

NAMING THE CHILD – Mighty God

Isaiah 9:1-7

Sermon for Peace Church

December 7, 2008

PURPOSE – To call people to put their hopes in the Messiah by naming him their Mighty God.

MAIN IDEA – The Messiah is our Mighty God in his power over life circumstance and in his faithful obedience through trial – so we walk with Him through our trials and we trust Him for deliverance!

I. INTRODUCTION

Let's turn in our Bibles to Isaiah 9 (p. 1072)

1. Mary did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water? ... would save our sons & daughters?

She may have ANTICIPATED that her Son would do such things – “the blind will see; the deaf will hear; the dead will live again!” – because her Son, the promised Messiah, was given GREAT NAMES & TITLES in the Old Covenant (which she knew well).

(i) The Messiah would be the: ROSE OF SHARON / the ROOT of JESSE / the MORNING STAR / the PROPHET, the PRIEST, the BANNER for God's people, the ANNOINTED ONE.

- Someone once totaled 360 Biblical names or titles for the Messiah ... who has come & will come again.

2. This Advent we're concentrating on 4 of those names, found in this passage of Scripture:

Read Isaiah 9:1-7

3. NAMING THE CHILD – is the title of our Advent series this year. And we are deliberately designing our response to the Word to be a NAMING CERMONY.

(i) Have you ever been to a baby-naming ceremony?

Probably most of us haven't because they're not common in present-day American culture. (Though it used to be in Western church tradition, at a baby's baptism or "Christening", the given names for the baby were there announced – typically including one that was a Christian name from Scripture. So that sacrament then had a "naming ceremony" feel to it.)

A. In other cultures, however, naming ceremonies are quite common.

- Last Sunday, I used a song from our hymnbook to explain this about AFRICAN culture – written by a missionary to Malawi. "That Boy-Child of Mary" (# 352) ... what shall we name Him? – Let's name Him Jesus, God ever with us, God ever for us!" ... At their naming ceremonies, Malawians give up to 15/20 names to a child expressing identity & hopes for that child.

- Native American culture too has baby naming ceremonies. I read this week that the Dakota tribe usually takes a while to name a child. Upon birth, the baby is given a temporary title, then they'd wait a while to sense the "spirit" of this child, gathering potential names, before ceremonially SEALING the child with an identity, a hope, a calling, a destiny – expressed in his/her given name.

(ii) That's the meaning of a NAMING CEREMONY – to name identity & hope. It's very Biblical.

I.e. – Jesus gets ahold of Simon's life and renames him PETER ... "Petros" = ROCK – on this Rock of a Leader, I will build my church!!

Biblically, names express HOPES / IDENTITY / CALLING

I.e. – You see this in the prophets – "Nahum" = "comfort" – His message was one of consolation for God's people because He would handle their enemies

"Micah" means "who is like the Lord" (the gist of his message & ministry)

"Joel" = the Lord is God; "Habbakuk" = "to clasp / embrace" ... the Lord

- Their names connect to their message & ministry

(iii) A NAMING CEREMONY therefore is a way for us to express hopes FOR & IN a child who has been born or is about to be born.

I.e. - So let's say Travis & Sheena have a little "naming party" at their home. They invite us to come & offer some names for junior (whose now in the womb). They GATHER those names: ISAAC – "laughter" / ELIZABETH – "God is my Oath"

Ernie (potato farmer) / Dennis, Bobby, Stan – future Blackhawk great (Tony, if a goalie)

... we're express dreams & hopes ... and then at a NAMING CEREMONY, they'd SEAL IDENTITY & HOPES by naming the child.

4. For the child who unites us here, his names HAVE BEEN GATHERED.

They are recorded in Scripture for us to both NAME IN HOPE & CLAIM IN FAITH ...
... BECAUSE ... this child whose coming we prepare for ... HAS BEEN BORN!

We name Him in HOPE of His coming again

We name Him in FAITH, as even now present in SPIRIT & WORD.

Last week we named this Messiah our WONDERFUL COUNSELOR.

This week we name Him our MIGHTY GOD!

II. MIGHTY GOD - DEFINED

... EL GIBBOR – is the Hebrew ... “EL” – God ... “GIBBOR” – mighty.

1. This child is GOD HIMSELF with us.

- Don't reduce Him to “an outstanding personage of history” – like modern university-thought.

- Don't reduce Him to a “great prophet”, as the Muslims do.

- Don't even reduce Him to the “greatest of all created beings”, as do Jehovah Witnesses & Mormons and Unitarians

THIS CHILD IS THE ETERNAL GOD WITH US! ... EMMANUEL

“The image of the invisible God” – Col. 1:15 – ... He is before all things, and in him all things hold together ... For God was pleased to have ALL HIS FULLNESS dwell in him.”

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word WAS God – John 1 – the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have beheld His glory – the glory of the One & Only, sent from the Father – full of grace & truth.

2. He is EL ... “GIBBOR” – that word, translated “mighty”, has a root meaning of “rise, raise, restore” ... My resource on Hebrew words states: *“This root is commonly associated with warfare and has to do with the strength and vitality of the successful, rising warrior.”*

This child we name today is God ... MIGHTY IN BATTLE! ... the “strong”, the “vital” WARRIOR!

III. MIGHT DISPLAYED

1. The MIGHT of this child was displayed in his POWER OVER CREATION.

(i) The winds & waves obey Him. - On the storm-tossed sea, the disciples were overwhelmed by their circumstances (as we often are!): *“Lord, save us”*, they cried. He stood up and REBUKED the wind & waves ... and it was calm. He has might over creation.

(ii) DISEASE & DEATH ITSELF cannot stand before His authority.

- In prison, John the Baptist wondered if Jesus was really the Messiah. So Jesus passed this report about His ministry along to John: *Go back & tell him what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.*

- He is the mighty God.

A. John Milton, accounting for Jesus’ water-to-wine miracle at Cana’s wedding, described it in these words: That day ... *“The virgin waters saw their Maker ... and BLUSHED.”*

- Such is the might & majesty of this child. He has power over creation.

2. Even more importantly, the might of this child was displayed in his FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE THROUGH TRIAL.

- We must never lose this focus on how Jesus’ strength was revealed in this age.

(i) Satan came at him throughout his life with a ferocity unknown to any of us. But as the mighty warrior, Jesus withstood Him. Here’s how Spurgeon describes it:

“Adam fell when but a woman tempted him; Eve fell when but a serpent offered fruit to her. But Christ, the second Adam, stood invulnerable against all the shafts of Satan – though tempted he was in all points, like as we are.

Not one arrow out of the quiver of hell was spared; the whole were shot against Him. And yet, without sin or taint of sin, more than a conqueror he stood. Foot to foot with Satan in the solitude of the wilderness; hand to hand with him on the top of the pinnacle of the temple; side by side with him in the midst of a busy crowd – yet ever, more than a conqueror!

Christ gave him battle wherever the adversary willed to meet Him, and, at last, when Satan gathered up all his might, and seized the Savior in the garden of Gethsemane, and crushed him till he sweat as it were great drops of blood ... then, when the Savior said, “Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt!” ... the tempter was repulsed. “Hence, hence”, Christ seemed to say ... and away the tempter fled, nor dare return again.

Christ, in all his conquests over sin, does seem to me to have established his Godhead!”

(ii) The MIGHT of this God with us was revealed in his faithful obedience through the temptations & trials of this age.

We might think it an ODD WAY to display strength. Why did he not just eliminate Satan? He will. But first he displayed his strength in faithful obedience – in order to become our Savior – the necessary perfected sacrifice for our sins; the necessary Spirit & Word for our obedience.

- A. Do any of you remember the 1974 boxing match titled: “The Rumble in the Jungle” – between Mohammed Ali and George Foreman? Held in Zaire, Africa. George Foreman was this huge, powerful puncher (still huge!). So Ali decided to fight in a style later called, “Rope-a-dope”. He just leaned against the ropes & took all the shots that Foreman could throw against him. Foreman whaled & whaled against him – but couldn’t knock that mighty fighter out! Ali’s core was too strong. He could take all the shots thrown. Finally, by the 8th round, Foreman was exhausted. He had nothing left. And Ali just had to throw a couple of punches ... and easily knocked him out.

That’s how the strength of this mighty God has been displayed in this world. Satan threw all the shots that he could ... even unto death on the Cross. But Christ displayed the strength of God by remaining true & faithful in love & righteousness ... pure in spirit – selfless, merciful, trusting, holy through death. His core was too strong!

So His resurrection became simply the 8th round FINISHER! ... = an EXCLAMATION POINT to the display of this Messiah’s strength through the wilderness, Gethsemane & the Cross – His whole life!

IV. NAMING THIS STRENGTH

1. Earlier I said that we must never lose sight of this way that the strength of this Mighty God has been displayed in this world.

The reason is because in NAMING THIS CHILD, what we do today is put FAITH & HOPE in that strength of God.

Naming the Child is a way of owning that MIGHT ... CLAIMING it for our lives.

(i) But it’s tempting to think of the might of God in Jesus just coming to deliver us FROM TRIAL. Occasionally it does!

(I think of Jean giving thanks recently about her sister's healing of a cancerous tumor – awesome!)

In this age, there are times when God DOES deliver us FROM TRIALS.

2. More often, however, for this age – the strength of this Mighty God – whom we name in worship & prayer – does not deliver us OUT OF TRIAL ... but THROUGH TRIAL in faithful obedience.

- That's how Jesus is our MIGHTY GOD!

(i) He's with us to strengthen us in difficulties – so that we do not fall from God.

- So that we do not give in to discouragement & despair
- So that we do not become angry & rash
- So that we do not become self-pitying & indulgent
- So that we remain faithful in prayer, loving to others, walking with godly integrity ... *“Not my will, but Thine be done”*

= this is the strength of the mighty God that we NAME today!

A. When the disciples despaired in that storm-tossed boat on the Sea of Galilee ... BEFORE Jesus rebuked the wind & waves ... He said, “Oh you of little faith, why are you so afraid?”

He first rebuked their lack of faith!

- For was He not with them – EL GIBBOR? Why the fear? Why the anxiety? Why the God-less-ness?

Jesus is teaching them that He HIMSELF is their peace & joy?

If He can sleep on the boat, can I not find rest beside him?

Yes, we can ... Yes, we can! ... by naming Him our mighty God.

B. You've heard it said: “Peace / joy is not the absence of trouble, it is the presence of the Lord.”

(iii) Jesus brings us strength that overcomes Satan's desires for our lives

= a strength that brings us THROUGH our trials in this age!

So this day NAME HIM your MIGHTY GOD – for the POWER OF OBEDIENCE!

- That's naming the child who HAS BEEN BORN ... in FAITH!

V. CONCLUSION

Today, we also name Him IN HOPE!

He is the One who is coming again – to close this age. And when he comes again, he will come as THE MIGHTY GOD!

(i) At his trial, the High Priest said to Jesus, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”

“Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: in the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”
(Mt. 26)

On that day the strength of Jesus will no longer be present to bring us THROUGH trials, He will deliver us FROM OUR BATTLES!

(ii) His resurrection from the dead is the promise of that day.

He has come ... He will come again!

A. And on that day, not only mother Mary, but “every tribe & tongue” will know:

- That her baby boy is the LORD OF ALL CREATION ...

... the RULER OF ALL NATIONS

... HEAVEN’S PERFECT LAMB

... THE GREAT ... ETERNAL ... I AM!

So today ... let’s name Him our MIGHTY GOD – in both FAITH & HOPE.

AMEN!