

Jesus - Wonderful Counsellor

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 December 2016

Preacher: Daniel Ralph

[0 : 00] With me to Isaiah chapter 9, Isaiah chapter 9.

We're going to begin at verse 6. We're going to read the two verses, 6 and 7. Now hear God's word. For to us the 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. Thanks be to God for his reading. Well, we're going to sing. Our focus this morning is not on everything that we read, but it all needs to be read. Our focus this morning is just on that one name of Jesus, the one name among many names, Wonderful Counselor. So here we are at the time of Advent, and we focus on the fact that Jesus came.

[1 : 45] Jesus is King. And the one who's come, according to Isaiah, is the Wonderful Counselor. But what does it mean for Jesus to be a Wonderful Counselor?

We may know what a human counselor is. Don't imagine that when you imagine Jesus as the Wonderful Counselor. What does it mean for him to be a Wonderful Counselor?

Well, I think what we need to do is we need to understand the two words separately, and then we need to understand what the two words mean together when Jesus is called a Wonderful Counselor.

So if you think of perfection when you think of wonderful, then you're beginning to understand what Jesus is. That's what wonderful means in the context here.

It doesn't mean wonderful in the sense that's a beautiful flower. It doesn't mean wonderful in the sense that that's a marvelous sunset. It means absolute perfection. In fact, it means God.

[2 : 44] Wonderful is a reference to God himself. Now, an example of this can be found in the book of Judges. Now, a theophany, if you don't know what a theophany is, a theophany is an angel of the Lord that turns up and speaks to God's people, but the angel of the Lord is God himself.

But he manifests himself as the angel of the Lord. Now, Manor, the man in Judges, asks the angel of the Lord, What is your name?

And the angel of the Lord replies, saying, Why do you ask my name, seeing that it is wonderful? In other words, why do you ask my name when you're not going to be able to comprehend how great it is?

Why do you ask me my name when your ability to truly understand what wonderful is is just not big enough or great enough to be able to comprehend just how wonderful wonderful is?

So we're a bit on the back foot here. So to understand what wonderful means, we have to go beyond the natural. We have to go beyond what we see when we look at any beautiful landscape.

[4 : 01] We have to go beyond what we see when we look at any beautiful flowers or arrangements or even a tree. We have to go beyond all of that, beyond the natural, to something supernatural.

And that's what is being referred to here. Wonderful does not refer to something that is natural. It is referring to something that is supernatural.

Then we have the word counselor. And the word counselor here is in reference to rule or governance or he has the right to say and affect anything that he does.

So this wonderful counselor is not like one that may sit in a room with a glass door, you know, so that you can see what's going on for accountability purposes, that just so happens to speak some kind of words to you that might or might not benefit you.

No, this counselor has words that determine. This counselor have words that divides. They are right and wrong. He doesn't give advice.

[5 : 05] He gives counsel. This is the way that it is. This is the way that it should be. And that is not the way it ought to be. And so this counselor is not like any normal counselor in the sense that we've got to understand who it is that's speaking.

And God is speaking. In other words, the God who is speaking here is the same God who speaks in creation.

In other words, when you look at God speaking in creation, what do you see? Well, you see things start coming into being. You see things out of nothing become something. So now we're beginning to understand what it means to see Jesus as a wonderful counselor.

In other words, his words create. Let me try and explain it like this. When you say the word sunshine, you're so clever, but you're only being descriptively clever.

You can say the sun is shining. You can say sunshine. And you're describing what the sun does, or you're describing what the sun is going to do tomorrow. When God says sunshine, he commands that very action to happen.

[6 : 21] In other words, he brings it into existence. Something that didn't shine before or didn't even exist before. When God says sunshine, suddenly you have the sun and it shines.

So when you think of Jesus as a wonderful counselor, you are not to think of someone who's going to sit in a small room with you and just tell you the right amount of words that he thinks you need to hear.

Not even close. This wonderful counselor has come to have governance. He's come to rule. He's come to be the king. He is wonderful, truly wonderful.

But he can also change things with the very words that he speaks. So he is a wonderful counselor, which means that he is incomprehensible.

He is beyond the natural. But when he speaks, he can change things. He speaks wisdom. He speaks his rule over your life into this world.

[7 : 24] What he says, in other words, goes. In other words, to be a real man, there's a few men in the fellowship here. There may be a few less than what we see.

But to be a true man is to accept that Jesus Christ is the ruler. And to be a true woman is to accept also that you're not to have the same kind of desire that Eve had.

You see, most men who misread Genesis, and most women who misread Genesis as well, get to that point where it says that Eve shall desire her husband as though it's a wonderful thing.

There's nothing wonderful about it at all. Because the word desire there is the same word for Satan when he kneels at the door waiting for an opportunity.

He desires to rule over you. So in both cases, Christ is the ruler and we are not. And he rules with wonderful counsel.

[8 : 27] But more importantly, what he says goes. So here's a couple of things. Whoever comes to me, I will never cast out. What he says goes.

Here's another one. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. What he says goes. In other words, when Jesus says this, it's going to happen.

It's not just counsel in the sense that they're great words, but they are words that affect the change that they're actually speaking about. So here's good reasons for listening to the wonderful counselor.

That they're never only words in the sense that errors are only words. In Colossians, it says this, that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge in Christ.

In Hebrews, in chapters one and four, it says that Jesus understands that he upholds the universe by the power of his word.

[9 : 33] He does all of that by himself. And we shouldn't forget what we're told in Psalm 193. David understood this, that actually God understands you better than you understand yourself, that God's understanding of human knowledge is better than human understanding of human knowledge.

In other words, God understands you inside out. That's why he is going to be the perfect savior. He knows exactly what you want, exactly what you need. He knows exactly who you are.

He knows exactly what you're thinking right now. And God deals with us appropriately to what we think and what we say and what we do. Let me put it this way.

God's not mocked. Remember Galatians? God is not mocked. You will reap what you sow. So what you think, what you act, what you do, what you believe, it may not, it may not come back on you tomorrow.

It may not come back on you next year. It may not even come back on you for the amount of time I'm your pastor, but it will come back. Why? Because God is not mocked. What God says, goes.

[10:51] And his understanding of us is greater than our understanding of us. So we should listen to the wonderful counselor, who is Jesus.

Now here's, these are many parts what makes the wonderful counselor wonderful. But most importantly, he doesn't come, you'll notice saying, well, I'll see what I can do. He doesn't come to the earth saying, well, let me run a survey and figure out exactly what people want.

He doesn't say, let me first sit down and listen in a counseling setting to find out what your need is.

No, he knows. He doesn't need to do any of that. Jesus, Jesus doesn't need to do any of that.

He knows what you're thinking even before you are going to think it. He knows what you're going to say even before you said. He has, as David rightly says, a knowledge too wonderful for me.

David understood that he cannot even attain it. It is so high. It is so great. I can't even get close to what God understands to be true about me. This is the wonderful counselor who speaks.

[11:59] This is the one who can say to you, come on to me and I will take every burden you have and carry it for you. I will take every weight you have and carry it for you. They're not just words.

He can actually do what he says. So here's what we should see when we look at Jesus. I'll give you an example from John chapter 11.

Now this is a famous chapter for a whole number of reasons because Jesus is told that Lazarus would die if he didn't come and Jesus didn't go and Lazarus died.

Jesus turns up several days later and Martha and Mary, neither can truly understand why Jesus did this, but Jesus already said that it would be for the glory of God.

When he turns up, Martha, well, she's just got loads of questions. Where were you? What were you doing? It's that type of, you know, attitude that's coming across to Jesus.

[12:58] And Jesus says to her, well, don't worry, Mary, Lazarus will rise again. And she says, yeah, no, in the day of the resurrection. And Jesus doesn't really answer that because he knows in a moment, in a moment, he's going to raise Lazarus from the dead.

So he doesn't really enter into her question because she thinks that everyone's going to raise from the dead in the future, which is true. But she doesn't imagine that it's going to happen to Lazarus literally in the next few moments.

Now he goes to Mary and Mary's crying. And the most interesting thing you notice about that is Jesus sits down next to her and he starts crying.

And I've always found that strange that why would Jesus sit down and weep when in a few moments he knows he's going to raise Lazarus from the dead? Then it says he was deeply moved and he brought the dead body of Lazarus back to life.

I think that's a wonderful example of the wonderful counselor. He listens to your questions, but he doesn't necessarily answer them because he knows what's going to come next.

[14:09] He knows that when you're crying, it's probably best just to sit down and cry with you. He enters into your grief, even though he knows exactly what he's going to do next.

But then he speaks. And as he speaks, he brings life at a death. That's your wonderful counselor. That's beyond the natural. That's what it means to truly meet the wonderful counselor. That's what it means to be in the presence of the wonderful counselor.

To be in someone who with words alone can either choose to answer or not answer, but who sits and weeps at you, but at the same time can speak a sentence and bring something that is dead to life.

And perhaps many of you this past week, this past month, even this past year, have cried over loved ones who are not saved. And you've got plenty of questions and you don't feel that Jesus is answering those questions.

[15:13] You feel a bit like Martha. You know, why weren't you here? Why didn't you do something? Why haven't you done something? And Jesus doesn't seem to answer you because he knows what he's going to do.

He knows what he's doing. But then some of you get to the point where you, do you know what?

You fast and you pray and you're on your knees that your daughter or your son or your husband or

your wife or whoever it is returns to the Lord and you're flat out.

And Jesus comes and what does he do? Well, he weeps. He enters into you. It says in Hebrews, he knows what you're going through.

But then here's the thing you need to trust. That not only is he a wonderful counselor, but he's a wonderful counselor who does what counselors do. They speak. And what you long for and what I long for is Jesus Christ to speak into my life in such a way where it changes things.

And I long for Christ to speak into your life in such a way where you change because I know you're not going to change any other way. Now, you need ears to hear and to listen, but we need Christ to speak more often.

[16:28] We need to hear the word of God far more often than what we do. Why? Because the word of God is the only thing that can create change. He is the wonderful counselor.

Well, moving on then, we have to move on to the fact that divine mercy leads to divine demands. Now, this is something that doesn't necessarily sit easy with many of us because there could be many of us who think that the greater the divine mercy, the lesser the demands, right?

It's all about grace. Therefore, this one can pass. That's not what we read, at least in the New Testament. In Luke chapter one, God's people understand how the Lord God has visited them by giving them Jesus, that he has been merciful by giving them Jesus, that he has remembered and kept his promise by giving them Jesus.

And the reason why he has done this, it reads in Luke one, that we may be delivered from the hand of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear. There you have it.

That where you have divine mercy, see, the people of the day understood this, that where you have divine mercy, it is always followed by divine demands that we may serve him.

[17:49] Now, I think that many Christians wrongly believe that the more mercy there is, less are the demands.

In fact, I've heard many conversations that argue it that way when it is actually the other way around. So they say things like, whenever a demand is made, even if it can be proved biblically, they say, well, grace will cover it.

But you're missing the point. Divine grace, divine mercy, leads to divine demands. It doesn't lessen them. It doesn't put them out of the way. It doesn't bypass them like a bypass does around a town. It doesn't do that. No, divine mercy is a straight road that leads us straight to the divine demands. You take the woman at the well, for instance. You've got the whole conversation about worship, what is true worship.

You've got the whole conversation about what it is to worship God in spirit and in truth. And then Jesus turns around and says to her, you know, no, that's true. You've got five husbands and the man that you're with now is not your husband.

[19:01] Right? What is he doing? He's making demands. Why can he, why does Jesus have the right to make demands on your life? Well, I'll tell you why he has the right. It's because he has shown you divine mercy.

He has shown you so much divine mercy that it's no longer your will that counts, but his. You're completely to be surrendered to God, the wonderful counselor, who has the right and the rule over your life because he's been so merciful.

Now, he could have left you alone. He could have left you alone to damnation. He could have let you go that way. He could have let you. He says, fine, but he has chosen not to.

But when he chose not to, he chose to also make divine demands over you. What happens today is that it's often the case that divine mercy is elevated at the same time that divine demands are suppressed.

It is true, absolutely true, that you are recipients of divine mercy. And it is absolutely true that you probably couldn't even get close to measuring just how much mercy you and I have received.

[20:16] We couldn't get close to it. But at the same time, how quickly it is that we forget the divine demands that come along with it. Keep this day holy is one.

But here we go. Your mind is flicked through the whole number of things that you may not do to actually keep the day holy. And this isn't to put on us a weight or a burden that isn't to be dealt with. It's simply to stress that that feeling that you feel that I can't do it is right in one sense, but in another sense, you know that you really ought to.

There are divine demands and the people of God, when Jesus turns up, understood that. That now that we have received the promise of Christ, that now God is fulfilled, that now he has shown us mercy, we should serve him.

But the divine demands are not burdensome. Repentance is not burdensome. And confessing your sins is not burdensome. And of course, repentance and confession are two separate things.

[21 : 29] None of this is burdensome. It all liberates us to have more freedom to follow Christ the way that he wants us to. Mercy is about removing you out of the corruption that's found in the world.

And the demands that Christ makes is about telling us how to live in a corrupt world. In other words, don't imitate them. So as we look at Jesus, there's another thing that we ought to remember, that he is an advocate for those who sinned.

And an advocate, like all advocates in court, must have something to say. Now, I've never been in court, but I'd hate to think that if I ever was, and I had an advocate, that I'm hoping that that advocate's got a really cast-iron case, that he's going to be able to say the words that are true and going to be able to back them up.

In other words, an advocate only has words. He can't do anything else. He can only speak. And Christ is our advocate. And what does he say?

What does our wonderful counsel say as we stand in the courtroom of God? Well, he says, you cannot bring a charge against this person because I have taken the judgment for them.

[22 : 52] I have taken their sin upon myself and I've given them my righteousness. That's the type of thing that this advocate says. That is why Christ is our wonderful counselor.

Here's how John puts it. He says, my little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. But, if anyone does sin because he's assuming that we will, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

There it is. That's divine mercy. That's Jesus as the wonderful counselor. That's Jesus as our advocate who with words alone commands us to confess our sin.

But, at the same time, with words, he tells the Father that we are forgiven of every sin. Why? Because we have received the divine mercy.

Now, if you have received the divine mercy, it's only then can you actually confess your sins. Now, I know that some people think it's the other way around, that you confess your sins in order to receive the divine mercy.

[24 : 05] But, you know, a quick look at the scriptures will show you that it just can't be that way around. It is a merciful action of God even for you to be able to confess your sins in the first place.

You did not know that they were sin until Christ pointed them out to you. In other words, the scripture says you are dead in your trespasses and sins. And I've been to a few funeral homes and I've also taken a few funerals and I've also been around several graveyards and I've never seen a dead person complain.

I've never seen a dead person understand that they are sinful or, you know, say, you know, why did you put me in these clothes? I preferred the other suit. You never get it.

Why? Because they're dead. Dead people can't respond. So, the very fact that you can even respond to God by confessing your sins already shows that you have been a recipient of the mercy of God.

You had to have received that in order to acknowledge and confess your sins in the first place. What does that mean? That means that his words are created.

[25 : 10] They create new life in the same way with Lazarus. Here's some final thoughts as we conclude. One thing that you should never forget is this, that the words of God, most importantly, can never perish, fade, or diminish.

In other words, the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord lasts forever. Now, what does that mean? Well, put it this way, can a bruised reed break? Can a smoldering flax be put out? Well, yeah, of course they can. But it says in the scriptures, a bruised reed he will not break and a flately burning wick he will not quench. He won't do it, but can a bruised reed be broken? Yeah? And can a smoldering flax be put out? Well, yes. Well, let me put it another way. Imagine Jesus and his legs.

Why aren't the legs of Jesus broken? Well, could they be broken? Yeah? Jesus' legs are just like my legs, just like your legs.

[26 : 18] Well, why couldn't they be broken then? Well, were Jesus' legs made of something that no matter how amount of pressure or impact that you make on his legs, they're made of a material that could not be broken.

No, his legs were just like your legs. You take a sledgehammer to them, they're going to break.

You're going to fall off a high cliff like he was tempted to do, to jump off.

If you hit the bottom, they're going to break. But why don't they break? Well, they don't break for this reason. Psalm 34, he keeps all his bones. And not one of them will be broken.

The reason why Christ's legs don't break is because the word of God can't be broken. Not because Christ's legs can't be broken. Here's another example in John 19, but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

Could they break his legs? Yeah, they could break his legs, but they didn't. Why not? Because the word of God cannot be broken. And the word of God said that his legs will not be broken. So when you hear the words of this wonderful counselor, you're hearing words that cannot be broken.

[27 : 34] Can you be broken? Yes. But the words of God concerning you cannot be broken. The words of God spoken over your life cannot be broken. Can you, like a smoldering wax, if you're feeling that, be put out?

Yeah, you could be put out. Can you, like a bruised reed, if you're feeling like a bruised reed, break? Yeah, of course you can break. But you won't break because of the word of God's concerning you.

And the word of God concerning you cannot be broken. And those words that cannot be broken say that you will not be broken. That's what it means to listen and to be part of the wonderful counselor.

That's who's speaking. We are moving beyond the natural to the supernatural of Christ who speaks and changes you with his words.

That's the one who's come and that's the one that we celebrate at this time of year in Advent. The wonderful counselor came. Amen.