

Isaiah 9:1-7 - Mighty God

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Preacher: Will Spink

[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Whew. That's a, no, no, don't do that. That's a tough act to follow. I'm really thankful for a committee and the session.

And definitely want you all to know of our love for this church, this city. How excited we are about what God is doing here and the fact that we get to be a part of it.

We're really thrilled about that. As hard as this seems to me right now, I'm going to preach this morning.

It's been recommended that I'm not. Y'all would all go for that. But this is actually really important because the reality is this, and I mean this with all my heart.

[1 : 07] The big news this morning is not that the search committee has a pastor nominee. It's not. It's that the God of the universe wants to meet with you and bless you.

Isn't that amazing? We're going to talk about the fact that Jesus, the baby in the manger that we're celebrating at Christmas, has come to us to be the mighty God, come to his people to live on earth for us, to die in our place, to set this table before us this morning and invite us to commune with him, to be his friend.

Isn't that incredible? And you get excited about a pastor nominee. That's something to be excited about. And that's what we get to look at in God's word.

I've been saying since early this year, back when I didn't know what was going to happen, what God was going to do in my heart to call me to this position, that what Southwood needed to be hoping in and relying on was not new programs and was not a new pastor, but the power of God at work through Jesus Christ in his church.

That has been our hope. That remains our hope. I'm convinced that is still true today. We need to believe that now. We continually need a renewed vision of God's love for us in Jesus Christ.

[2 : 38] And that's what he gives us this morning. That's what we need today. We need to open God's word. We need to hear from God's heart. We need to come to God's table together. So let's turn to Isaiah chapter 9.

And hear from God's holy word. Isaiah 9 at verse 1. But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish.

In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. But in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. You've 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.

[3 : 41] For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult, and every garment rolled in blood, will be burned as fuel for the fire. 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.

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.

Thus far, God's holy word. Will you pray with me? Father, we are thankful for your word. We're thankful for good news of great joy, that a Savior is born.

And it is our prayer this morning that we would have the joy that comes from knowing that you have met our deepest needs for deliverance, that our sin has been atoned for, that a Savior has been born to us, as we learn more of him in your word today.

Would Jesus indeed be the one in whom our hearts rejoice? Would that be true for us today?

Would that be true for us always? We ask it in his name.

[5 : 10] Amen. We are talking this Christmas season about the identity of Jesus. What child is this?

Who is Jesus? And we are using these four titles that Jesus is given here in the sixth verse of Isaiah chapter 9. So last week we talked about Jesus as wonderful counselor, as the one who unfolds God's wise plans for his people, who gives direction to where life is truly found, who shines light on the proper paths for us, who in fact himself is that light and is the way to the Father.

This morning we are going to talk about Jesus as mighty God. The mighty God who can carry out his wise plans. The one who is capable, who is able to achieve the ends of his wonderful counsel. Isaiah describes it this way in chapter 14. He says, This is the purpose that is purposed concerning the whole earth. This is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations.

For the Lord of hosts has purposed and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out and who will turn it back? When he has purposes, when he has plans, they cannot be changed.

[6 : 30] He's able, he's strong and mighty to accomplish his purposes. They will come to pass. Jeremiah chapter 32. Ah, Lord God, it is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm.

Nothing is too hard for you. You show steadfast love to thousands, but repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them. Oh, great and mighty God, whose name is the Lord of hosts, great in counsel and mighty in deed.

Great in counsel with wisdom and plans, and mighty in deed, strong to see them accomplished.

This is what it means to be the mighty God.

That nothing is too hard for you. When he's talked about as mighty God, he talks about things like creating everything out of nothing.

Redeeming people out of slavery. Judging all of mankind. He is strong. He's active and at work. His plans cannot be thwarted.

[7 : 37] He's the mighty God. But this is much more than just a description of a child who's coming. That this is what he's going to be like. That he's going to be strong and mighty.

It is that. But in particular, in this verse, it's a title of God himself, given to the promised child. In both of the passages we've just looked at, those are speaking of the Lord of hosts, of Yahweh himself, God Almighty.

The one referred to as mighty God was God himself. El Gabor. That's how you say it in Hebrew. The mighty God. You may have heard of many Hebrew titles like that for God.

A lot of them start with El. El Shaddai. The God who provides. Who's all sufficient. El Royi. The God who sees me. El Elyon. God most high.

Names for God throughout the scriptures. Over and over again. And now in this verse, El Gabor. Mighty God. It's one of his titles.

[8 : 44] It's who God is. And here, don't miss what's so obvious that we could easily look over it. Who gets the title? Who in this passage is the mighty God?

It's the promised baby in the manger, isn't it? It's Jesus. The reality of the promised child being divine is evident in all four of these titles.

We talked last week of Wonderful Counselor, that Jesus was to be one with wisdom that was supernatural beyond human comprehension. But the divine nature of the promised child is most clear in this title of God himself given to Jesus.

Mighty God. When we talk about that mystery of Jesus being the mighty God, we talk about it in terms of him being fully God and fully man, right?

A reality that in some ways defies our complete comprehension. But what's happened in recent decades is that there's been a move away from appreciating that mystery and towards trying to take it and say, here's how we'll handle this mystery.

[9 : 54] It's actually that Jesus was not divine at all. In fact, he never claimed to be. And so, many people, particularly many scholars, even those who would identify themselves as Christians and

claim to follow the moral teachings of Jesus, they've argued that being divine was simply not on Jesus' radar at all.

It was something made up by his followers after he was gone. And that this is what he meant and this is what he would have claimed. And this is standard fare these days in religious studies courses on college campuses.

It's standard fare in many divinity schools. And so, because those of us who started hearing this when we were in school are getting older now, it's standard fare among our friends and our neighbors and those we do life with.

That this is what we're supposed to believe. And I say to you this morning, the significance of Jesus' deity is of such fundamental importance to our faith.

It's foundational to all of the early church creeds and confessions of the church. That Jesus was fully God and fully man has been vital to what it means to be a Christian.

[11:12] It's worth talking about for a few minutes this morning. To be honest with you, it astounds me that scholars can look honestly at the New Testament and choose sometimes to ignore the myriad ways Jesus claims to be divine and to concoct other explanations for things that are more easily explained by that single fact.

Where do we see Jesus as mighty God in the Gospels? There's a number of ways. I'll mention just a couple of them this morning. First, He forgives sins.

Look at Luke chapter 5. You know this story. You've heard about the paralytic whose friends loved Him so much that when they couldn't get Him to Jesus, what did they do? They took Him around the side of the building, climbed up on the roof, cut a hole, lowered Him down in front of Jesus, and He gets there and Jesus says what?

Verse 20, Man, your sins are forgiven you. And the scribes and Pharisees began to question saying, Who is this who speaks blasphemies?

Who can forgive sins but God alone? They get it right. The scribes and Pharisees, you should know, are good ones to follow on these. They got a good radar for people blaspheming.

[12:28] They know when you're claiming to be God and when Jesus forgives sins, they said, Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Problem. Only God can do that. And they're right, aren't they?

To forgive sins as a whole can only be done by one against whom all sin is committed. I can't forgive your sin that you committed against somebody else, can I?

Only the one against whom the offense has been committed can forgive the sin. And they say, Only God can do that in a general way and forgive someone's sins.

What does Jesus say? Why do you question in your hearts? What's easier to say? Your sins are forgiven you or to say, Rise and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins so that you can all be clear that I really can do this.

I say to you, Rise, pick up your bed and go home. And he does and he goes home glorifying God and they're all amazed and they glorify God and they say, We've seen extraordinary things today.

[13:31] Not just a man healed but sins forgiven. And so when Jesus is questioned, Hey, you don't have that authority. He says, Let me actually not back down but let me confirm to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

I do have that authority and he demonstrates it. Another example, Jesus receives worship from many who fall or bow before him.

It happens several times. One of the best ones is during his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. His followers begin to praise him saying, Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven. Glory in the highest. They're praising him. They're worshiping him as he comes into the city on the donkey. And again, the Pharisees catch it. They hear it. Hey, teacher, tell them they've gotten it out of control.

They're getting run away with this whole worship thing that you would be God. Teacher, tell them to stop saying such horrible things. And Jesus says what?

[14:40] No, it's not that you misunderstand what they're saying. They don't really mean that I'm God. The Pharisees, you misunderstand them. No, he doesn't say that at all. He says you misunderstand who I am.

That I am worthy of this worship to the point that if they stop, the very stones will cry out and worship me. Be clear about who I am.

I will receive such worship. One last example. One of the great demonstrations of Jesus as mighty God is his miracles, right?

The wonderful deeds that he does that demonstrate his power and authority. Things like turning water into wine. Like feeding more than 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish. Healing many, many people of various diseases. Many of his miracles. Those miracles, remember, were written about in the lifetime of many people who witnessed them.

[15:45] If they were made up later by his followers, they would have been easily repudiated by people in the towns where they're recorded to have taken place. It would have been easy to say, that didn't happen.

He never said that. That event never took place. And instead, they were widely affirmed and therefore believed. But the unique thing about Jesus' miracles is that he performs them on his own authority.

Time and again, he performs miracles on his own authority. Now that's strange because before and after Jesus, prophets who performed wonders and signs always were quick to point out where their power came from.

To say, oh, this wasn't me. It was the authority of God by which this happened. And Jesus never gives such explanations. In fact, he did quite to the contrary in many of his miracles.

One example would be Matthew chapter 8. He heals a leper. The leper comes to him and says, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.

[16:52] And Jesus said, don't be confused. Not me, but if God's okay with it. No. Jesus does what? Jesus immediately stretches out his hand and says, I will be clean.

And he is. Jesus says, it only requires me willing it. And the miracle occurs. My authority is my own. Because I will it, you will be clean. There are many, many other such proofs of Jesus' awareness of his deity in the Gospels.

He teaches on his own authority as we saw last week. He grants eternal life. He judges mankind.

He applies Old Testament passages about God to himself over and over and over again.

He does that. This is God incarnate. Emmanuel, God with us. The one who has been promised.

The one we've been hoping for. God is coming to save us.

[17:56] Here He is. This distinction between Jesus being yet another prophet or good teacher and being the eternal Son of God, the mighty God Himself is a vital one.

It distinguishes between world religions like Islam, Mormonism, and Christianity. It's the distinction that C.S. Lewis makes when he gives his famous trilemma in mere Christianity.

When he says, Jesus is either liar, lunatic, or Lord. This is the way Lewis says it. I'm trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Jesus.

I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God. Lewis says, that is the one thing we must not say.

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg or else he would be the devil of hell.

[19:03] You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool.

You can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher.

He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. Lewis, a long committed atheist himself goes on to say this, now it seems obvious to me that he was neither a lunatic nor a fiend and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that he was and is God.

It's a famous argument, an old one now and people of course don't like it anymore. And the most popular response right now to this and this comes from those who call themselves Christians and those who don't, it's the one I mentioned earlier, that Jesus never claimed what the Gospels indicate and so Lewis has left out a fourth choice.

Liar, lunatic, Lord or legend. Legend, they would say. He was completely, it was made up by his followers. This guy existed. There's too much evidence to deny that but he didn't really claim these things.

[20 : 28] So the fact that he's God is a legend. He can be a good teacher as long as he never claimed it. I've begun to show you why I don't think that line of thinking holds any water. There's much, much more there we don't have time for this morning.

But, this important distinction is one that we talk about because it's been on Jesus' heart. It's one he wanted to make clear. It's been on his heart since his earthly ministry.

In what may be called the first public opinion poll, Jesus asks his disciples, what are you hearing out there? Who do people say I am?

In Matthew 16, they tell him what they're hearing. Some say John the Baptist. Others say Elijah. Others, Jeremiah, one of the prophets.

Jesus said to them, but who do you say that I am? Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Some say John the Baptist, a great teacher.

[21 : 31] Kind of strange, but a great teacher. But then you do all these wonderful deeds and they've watched you and they've seen them and so they say, oh, it's Elijah, one of those prophets that did great signs.

And Jesus turns the question on them, who do you say that I am? And the answer that Jesus praises is neither of the ones that have come from the crowds, but Peter's declaration that Jesus is indeed the Son of the living God, the anointed King promised to God's people.

This grasp of His identity, Jesus says, is so foundational. It's the basis of the church that I'm going to build. Yes, blessed are you and I'm going to build my church right there on you knowing and understanding who I am.

The thing I love most about Jesus' question to His disciples there is that it moves us from the merely theoretical or theological to the intensely personal, doesn't it?

But what about you? Who do you say that I am? Not what do the polls say? Not what do you hear out there? Who do you say that I am? And we said last week, that's what we were going to ask ourselves during this series.

[22 : 51] As we look at these four titles of Jesus, not just what's His identity, who is Jesus, but who is Jesus to me? We want to ask if we're merely identifying a great chef and knowing who He is or if we're personally experiencing Him, actually tasting His food and personally identifying and being impacted by that reality.

Not a mere identity at arm's length, but who is Jesus to me? Isaiah has prophesied that Jesus will be the mighty God. I've argued that Jesus claimed to be and is the mighty God, but is He your mighty God?

Who do you say that He is and perhaps even more importantly, who do you experience Him as in your life? Let's apply that to our lives.

These first couple may seem obvious, but if He is your mighty God, then He receives all your worship, doesn't He? All of it. Do you live as though He's worthy of all honor and praise?

Do you worship Him like that when you are in this room? Do you worship Him like that when you leave this room? Do you pray to Him as though He actually is strong to help you?

[24 : 22] As though nothing is too hard for Him? As though He really intervenes in the world that He has created and would do that in your life? Do you pray to Him like that?

Is He actively and practically your mighty God? Do you seek to obey Him in everything? If He's just a good teacher or an inspirational leader, had some good things to say, then you can follow the things you like and the places you don't understand or don't like, you can just leave Him out like you would with anybody else, right?

If that's all He is, then take what you like and leave the rest. But if He's God, then I must follow all of it, right? We say, sure, of course, yeah, right, but do we live like that?

Are there areas of your life where you'd prefer to stay on the throne, where you've decided you know best, where you're committed to doing it one way regardless of what His Word says?

I'd ask you this morning, are you regularly seeking to know Him and His heart for you more? Do you hunger for this in a way that you want to know what Jesus would have to say into my life or only on the times when you want to look good or when you really feel confused?

[25 : 45] Is He actively and practically your mighty God? Worship Him. Obey Him. And finally, trust Him in every situation.

John Calvin says that's what Jesus being the mighty God is about. That the big takeaway from this is that we may now rely on Him with safety.

That He is strong for us and for our salvation in every circumstance. We can trust that. And we're going to get to talk more about this in the next couple of weeks.

But Isaiah here in chapter 9 sees God's people. What He says is coming for them is they're going to be oppressed. He sees them as weak. He sees them as failing.

And that's where God's people are going to be, Isaiah says, when this prophecy comes true. And it's going to be to those oppressed, weak, failing people that to us, a son is born.

[26 : 52] To us, Isaiah says, there's a child coming and He's going to be given to us. Do you see the glory of what He's saying? Do you see God's solution to our problems and our weakness and failing?

The mighty God has come to us. The point we noticed at the beginning that the title is given to a baby in a manger, come to earth to walk among us, to suffer with us.

He has given Himself to us. That's the child Isaiah is speaking of. Listen, friends, God is indeed strong and mighty.

He is great and powerful. But He's not removed and distant from you. He's not a theoretical mighty God.

He has entered in. He has come to be your mighty God to rescue you. Every other religion in the world seeks to say, how do we get to God?

[28 : 04] Every idea we come up with, how do we get to God? And biblical Christianity says the story is about this. God came to you. God came to you.

He came to give Himself for you. Isaiah says, the baby you're going to celebrate this Christmas who will enter your pain and walk on this earth is God Himself.

God is the mighty God. The good news of the gospel again today. You've heard it before. It's the same good news.

It's that the mighty God, the creator of the universe has moved towards you, has been born in a stable for you, has died on a cross for you, is coming again to take you to be with Him and has set this table before you to invite you to commune with Him and be His friend.

That's the good news of the gospel. That's what it means for Jesus to be the mighty God who created it all, who reigns over all of it today, for whom nothing is too hard.

[29 : 17] He's come to you. Emmanuel, Emmanuel, God with us. that's what we celebrate at this table.

That's what it reminds us of. That He is strong for us. We can trust Him. He's come to be with you.

He's not waited for you to get stronger, to figure it out, to clean yourself up. He's come to give Himself for you in your weakness, in your sin, in your refusal to acknowledge Him as God.

Jesus comes to you, gives Himself for you, and invites you to eat with Him. The mighty God. On the night He was betrayed, Jesus took bread and broke it and said, this is My body which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of Me. In the same way also He took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of Me.

[30 : 33] For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Because He desired so strongly to have a relationship with you, and because you weren't strong enough to get to Him, the mighty God came to you and gave Himself for you.

He came to meet with you. He set the table this morning. He extended the invitation and said, come, come eat with Me. If you've known that, if you've known Jesus as the mighty God, if you've known Him as the only way to have your relationship with your heavenly Father restored, then come and eat with great joy this morning.

If you hear some of these things and what Jesus claims and what God's Word says and you think, I don't know about that. That seems a little far-fetched.

If you're not sure who Jesus is or who He is to you personally, then I'd encourage you not to come to this table but to consider the claims of Jesus.

It's a matter, we believe, of life and death, of eternity to take some time to consider that as something we should all do. Who is Jesus?

[31 : 53] What do I do with someone who walks on this earth and claims to be God Himself? If He is indeed the mighty God, then when He says no one comes to the Father except by Me, He's inviting you.

He's inviting you to come to know the God who made you, to know the God who loves you, to know Him through Jesus Himself.

It would be a great honor for any of us to talk with you about Him this morning. Please grab one of us. We'd love to talk with you about Jesus. Pray with me and then we'll come to the table together. Lord Jesus, You are the reason that we are able to fellowship with our Father. You're the reason that He has been able to adopt us into His family because You have paid for our sins, because You have provided our perfect righteousness.

We give You thanks and praise this morning. Would You set these elements aside from a common use to a sacred one in our hearts that would push us to remember what You've done for us and to rejoice again in a God who would give Himself for us.

[33 : 15] We ask it in Your name. Amen. Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread and He broke it and gave it to His disciples. As I, ministering in His name, give this bread to you, He said, take, eat.

This is My body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Me. In the same way, after supper, He took the cup and said, this cup is the new covenant in My blood shed for many for the remission of sins.

Drink from it, all of you. Our host team will usher us to the front and to the back and we will feast together. Come, taste and see that the Lord is good and has come to you.

For more information, visit us online at southwood.org. Thank you.

Thank you. You're all right. You're right. What to do on your mind, pat for you? You're right. You're right. Take care. You're right. You're right. Pat. Get ready to meet me, vers constante, and to the back and see you, in all you have to need to read, increase the swear for the evil now.

[34 : 31] ■■ justice over you. All right. Take care. See you. Mayan city.