

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: The Incarnation

Pt. 3 Wonderful Names

Luke 2

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 12.26-27.09

Now Christmas is over. The packages are unwrapped and I would imagine soon the decorations that have been put out will be boxed back up and put away but, Jesus will still be here. That's the impact of the Incarnation. That's what we've been talking about is the Incarnation is literally God with us. It's not a moment in history. It's not a porcelain Jesus in a nativity scene but it's a real Jesus becoming flesh.

As John says, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. That's true. That's what I like about what we just saw. Incarnation is messy. And we forget that. We forget that Christmas is something that is the beginning of a long journey for a man that would not end well. We forget that in our momentary celebration of the birth of the Messiah that the Messiah came here to get in the midst of us – the flesh. Like the writer of Hebrews says that we have a great high priest who can sympathize with us. In other words, our Savior has walked where we have walked, carried similar burdens, has gotten messy with life. Life is messy and we have a Savior that is not just a porcelain figurine that belongs in a nativity scene that we worship for one day out of the year, but, we have a Savior that we can go to throughout the year; that is with us at all times. Sometimes I think we forget who we're dealing with when we think of this child.

Isaiah the Prophet gives us a completely different look at the child. I want us to look at a completely different passage from Luke 2. That's where we've spent most of our time but I want to move out of that and show you a bigger picture. Luke 2 gives us a small taste of the Christmas story but it's only one portion of it. For us to see a much larger version of the incarnation really we have to start back in the Old Testament. So, open your bibles with me to the book of Isaiah, chapter 9, verse 6 is where we're going to begin. Before Luke ever occurred the incarnation was promised by a prophet, the Prophet Isaiah. Now, if you don't have a bible there's one in the chair back in front of you. You can then follow along because we're going to be looking at a number of different texts right around Isaiah. You'll be seeing the passage that we're going to begin with coming on the side screens. The reason for that is so that we can read this together. I want us to read this passage which might be very familiar to the majority of you but possibly you don't understand the historical context; why it was written, how it can be applied to us today. But I want us to read this as a congregation together. Isaiah Chapter 9, verse 6.

Let's read. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace. I've chosen this passage to end our Incarnation study because it gives us a different look at Jesus. This is the sticky Jesus that we don't always see in the Luke 2 passage. This is Jesus in the fullness of His deity and we see that as represented in four names. Now, you need to understand something about scripture. Scripture takes the giving of a name very seriously. A name represents who you are and represents your character. And that's true of God. God was given a number of different names throughout the Old Testament and New Testament. For example, we know of Yahweh – the Great I

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Am; Elohim – which means creator of God; Adonai – which means The Lord. There's El Elyon which means the possessor of heaven and earth. And then there's all the Jehovah names. There's a myriad of Jehovah names throughout the Old Testament. Jehovah Jireh – the Lord will provide; Jehovah Rapha – the Lord heals; Jehovah Rohi – the Lord our shepherd; Jehovah Shalom which I imagine you can guess that – the Lord of peace and on and on it goes. In fact, that would be a great study for some of you. If you want to dive in and study the names of God throughout this next year it would be an exhaustive study. Not only understanding the different names of God, of Jesus Christ, of the Holy Spirit but it's application to your life. Why is that? It's because a name is important and we see that here in this text – four names Isaiah uses to define the attributes of the coming, incarnate Messiah. But, before we ever look at those names we have to look at the historical context of this passage. Now, you've heard me talk about this before. There's a pretext. There's a posttext. There is a context. You cannot just take the bible and randomly open up, read a passage and apply that to your life with any kind of sense of true understanding of the text. The reason why that is is because every passage in the scripture revolves around a context; revolves around a setting. Even the Psalms – you need to understand the historical settings of why David or the other Psalmists wrote this Psalms – to give it true depth of meaning and to be able to apply it to your life appropriately.

One of the pet peeves that I have is that when people take passages of scripture out of context. That's not how God meant us understand His Word. We have to understand it first in a historical, contextual setting. Then we can understand it how it applies to us. And that's what we're going to do with this passage. This passage was written seven hundred years before Jesus, so we should be asking what caused Isaiah to speak these words in the first place. If you do a little research you find out that there was a king during this day named King Uzziah. Isaiah wrote and was a Prophet from about 740BC on to and past King Uzziah's death. Now, that's important because that's a historical marker that tells us what was going on in and around the land of Judah at this particular time. King Uzziah was a Godly king. He was a powerful king and he reigned well and when he died that changed everything in the landscape of the day and it set a historical marker for what had come before and what was about to come in the future.

Give you a concept. That would be like me saying to you today the words 9-11. We all know where we were on 9-11. We understand that as a historical marker for our country. Well, that too would be too in this day you understood that King Uzziah was a good, Godly king but had suddenly died. After that his son, you would have known rose to the throne but just for a very short period of time and then another king was inaugurated – King Ahaz and he was neither good nor Godly. And everything changed. In a very short period of time things went from great peace to utter devastation and it all happened in a short period because of a king, King Ahaz. Ahaz no sooner was inaugurated as king when he had to make a major decision. He didn't understand any of the landscape of the day. The Assyrians were the power of the day. They were the super power and they had a mighty

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army – a feared army. The smaller nations that lived around Assyria were always fearful and in jeopardy of Assyria overpowering them and taking their land and their people into captivity. This would have been a concern for Ahaz, the King of Judah. It was also a concern for Syria and for northern Israel. They were all concerned about Assyrian, the Assyrians.

And so, Ahaz was given several choices during this very tumultuous time. He could side with the Assyrians, gain their trust, be a part of their super power and be protected by them. Or, he was given an option. The King of Syria and the King of Northern Israel came to him one day and said let us join forces as a coalition and let's attack Assyria. Or the third choice he could do is what the Prophet Isaiah was telling him to do and that was to do nothing. Trust in the mighty arm of God. Those are the three choices that he had when he came to power. He had a choice.

Now, let's just stop for a moment. Let's bring this in to present, modern day. It doesn't matter if you're studying biblical history or you're studying American history or if you're studying modern times. One thing that links all of us is that we routinely have choices to make. Now, as Christ followers we have options in our choice making. We can go to our God from the smallest choices to the largest choices and know that we have a God who is strong and mighty and will guide us in our paths. The question is do you do that? Or do you leave the choices that are big in your life for God? You see, I think Ahaz made a strategic decision in his life somewhere when he stopped trusting God for the small things. When he stopped trusting God for the small decisions in his life, when a large decision came he didn't even think about it. In fact, he used logic, rationale, the thinking and the advice of the day to make his decision. He made a poor decision. Rather than trusting in God he choose to side with the Assyrians. It was a safe choice. It was a logical choice. It was a secure choice but it was a choice that lacked faith. We can learn from that. Where are our choice mechanisms today? Do we rely on our own logic? Do we rely on our own knowledge to be able to survey our choices and options or do we hold off making even the smallest choices of our life? Do you know why it's important? Because what we're about to see with King Ahaz we can see played out in our lives over and over again on a much smaller scale.

King Ahaz made a wrong choice and it became devastating to him and the people. Do you know why? Because the Assyrian concept of him aligned with the super power back fired on him. Assyria took them under their wing for a period of time and then turned on them and became their captors; led the people into captivity all because of a poor choice. Do you realize that whenever we have a choice it not only impacts our lives or rarely impacts our lives. It usually impacting our lives and our families lives and those associated with our families and on and on and on. Which speaks to those of you who are in leadership. Don't ever underestimate that your choices, however small they might be impact other peoples

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lives. Many times they impact peoples lives in the way they relate to you and the way they understand the God that you follow. This is exactly what we see in the text.

Back up with me to Isaiah chapter 8, verse 21. What do we see? We see Isaiah prophesizing what will happen. They will, verse 21, pass through the land greatly distressed and hungry and when they are hungry they'll be enraged and will speak contemptuously. Who will they speak contemptuously against? Against the king and their god. Do you see the ramification of a choice? Keep reading. Verse 22. And they will, this is Judah, they will look to the earth, but look, distressed, darkness, gloom of anguish. Look at that trilogy. And they will be thrust into thick darkness. What does that sound like to you? Sounds like a hopeless situation, because of a choice.

Well, we also have to understand that it was during this time that God promised a new light would dawn in Judah; that there would be a savior. Look at verse 2 of chapter 9. This is the pretext to verse 6. Now remember the historical setting. Here they are in the midst of captivity and darkness. To be literal they are in distress, darkness and gloom of anguish. That's what the people are feeling. And the prophet tells them this – the people who walked in darkness, that's Judah, have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of deep darkness, on them has a light shined. You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of His burden and the staff for His shoulder, the rod of His oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. And every boot of the tramping warrior in battle of tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burnt as fuel for fire. Do you hear what Isaiah is saying? The people who hold you captive themselves will be captive. You will be released from your captivity. You will receive freedom and the very people who hold you in this state will themselves come to ruin. How? Now we're at our text. Verse 6, for to us a child is born. To us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulder. He has great names – wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace.

Now, maybe you're thinking the same thing as the people of Judah were thinking. Child? How can a child help us during this devastating time? How can an infant be the one who would lead us out of such despair? Well, this is not just any infant. This infant has divine names and divine attributes. What Isaiah was promising was the promising Messiah that would not only take control of their government situation but would take control of their spiritual situation. When we look at the nativity scene we look at the beginning of a restoration for us spiritually. But, it didn't start there. It started hundreds of years before when God would promise His people, His chosen one, His followers that you do not have to live without me. I am God in the flesh; God with us and to prove that I'm going to give Him, the Savior four names that illustrate that. Look at these names – wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace.

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Let's say them one at a time. Wonderful Counselor. What do you think of when you hear the term wonderful counselor? You hear counselor. You hear someone who can help us with our problems. Now, we've all received counsel whether or not we've gone to professional counselors and not highly advocate that but whether you've gone to work out your problems. We've all received counsel and not always has it been wonderful counsel but it has been counsel, right? You know the difference? There's a difference between counsel and wonderful counsel. Counsel can be given by anybody on the street. You walk up to them, you tell them what's going on in your life. Suddenly they're an expert on your situation, right? And they're giving you advice. That's counsel. But that's not wonderful counsel. What is wonderful counsel? What is wonderful counsel? Wonderful counsel is when a counselor can look into your life, the individual issues in your life, see all the dynamics of all the parties involved and give a strategy to help you specifically. That's a wonderful counselor. If you look into the text, in the Hebrew language it is better translated something like wonderful strategist or extraordinary strategist. Now, that makes sense doesn't it? Makes sense to the historical context. Here these people, in captivity. They're beyond help. What do they need? They need someone who is an extraordinary strategist to get them out of the mess they're in, don't they? And yet that's what Isaiah's promising them from the voice of God that one is coming who will be an extraordinary counselor, an extraordinary strategist. Place that in the concept of the hearing Ahaz and the people of the day.

Now, place that in your own life. What have we been learning about the incarnation? We've been learning that the primary aspect of the incarnation is not the moment but what would occur from the God-man? That He has come to what? Save His people from their sins. You see, that's the real bind that we're in. You know, talk about hopeless, distressing, dark situation. Think about the issue of our sin before a holy God. No one can figure out how to bridge the gap between man and God. God requires justice. Righteous, holy justice. What He requires is a man who is perfect to take the sins of man on himself. Where can we find such a man? We have a God who delivers an extraordinary strategist, one who is fully man, God with us, fully God – Jesus Christ. The bridge between God and man; takes our sins upon himself so that we might have a relationship with God. Now, think of it this way. If God did that for us, solving a problem we could not solve don't you think He would also devise strategies for other aspects of your life? See, that's the promise that we have a Messiah who's involved in our lives to such an extent that He would be our extraordinary strategist, leading us in how we should live our lives. He is the wonderful counselor.

And why is He the wonderful counselor? Second name. What is it? Mighty God. Now, have you noticed there's something going on here? It's wonderful counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace. There's a combination of words that bring an idea together. That's true of the second name – Mighty God. The Hebrew word for God in this situation is El Gibbor which means more than mighty, more than strong. It means super mighty, super strong God. Why can He be trusted as the extraordinary strategist? Because

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He is the super, strong God. You've got to put that in your mind. Because what do we do? We look at life situations and sometimes we are pushed back from them and we say what are we going to do? Where are we going to go? All of a sudden, distress, darkness, gloom of anguish sets in and just like the people of Judah we forget. What is our God doing? Our God has sent a child, the Messiah who was one of us. Solved the greatest problem that we had in our life. He's the extraordinary strategist but He's a mighty God. Nothing is able to overpower Him. No problem that you have, no matter how great overpowers your God. You know, you've got to put that in the context of the here and now and I realize it's difficult. I tell you. I'll be honest with you. I forget that too. You know, I get dark and distressed and gloomy and filled with anguish. Stuff happens in my life. And you know what I do? It's just I think a part of our sin nature. It's as if we want to move away from God and just try to handle it ourselves and yet that's the very time God's spirit is calling out to you – don't forget, I'm the wonderful counselor. I'm the mighty God. I have power you haven't even begun to think about. Put your hope and trust and decisions in me because...third name.

I'm the everlasting father. I'm the everlasting father. These are two words that also create a concept. Do you see that? Everlasting. What's that mean? Never ending. It's exactly what it means. Just everlasting. A perpetual duration. Father. Personal. Relational. Well now, you might be thinking wait a minute. This is the incarnate son. This is not the father. What does this mean? How can this title be applied to the Messiah. Well, because it's not a reference to the Father as the first person of the trinity. Listen to this. This is a reference to the Son as the author of eternity. Do you realize that the word father can also be referred to as the one who is the source? Or the beginner? Or the one who is the author? And that's exactly what we see revealed to us in the New Testament. You don't have to turn there but I want you to at least jot down Colossians chapter 1. Colossians chapter 1 speaks of the preeminence of Christ and in verse 16 it says for by Him all things were created, did you know that? Jesus Christ is the creator. For by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities were all things created through Him and for Him. Verse 17 and He is before all things and in Him are all things hold together. What does that say about Jesus Christ? He's the creator, He's the sustainer. He is the author of eternity.

You're looking at me like, how does this apply? You ready? He knows everything about your life. Past, present, future. There's nothing that's going on in around your life, your social schema, anything about you. He knows every thing about you that can be known. He knows more about you than you know. And so when you come into these forces of life where you feel distressed, dark, gloom of anguish who's there? The author or eternity. The author who knows everything about your life. He's a mighty God with an extraordinary strategy.

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The last name is He is the prince of peace. Now, all of these mean something. Extraordinary Strategist. Strong God. Author of Eternity. What do you think Prince of Peace means? Means prince of peace. That's it. Nothing special here. But, listen to what it says. He's the prince. Hierarchal. He's the king. He is the king of peace. This is the last title but it might be the most important. John Calvin writes, of all blessings not one is better or more desirable than peace. You know what that's true? What is life like when you are peace-less? It's distressful, it's dark, it's gloom of anguish. It's all the things the people of Judah were feeling. It's all the things that you and I will experience in life. It's all these things. When you have a lack of peace it feels like your world is caving in on you. And so what do we do when we trust our decisions and our choices and our lives to the Messiah? He provides extraordinary strategy because He's a mighty God, because He's the author or eternity and knows everything about you and He will give you peace.

What you long for He will give you. This is our God. This is just a momentary reflection of our God. The stable. He rose up out of the stable, became a man, did the incredible. Died for us. Lives today to sustain us as His followers. See, this is not something that should be located to one day of the year. This is a celebration that should spring forth from the believers heart every single day because this is our God, coming gently as a child. Why? Well, this is just what we covered in the last couple of weeks. Why did He come as a child? No one is afraid of an infant. Comes to build a relationship with you. Let's pray together.