demons that had BOUND HER LIFE;

He's the counselor who trained everyday fishermen to be world-class missionaries.

A. Those with the privilege of sitting nearby Him at the Sermon on the Mount, after he had finished teaching, were AMAZED at his Words (Mt. 7) – because he taught as one who had authority.

He is the WONDERFUL COUNSELOR!

## V. CONCLUSION

So today, LET'S NAME HIM OUR WONDERFUL COUNSELOR in song, in prayer and trust.  
Our hope is IN THE LORD!

1. We will sing: ISN'T HE WONDERFUL – a song that the choir will first lead us through.

And in the spirit of a naming ceremony, we'll UNFURL that name on the EVER-GREEN tree – the tree of eternal life – a Christ-mass tree - a tree of representing salvation.

- (i) Then during the Lord's Supper, we'll all bring our names forward – EVERYBODY – as ornaments to be put on that tree – as a way of expressing OUR HOPE in Him who is our wonderful counselor – today and in every day to come.  
(That's what the ornaments are for – and they'll remain on the tree throughout Advent.)

BEYOND ANY CIRCUMSTANCE OR SITUATION WE MIGHT HOPE FOR ... As Christians, our hope is IN the Lord.

That boy-child of Mary ... born in stable ... a manger His cradle in Bethlehem.

What shall we call Him, the child of the manger?

Let's name Him: OUR WONDERFUL COUNSELOR!!

CHOIR

Song (Banner)

Scripture – Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9 (Tissues)

Song