

Isaiah Chapter 9 v 6 - Wonderful Counsellor

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[0 : 00] Coming to God, our Heavenly Father, let us pray together. Most gracious and loving God, most excellent and wonderful Heavenly Father, we find our hearts immediately lifted and our spirits excited whenever we speak the name of Jesus, your Son.

Because there is nothing that compares with Him. There's no word, there's no name that can excite the believer like the name of Jesus. Because when we think of Him, we are just filled with joy.

At one who loves us, who one who purchased us for God, who one who came down from His throne in heaven to be the King of men and women and boys and girls.

To bring them into His kingdom who once were trapped and enslaved in the kingdom, the dominion of darkness. Who were under the sway of the evil one.

Who were those who acted in disobedience and rebellion and ignorance and blindness and darkness. Oh, how we thank you that Jesus came as our conqueror to subdue us.

[1 : 15] To bring us down that He might lift us up. To bring us to our knees. That we may see what beauty there is in His rule and reign.

There is no King like Jesus. There is no God like you, our Father. There is no Saviour or Redeemer. There is no one and nothing in all the earth, in all the world that compares with you.

Lord, who have we in heaven? Who have we on earth but you? Oh, Lord, you're our treasure. You're our sweetest and most delightful possession. You are everything to us.

Lord, if we were to lose our homes, it would be a sadness. If we were to lose our finances, that would be difficult to bear. If we were to lose our health, that would be painful and discomfoting. But we could bear with all these things as long as we have you. But if we were to lose you, oh Lord. If we were to lose the comfort of your love. If someone was to take away the assurance of your forgiveness.

[2 : 17] Of the tenderness of your smile. If someone was to somehow rob us of Christ. Then who could bear it? But praise God, that shall never happen.

Praise God, oh Lord, it's impossible for us to lose your love. You have said that we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For neither death, nor life, nor powers, nor anything in all creation. Height, nor depth. The past, the present, the future. There's nothing that can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Thank you that this evening we are securely, certainly bound up, constrained, wrapped up, ensnared, unable to break free, even if we wanted to, from the embrace and the love of our God in Christ.

Oh, we thank you that though hell vents all its spleen at us, though the devil rages with all of his anger and poison. He cannot do anything to take away the love of God from us, his people.

[3 : 25] And we thank you, oh Lord. Lord, it is certain and secure. And we pray again that for each of us this evening as we come to your word, as we come to worship, as we come to the table, would you impress upon us this glorious truth, this assurance that we are yours and yours forever.

And we pray, oh Lord, again these things that from our hearts may overflow the worship and the praise that you deserve. Lord, that we might give to you our lives afresh and determine to follow you as our Lord and Master in the days ahead.

For we ask these things, oh Lord, in and through the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Verse 15. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[5 : 48] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me. I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not yet, sorry, not all who have not met me personally. My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. May the Lord bless his word to us.

One of the great challenges of course at this time of year for us is thinking of what we can buy as presents to give to our loved ones, our neighbours, our friends, whoever it may be and it's always a challenge particularly of course when it seems that everybody has everything they could possibly need or possibly want and there are many advertisements on the television for things like not on the highstreet.com or special gift or unique present or all these different things trying to give something different this year. Of course the reality is that almost certainly when we buy something, usually in desperation having spent hours and weeks and all these things, we buy them something which ultimately they're never ever going to use, ultimately never really going to make much purpose of, it's just a token. But of course when we think about giving and think about gifts and again of course our minds as believers are drawn to the verses we thought about this morning in Isaiah 9, verse 6 particularly, for to us a child is born, to us a son is given or gifted, the gift of a son is given to us. We know of course that every child is a gift of God, God is the one who gives life, but of course we understand in the giving of Christ something more is to be understood. We know that this again, we're seeing, we see, when we read the scriptures don't you find you're reading them and something else pops in your head, for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believed in him should not perish but have eternal life.

In Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6, it's almost a little bit like the birth announcement you might read in the newspaper, you know, to us a son is born, to us a child is given, Dave and Julie sort of announce the news in the paper, to us a son is born, a safe arrival of son, a brother for Simon, for Lily or something like that. But of course this announcement that a son is born and a child is given is premature, isn't it? It's 600 years before the birth of Christ, but for the birth of this very child the announcement is made. We thought about that this morning, about how God is fulfilling his promises to us when we get to the New Testament and the birth of Christ. It's not just a last-ditch attempt by God, it's sort of come to the end of his tether with humanity, what on earth can I do with these sinful human people? There's nothing more I can do for them, I keep sending them prophets, I keep sending them my word and I keep sending them kings and all these sort of things. I've run out of ideas, I've only got one thing left. No, of course it's not like that, is it? All from the very beginning, Genesis chapter 3, the beginning there's the descendant, the seed of Eve is coming, there's somebody promised, this saviour, this king, this redeemer is coming. But also when we read this description, if I can put it that way, particularly the second part, it's almost as if it's an obituary as well to the life of Jesus because we have, he will be called wonderful counsellor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace. It's as if it's listing the achievements of this person. This is what he's accomplished in his life. This is what his character is like, a loving grandfather and husband who gave so much of his time for charity, he was always there to help and so on. But again, that obituary is long before his death.

[11 : 43] In one sense, that description of his life and the qualities of his character and his personality were again, before he was born, before anything was known about him, before he'd done anything, before he'd stepped upon the earth, before he'd made a name for himself in the world.

Of course, again, this is prophetic. It's not only his birth that is prophesied and declared, it's his ministry that is prophesied and declared. What he would actually accomplish and what he would do is made known thousands or hundreds of years before he actually spoke a word in the ears of people.

Now we know, of course, that this is Jesus, isn't it? He is the son who is given. He is the one who is called wonderful counsellor, mighty God. He is the gift of God to the world for God so loved the world he gave. Yes, we rejoice in and we hold and we delight in the truth that Christ came to save those who were chosen before the creation of the world, yet marvelously, yet wonderfully. He is such a God who has a love even for the wicked and for the rebellious that he gave his son for the worlds.

Christ came into the world. The blessings of Christ have repercussions in the world, even those who do not know Christ. Here we are in this country which is in the main, in the past, is built upon the gospel and the truths of God's word and people enjoy the benefits of Christ's coming, yet sadly do not know the fullness of those blessings.

And here in these titles of Jesus, we have, in one sense, wrapped up extra gifts, if I put it that way.

[13 : 34] When we have received Christ, when we receive the child, when we receive the son who is given to us, then we receive one who is a wonderful counsellor. We receive someone who is a mighty God. And what we understand is these titles are telling us of the things of the ministry of Jesus. So he's the wonderful counsellor, which means he's the giver of wisdom and understanding. He's the mighty God, the one who gives power to live. Power over death. He's the everlasting father, the one who receives us into his family and adopts us as his children, who gives us new birth. He's the prince of peace, the one who brings that overruling satisfaction of heart and contentment in relation to God and to ourselves and to others.

Now, the gifts that Jesus brings, of course, are not like the gifts I thought of at the start, gifts that really make no difference whatsoever to our lives. These are really essential gifts.

gifts. These are things not just that we want and we do want them, but things that we absolutely need. In one sense, the cause of our sorrow, the cause of our grief is that we do not have these things, that we lack them.

And I want us to think, therefore, over these coming weeks about these four titles. Well, we're only going to think about three of them because a few weeks ago, six weeks ago, we thought about the last of those titles, Prince of Peace on Remembrance Sunday.

So we're not going to look at that one, but we're going to look at the other three over the coming weeks, God willing, to think about what it means for Jesus, the Son of God, to be wonderful counsellor, mighty God, everlasting Father.

[15 : 24] First of all then, tonight, wonderful counsellor. Now, I think some of the translations almost separate that, so they describe him as wonderful and describe him as counsellor, but I think it's only right and proper. In one sense, both those things, that's true, he is wonderful and he is a counsellor, but they're put together, I think rightly, he's a wonderful counsellor.

They belong together. Because he gives counsellor like no other. They magnify his ministry. They magnify his ministry as teacher and declarer of God's word. In fact, we're told later in Isaiah chapter 28 that God is wonderful in counsellor and magnificent in wisdom.

And Jesus is this wonderful counsellor on the night before his death. And he took his disciples aside into the upper room and shared with them in the Lord's Supper and he spoke with them and told them that he was leaving them, but he told them as he was leaving them, he wouldn't leave them alone, but he was going to send them, who? Another counsellor. That's one of the English translations of that incredible word. Paracletos. Someone who comes alongside to help. Comforter. Helper. Another counsellor. One like himself. Jesus is the primary counsellor, the first counsellor. Holy Spirit continues his ministry of counsel. What does a counsellor do?

What does it mean to be a counsellor? It doesn't mean sitting on the local town council. Of course, that's not the word counsellor here, is it? Here's a simple description. A counsellor imparts practical wisdom that leads to understanding for life. So again, a counsellor imparts practical the wisdom that leads to understanding for life. Now, in our day and generation, there seems to be an enormous growth in counselling and in counsellors. There's any number of professional counsellors that can be called upon to provide help and advice for those who want it. If you turn to your yellow pages, then you'll find six pages of counsellors offering their services. Marriage counsellors, debt counselling, bereavement counselling, counselling for drink and drug abuse and addiction, eating disorders. The list is almost endless. If you have need of counsel, there is someone who is offering themselves to give you the counsel for that particular and special need.

It's very clear, isn't it, that as a society we lack good counsel. We recognise that there seems to be in our society a great need for wisdom and understanding which probably greater than there ever been before because not only do you turn to your yellow pages, but you only have to turn on daytime TV. And there's a constant stream of shows that offer counselling. Counselling for parents who are struggling with problem children. Counselling for those who've got eating disorders and want to lose weight. Counselling for those who've got financial issues. What is these things saying? These things are saying to us there's a vacuum, there's an empty space where men and women need counsel and cannot find it and are looking everywhere they can for it. I came across this

statistic, this survey which was carried out several years ago within this century and it says it was found out that if you have emotional difficulties, emotional problems, probability that you will be well in a year if you go and see a psychoanalyst is 44%.

[19 : 40] If you go and see a psychotherapist, it's 53% chance you'll be better in a year. If you see a psychiatrist, 61% chance you'll be better in a year. But if you don't go and see anyone at all, the chance of you feeling better in a year is 73%.

Not all counsel is good counsel. Not all counsellors are wonderful counsellors. But Jesus is called Wonderful Counsellor.

If you were to speak to the majority of people today, I think that whether they are Christians or not, they would acknowledge that the words of Jesus are some of the greatest, most profound words ever uttered by a human being in history. They would point to the Sermon on the Mount about loving and forgiving and turning the other. They would say, well, these things are profound. These things are incredible. The things that Jesus taught are wonderful. If people live by the words of Jesus in this way, then the world would be a much better place, whether they're Christian or not. And some people respect Jesus in that way as a great teacher.

And those who actually heard Jesus firsthand on that occasion on the Sermon on the Mount and at other times were blown away by the way that he spoke and taught to them. Mark comments on this in his gospel, chapter 1. The people were amazed at his teaching because he taught them as one who had authority. His words had power. They had impact. They had effect. Later in the life of Jesus, his disciples, some of them left him and turned away from him because of the teaching that he had. And so he turned to his 12 disciples, Peter and the others, and said, well, are you going to leave me? And their response was this, where shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. It wasn't simply that Jesus was a great orator or a communicator or had the gift of the gab, if I can put it that way. He was someone who had wonderful counsel. And those who heard it were impressed by it. That's not all that's meant by this title. That's simply that Jesus taught wonderfully well. That's not all that's meant when we think of this counsel that he gives, that he was someone whose words are effectual and powerful and useful. There's something much more than that, isn't there?

Because when we read through the gospels, we see people who heard the counsel of Jesus, the wonderful counsel of Jesus, and they were completely unchanged by it. And we have people even in our own day, people of intellect and understanding, people who study the scriptures and the Bible, and they read it, and they have no blessing from it. They get down into the real nitty-gritty of it, of the original language in the

Greek or the Aramaic or whatever, and there's no change. There's no counsel that's imparted to them, even though the words of Jesus are there before them. But Jesus told us to expect that.

[22 : 54] Near the end of the Sermon on the Mount, when he spoke about the parable of the two builders, didn't he? And what did he say in Matthew 7? He said, everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. You can hear the words of Jesus. You can, in one sense, find them wonderful, even. You can look at them and feel that they have power and authority, and yet you can still not know Christ as the wonderful counselor.

Matthew in chapter 13, Jesus explained why people did not take his counsel seriously. He quotes from Isaiah, from an earlier chapter, chapter 6, verses 9 and 10, and Jesus said this of the people to whom he was speaking. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. You will ever be hearing, but never understanding. You will ever be seeing, but never perceiving. This people's heart has become calloused. They hardly hear with their ears. They've closed their eyes. There's a problem, isn't there, in the human heart and the human mind, which makes even the counsel of Jesus and the word of Jesus dormant, ineffectual, powerless. Now, we believe in the word of God. We sang there, didn't we?

We will trust God's word alone. We believe that this is the inspired and infallible word of God. We believe this is God's word to humanity. We believe that the words of Jesus have life within them. Yet, they do not have life within them by themselves. These are words on a page. To enjoy the gift of Christ's wonderful counsel that gives wisdom that leads to life, we must experience more than an intellectual stimulation. We must receive more than simply having our minds educated. It's one of the great faults in our society, I believe. One of the faults amongst our politicians and amongst the educators of our world. They believe that if we educate people, that will make the world a better place. Now, there's no doubt that education is right and good.

But there is almost a hope that if we only educate people about the right and the wrong and the good and the bad, that somehow they will sort themselves out. That somehow this world can be a marvelous utopian society. But when Jesus is spoken of as a wonderful counselor, it's speaking about something more than receiving his word. God promised that when he sent the Messiah into the world that he would do something quite extraordinary. In Isaiah 54 and verse 13, God says this, all your children will be taught by the Lord. And John 6, 45, we read, it's written in the prophets, they will be taught by God. Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. [26:17] How can I put it this way? It's got to be personal. It's got to be Jesus who we take as our counselor and as our teacher and our instructor. It's got to be something more than simply taking his words. It's taking him. It's in part, it's receiving of him, for he himself is the very wisdom of God. He himself is the counsel, if I can put it that way.

It's not just that his words have counsel, he is the counselor. He does something spectacular by imparting to us something we can never attain by study, by education, by reading.

There's a supernatural infusion of wisdom that when we receive Christ, we receive sight. Do you find that interesting when we read there from Isaiah 9, how it begins by talking about those in darkness receiving the light?

And how from receiving that light, verse 3 takes about how the nation is increased in joy and blessing. Light brings life and joy and rejoicing and fullness.

And so we know that the world in which we live and the people of this world in which we live are people who are blinded to the words of Christ and to the person of Christ.

[27:49] 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 4, speaks about the God of this age has blinded the minds of those who do not believe. Not blinded their eyes, blinded their minds. But what has God done?

Verse 6, for God who said, let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. Where?

In the face of Jesus. It's in Jesus. And him alone is their wisdom and counsel and understanding.

God has created humanity and placed within us, I believe, a searching heart.

God has put within humanity a desire, a thirst for knowledge and understanding. That's a good thing. God has put within us, I believe, a searching heart. But we have to look in the right places to find the answers to the things that we are searching for.

But in that searching, of course, there is also a sadness and a sorrow because the world in which we live and the people we live amongst, and we ourselves were such, and it can indeed sometimes re-echo in our hearts as well, are searching and searching and never finding what they're looking for.

[29:16] They're looking for answers to questions that trouble them and concern them. But their folly is this, and our folly is this, in thinking that somehow by our own wisdom and our own counsel, we can find out the answers to those questions.

It's putting our faith in ourselves as having the ability to give wonderful counsel where we go wrong. But the reality that the Bible teaches us, the reality of this verse and this description of Jesus is this, that actually the way that we can know the answers to the questions is when God reveals them to us, that he is the revelation, he is the opening, he is the one who has made himself known.

So what is God like? Well, the only way we can know what God is like is how he has revealed himself in his word and in Christ. But who am I? Where did I come from?

And where am I going? The knowledge of what life is all about and how to live that life. Why we're here. These fundamental questions that eternally have plagued and puzzled and frustrated humanity are found in the wonderful gift of the wonderful counselor who is the Son of God.

Have you experienced that for yourself? Only as you came to faith in Christ, only as it were, as you submitted yourself to him as your counselor and as your Lord and as a revelation of God, only then did things start to make sense.

[30:54] Not everything. Those questions, that searching, that earnest longing to find answers to the meaning of life, they found their place and their meaning in Christ.

But that's exactly what scripture is telling us all the way through. In Christ we find out what God is like. Hebrews 1 verse 3, the Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.

Do you want to know what God is like? What does Jesus say? If anybody's seen me, they've seen the Father. It's in Christ we find out who we are. Luke chapter 19 verse 10, the Son of Man came to

seek and save what was lost.

We actually realize what condition we're in. We are the lost. We are the ones separated from God. We are the ones in great need. It's only in Christ that we find ourselves. It's in Christ that we find out the purpose for our lives.

John 15, you did not choose me. Only I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit. The great discoveries, as it were, of the Reformation.

[32 : 06] We're to discover that every single one of us is made for the glory of God. The purpose of your life and mine is not simply these 70, 80, 90, 100 years of toil and of childbearing and of death.

To live for the glory of God. To live for the glory of God in everything that we do day by day. And how do we live for the glory of God in what we do? It's in Christ we find out how we are to live this way.

John 8, 12. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. The reason that we read from Colossians, particularly chapter 2, is because I think there Paul is summing up, hopefully, what I've been saying.

He says in verse 3 of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. What was Paul's desire?

What was it that he contended for and worked hard for? He said this, And he says, Where's that understanding?

[33 : 25] In Christ. In whom are hidden all the riches through the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. So much more for us, dear friends.

If you've been a Christian for a few years, or 10 years, or 20, or 30, or 40, or 50, or 60 years, we're still only, only on the surface of understanding and learning about the person of God in Christ.

Do we want wisdom? How do I meet with and deal with the challenges of my age? How do I meet with and deal with the challenges of my family? I come to Christ, the wonderful counsellor.

How do I, what's the right course of action for me to take in this situation? How should I deal with this temptation? We go to Christ as our wonderful counsellor. The question is not this, if I can put it this way, and as I close with this.

The question is not, will Jesus give me wonderful counsel? Because he certainly will, because we're promised that the child who's given is the wonderful counsel. The real question is this, will I listen and obey?

[34 : 41] Will I listen and obey? Or will I say, my own counsel I will follow, not yours?

The wonderful counsellor who brings light to darkness, who enlarges our joy and causes us to rejoice.

Are we building our lives upon the word of Jesus by listening and doing? Or are we, as it were, preparing for a big downfall by listening and ignoring?

Jesus is to us a wonderful counsel. Jesus is a wonderful counsel.