

## Wonderful Counselor

Isaiah 9.6

**Intro** – Whether you know it or not we are a room full of people in need of therapy! It's time for us all to sign up for some counseling!

Well, a little more seriously, counseling is one of the hardest portions of a pastor's job description. One of the reasons is that I don't always know if the person is telling me the truth. Another difficulty when doing counseling is that you don't always know what to say! You know, I try to be unflappable and remain cool. I try to act like nothing will ever shock me. But sometimes, people do some shocking things! Occasionally, I just want to say, "you did what!?"

And then sometimes, I don't really know how to help people. There are times, when the sin is so tangled, I can't find the end of the sting to help state untangling the mess.

But what if we could all sign up for counseling with Jesus Christ! Well... now that I think about it... That might be a little intimidating.

Our passage this morning refers to the name of the coming Messiah of Israel as "Wonderful Counselor". Let's look again at **Isaiah 9.6**

**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.**

**Transition** – This morning, I want us to focus on the fact that as Wonderful Counselor, Jesus was exactly what Israel needed, He is exactly what individuals need, and He is exactly what the whole world needs...

### 1. Israel's need for the Wonderful Counselor

- a. Israel had a problem. Their king was not wise. King Ahaz was wily and crafty, but he was not godly. His trust was in himself not God, and He refused to listen to the Word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah. Israel had to pay the price for a king that would not listen to wise counsel.
- b. This had actually been going on for a long time. Remember back in the days of Reheboam, Solomon's son. The wise men of the kingdom advised Reheboam to lighten the tax burden on the people, simplify the standard of royal living, and make life a little easier on the masses. Instead of listening to wise counsel, Reheboam listened to his young friends and decided to increase the tax burden on the people. And the kingdom promptly split in two. The strength of the nation was never the same, and the people had been suffering the consequences ever since.
- c. Israel needed a king that would be a Wonderful Counselor.
- d. In fact, toward the end of Moses' life, he gathered all the nation together in an assembly. And Deuteronomy 32 says that he gave to them the words of a song. And in the song he exhorts the nation, he memorializes the great works of God in their history, and he also takes some time to describe the nation. And sometimes the description of the nation is more like a rebuke. And here is one of the lines of Moses' song to them...

**"For they are a nation void of counsel,**

- and there is no understanding in them.** (Deuteronomy 32:28)
- e. What Moses meant was that they always seem to have a hard time following the plans and purposes of God. They were “void of counsel” because they abandoned the Law of God.
  - f. Israel’s nation had been split in two, they were facing foreign invasion, they were led by politicians instead of prophets, and they were all hurting for it... all because they had rejected the wisdom of God in the Law. They needed a Wonderful Counselor! This promise would have warmed the souls of the godly in Israel in expectation of a better day when wisdom instead of folly prevailed.
  - g. **Application** – And Israel is a perfect picture of us. We do not naturally submit to the wisdom of the Wonderful Counselor. We are more likely to set our course based on our own selfishness. Then when we reap the relational and financial and personal consequences of our actions we might be open to the wisdom of Jesus.  
- So we should just ask ourselves this morning whether or not we are ready to receive counsel from Jesus. Are we through with charting our own course? Are we done with accepting the wisdom of the world? Have we had enough of trusting in ourselves?
  - h. **Transition** – So, thinking about Israel’s need for the Wonderful Counselor should also make us consider...

## 2. The World’s need for the Wonderful Counselor

- a. Someday this world will be ruled by the Wonderful Counselor. Isaiah says that... “the government shall be upon his shoulder... of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end.” The kingdom of Christ will be established by justice and righteousness.
- b. Jesus’ reign will be wonderful because of His wisdom.
- c. Everything from watching yet another corrupt governor be sentenced to do prison time to hearing about slave traffic and genocide reminds us of the desperate need for this world to be ruled by the Wonderful Counselor.

### And by the way...

There is an interesting connection between Israel’s need of the Wonderful Counselor and the world’s need of the Wonderful Counselor. Back in Isaiah’s time Israel was struggling under the foolish reign of Ahaz. 750 years later, God sent His Son, the Wonderful Counselor, to Israel but the majority rejected Him. However, Paul the Apostle wrote these very hopeful words in Romans 11...

**Romans 11:25-26** - ...I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. <sup>26</sup>And in this way all Israel will be saved...

And for various reasons that I don’t have time to go into, it seems like that spiritual awakening among the Jewish people to Jesus their Messiah will probably come very close to the end of the age, roughly just before the coming of the Wonderful Counselor to rule the world!

**Transition** – And that brings us to # 3...

## 3. Individuals’ need for the Wonderful Counselor

- a. Whatever else “Wonderful Counselor” means it certainly means that Jesus was wise! And there are countless places in the account of Jesus’ ministry where we see His great wisdom...
- b. In **John 4** Jesus is sitting on the side of a well and asked a woman for a drink of water. She enters into conversation with Jesus and things get around to spiritual things and she starts arguing with Jesus. Finally, Jesus tells her to go and call her husband, when she claims to have no husband, Jesus responds by saying that what she has said is true because even though she’s been married 5 different times, the guy she’s living with now is not her

husband! **Jesus knew her most telling sin and called her out on it!** Her very next words were, "I perceive that you are a prophet!"

- c. One of the things that is helpful in counseling is compassion. Jesus was incredibly compassionate. Listen to the compassion in...

**Matthew 23:37 - "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!**

Jesus would have liked to provide protection and guidance to the whole nation of Israel, but they refused it.

- d. Another thing that we see in Jesus as the Wonderful Counselor is His grace. He didn't burden people with legalism or with guilt, He offered them the power of grace!

**Matthew 11:28-30 - Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**

Jesus offers us grace. He offers us a "yoke" that is light. He offers us rest and peace from striving on our own. When we "go to Jesus for counseling", which we do by the way by listening to His Word, He doesn't say, "do this & don't do that". He says, let me help you with that! He says, I've already done it all for you!

Of course, Christ's ease yoke and light burden doesn't erase the need for obedience and commitment in the Christian life. It is just grace empowered obedience. It is a commitment with which we have the partnership of Jesus.

- e. You know, as we've been going through the Gospel of Mark this past fall, we've seen the wisdom of Christ again and again. He has taught us that the way to be first is to be last, the way to be great is to be servant of all (Mark 9.33ff).
- f. Also, as we look at the Sermon on the Mount beginning in Matthew 5, there is no better wisdom than learning...

- i. poverty in spirit
- ii. mourning over our sin
- iii. hungering and thirsting after righteousness
- iv. learning to be a peacemaker
- v. learning to forgive

These are WISE ways to live!!!

- g. And Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor because He is GOD! The word "wonderful" could be translated "supernatural". Jesus' wisdom is beyond the realm of human explanation.
  - i. He knows the hearts of men and He knows the future! No wonder He can offer such good counsel!
- h. **Application** – Of course the question for us is whether or not we personally see the wisdom of Jesus' way of living. Have we been thoughtful enough about life and living to realize that our ways are naturally foolish and God's are wise? Have we examined our lives or are we just going through our days wondering why our souls are dry and our way is hard? Jesus does offer us true wisdom for living! In fact, Jesus is Wisdom itself!

**1 Corinthians 1.30 – But of Him are we in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.**

Jesus is our Wisdom from God if we will receive Him.

When Martin Luther was preaching on this passage back at Christmas time in 1532, he said this...

"We must, therefore, treasure this name 'Wonderful' so that we're not misled by external trappings..." *Luther was talking about the external trappings of Rome, but I*

*think that when we see Christ as truly wonderful it should guard our hearts against the external trappings of the world, or against the external trappings of faddish, modern Christianity!*

**Conclusion** – Now... here's where this all comes into focus for our personal lives. The context of Isaiah's prophecy brings in the final application. We talked about this last week. The book of Isaiah starts with doom and gloom and gets even worse. Just about all the people of God in Isaiah's time could expect was darkness and defeat, invasion and captivity. But Isaiah prophecies that all of that will change because of a Baby being born. And we mentioned last week also that we all have our own personal darkness to deal with. Our hearts are stained with sin and scarred with the results of our own selfishness and foolishness.

If we want to see that personal darkness changed into light, we have to sign up for some sessions with the Wonderful Counselor! If we want to see the darkness of depression lifted, the evil of anger recede, the burden of guilt unloaded, we have to come to the Wonderful Counselor, Jesus Christ.

So, if we could imagine ourselves calling up and making an appointment with Jesus, what would He say? Well, I think that He would say basically three or four things...

- **First** of all, Jesus would call upon us to repent of our sins. Recognize that even though our sins are our own worst nightmare, that isn't the worst of it. Our sins are AGAINST GOD. Our pettiness, our backbiting, our little idolatries are all rebellion against God's law and violations of His holy character. When we see the horror of our sins being against the most glorious and good King there ever could possibly be, we should readily, quickly turn away from them. We should be anxious to be rid of them.
- **Second**, Jesus would tell us to trust Him. You can't benefit from the wisdom of a counselor that you don't trust. But of course trusting Jesus goes way beyond a relationship with a human counselor. Trusting Jesus means truly believing that His death on the cross merits your salvation from God's wrath and forgiveness of your sins against God. Trusting Jesus means believing that HE paid the price for your sin.
- **Third**, Jesus would tell us to obey and follow Him. If we want darkness to change to light, we have to be willing to swallow the prescriptions that Jesus gives. We have to live in the humble servanthood that He prescribes. We have to learn to be peacemakers. We have to hunger and thirst after righteousness.
- And then **finally**, if we scheduled an appointment with Jesus, I think that He would talk to us about what we see as valuable. That is one of the most important things in helping people. For example, we have to get the teenager to see the true and lasting value of honoring her parents over the temporary value of telling them off. We have to get the arrogant man to see the real value of Christ-like servanthood over the empty value of domineering his family with bullying. And that is where the Messiah' name "Wonderful Counselor" brings us full circle. Jesus is of ultimate value! He is truly Wonderful! And when we begin to see the great and lasting value of HIM, then we can set aside the lesser values of our sinful idolatries. When we see the eternal value of living for Him, then we can see the petty value of lust or pride, anger or bitterness, greed or dishonesty for what it really is: worthless dust in light of the solid gold of Jesus and a relationship with Him!

**Is Jesus truly WONDERFUL to you?**