

Sunday Sermon
December 13
What Child Is This?
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.

Said Ronald Reagan, “the most terrifying words in the English language are: I’m from the government and I’m here to help.” And yet it is to the government that many today are looking for help. We are gradually being overrun and enslaved by a culture of fear... fear of being politically correct or incorrect, fear of ISIS, fear of Islam, fear of economic ruin, fear of being overrun by immigrants, fear of the action or the inaction of government, fear of World War III. The list goes on and on. Who can help us? Who will save us? Where is the leader that we long for? Isaiah answers that question. The end of fear, and the end of war, is coming in a person – once a child but now a king! *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.* The child of the first advent will be the coming King in the Second Advent. The “child born” points to Christ’s humanity and the “Son given” points to his deity. God’s answer to everything that has ever terrorized us is a child. Indeed the power of God is so far superior to the powers of this world, and all the big shots of this world, that he can defeat them by coming as a mere child. His answer to the bullies swaggering through history is not to become an even bigger bully. His answer is in the person and character of Jesus! So ultimately the answer to our problems and fears is not found in bigger government or smaller government, but in divine government. Look then as Isaiah gives us a portrait of the coming King of Kings. How will this ultimate political leader lead? What will be the character of the Messiah’s regime? Isaiah answers these questions by giving us four descriptive titles of this coming world leader:

I. There will be *no more confusion* because He is the *Wonderful Counselor*.

The word *wonderful* in this passage literally means “incomprehensible.” The Messiah will cause all of us to be “full of wonder.” Now this term is much weightier than the way we use it in normal conversation today. We say things are “wonderful” if they are pleasant, lovely or likable. Jesus is wonderful in a way that is boggling to the mind. Indeed, the same word for “wonderful” is used in Judges 13:18 when Manoah, Samson’s father, asked the LORD (in a theophany) what His name was. The angel of the LORD responded, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?” In other words, “*Why do you ask my name, since it is way beyond your comprehension or understanding?*”

The title *counselor* refers to his ability to give guidance or advice. He is able to advise His people thoroughly because He is qualified in ways no human counselor is. He exhaustively knows human nature. He knows you through and through. He knows your every motive, your every emotion, your every desire and your every experience. He knows all the “stuff” you are going through. And he knows the exact counsel that you need in facing any problem or any decision in your life. Further, he knows that not just for you, but for all tongues, tribes, and nations.

Therefore as the coming king, he does not have to turn to anyone else for counsel. Many of our politicians turn everywhere else for counsel. They go to one another; they listen to special interest groups and lobbyists; their actions follow their special polling. They say what we want to hear, not what is best or right for us! But King Jesus will be different. As Isaiah says, “Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel?” When Christ rules the world there will be no uncertainty in his administration. He will have the ultimate and only true answer to every political problem, every situation, and the need of every nation. Imagine that! And all his decisions will be just and right.

How markedly this new reality will contrast to our present day reality of abject distrust for government. **Exit polling from the 2014 midterms makes clear that people are highly skeptical of politicians. Just**

20 percent said they trusted the government to do what's right "always" or "most" of the time, while 79 percent said they trusted the government only "some" of the time or "never." The collapse of our collective trust in the government—and, by extension, its ability or willingness to help solve problems—has massive reverberations for politicians. They are considered less-than-honest brokers by large numbers of the American public, meaning that everything they say or do is viewed with suspicion. Sadly, this lack of trust has become the new normal.

II. There will be *no more consternation* because He is the *Mighty God*.

Christ will not only know what to do concerning the nations, but he will have the power to do it and no one will be able to impede his progress in doing it. No army will be able to withstand him. There will be no gridlock in his administration. **It was interesting to hear recently that Obama was “playing God” when he pushed everything through by executive order. Christ will rule by executive order! But he will not be “playing God” because he is very God!** No more will we experience any consternation that the right and holy thing is being blocked by Congress, the Supreme Court or by the president. No more legal abortion, selling of fetus body parts, gay marriage, terrorist shootings! That which is right and perfect will become the norm in his government. There will be no such thing as corruption, political favors, or ineptitude. This is inviting news to our young adults who have become completely disgruntled and disenchanted with our government. **In a 2011 book, researcher Christian Smith concludes that American young adults (aged 18-23) are becoming less involved in politics and in trying to change the world for the better. They have given up. Smith cites six different types of political involvement among young adults:**

The politically apathetic—27 percent

The politically uninformed—13 percent

The politically distrustful—19 percent

The politically disempowered—10 percent

The marginally political—27 percent

The politically involved—4 percent

Smith concludes: Most emerging young adults in America have extremely modest hopes, if any, that they can change society or the world for the better, whether by volunteering or anything else It is not that [they] are ... "me first" social climbers They simply think of themselves as "realistic" about the likely influence they might have on society and the world around them They often think investing in public life is not their responsibility, but rather [the responsibility] of wealthier, more famous, and more powerful people. And so most steer clear of civic participation, public engagement, and political life.

III. There will be *no more cares* because He is the *Everlasting Father*.

Why call Jesus "Father?" He so perfectly represents God the Father that he will provide a fatherly reign. Jesus is before, above, and beyond time, the Creator of all things - the Father of Eternity.

1. Subsequently, he will *forever* act as a father would for his children. Contrary to some earthly dads, he will never die nor will he ever desert us. He is the eternal ruler who will always be there for us. His administration will never end! He will never experience a "lame duck" presidency.

2. As Creator Father, he was the one who created us and therefore knows what is best for us and for the nations. He will never be perplexed or befuddled as to what is best for the nations.

3. As a father he gave his life for us and for his the nations. And that same unconditional love will be demonstrated in his provision of food, shelter, protection, and perfect fellowship between us and each other. There will be no want for any good thing in the "Edenic" earth. Gone will be all poverty, all injustice, and all discrimination.

I recently read a story that reminded me of our God's patient love with his children and I was once again consumed with yearning for the day when Christ will rule the earth with that kind of love.

Shea Seranno had just taken the exit ramp near his home when his car sputtered and died. Trying unsuccessfully to restart the car, he called a tow truck. The wrecker promptly arrived and deposited his car in the driveway. Serrano popped the hood and fiddled with the wires and hoses a bit. Having exhausted his less-than-vast auto repair knowledge, he called his father. His father listened as he explained what had happened.

His father simply responded, "I'll come up there tomorrow after work." Shea's father lived 215 miles from him. His dad was going to drive up after driving a city bus for 10 hours. Shea's father arrived on his doorstep three hours after he had turned in his bus at the depot. He said hello, hugged his son, and walked back out to the driveway to have a look under the hood. It took about 15 seconds. His father emerged from under the hood, looked at his son, returned his wrench to his toolbox, and walked past Shea to his own vehicle. "What's wrong? Did you not bring the right tools?" Shea asked. "We're done," his dad replied. "What's wrong with it?" "It's out of gas, son." Shea's dad ate with his son, and headed home. Another 215 miles. 430 miles round trip after 10 hours of driving a bus. Seranno says his father didn't harass him or berate him that evening over dinner. He didn't even bring it up at all. As a matter of fact, nine years later, his father had still never mentioned the embarrassing incident again. We have and will one day directly and daily experience a "Dad" like that.

IV. There will be *no more conflict* because *He is the Prince of Peace*.

We have never really had peace on earth in the sense that we think of it. Wars and rumors of wars have characterized the two millennia since the announcement of Christ's birth and of peace on earth in Luke 2:14. The Prince of Peace will bring a reign of peace like nothing else in history, and will result in the complete cessation of war across the entire globe. During the present age we see glimpses of that coming peace in that all who receive Christ as Savior experience both peace with God (where the war is over between them and God) and as they live in obedience to Christ, they experience the peace of God (tranquility of soul) in their lives. But there will one day be a global peace. This peace will be made sure by the establishment of a kingdom in which Christ will rule the earth with a "rod of iron." There will be no coup d'état, no insurrection, not even the slightest threat to disturb the peace he brings to the world. Isaiah 9:7 says, "*There will be no end to the increase of his government or peace.*" In other words, this government characterized by peace will keep expanding and improving. *The hymn "Like a River Glorious" accurately speaks of this global peace that is "perfect, yet it floweth fuller every day, perfect, yet it groweth deeper all the way."*

In a sermon entitled *The Beauty of Biblical Justice*, Pastor Timothy Keller defines the biblical concept of *shalom* as universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight. Keller states, "God created the world to be a fabric, for everything to be woven together and interdependent." Keller illustrates his point with the following picture of biblical *shalom*: "If I threw a thousand threads onto the table, they wouldn't be a fabric. They'd just be threads lying on top of each other. Threads become a fabric when each one has been woven over, under, around, and through every other one. The more interdependent they are, the more beautiful they are. The more interwoven they are, the stronger and warmer they are. God made the world with billions of entities, but he didn't make them to be an aggregation. Rather, he made them to be in a beautiful, harmonious, knitted, webbed, interdependent relationship with one another." There is coming a day when this *shalom* will be a reality. To quote a Steve Green song, "*When his kingdom comes what a difference. When things are on earth as they are in heaven.*"

Conclusion

There is certainly some justification for fear in our society. Franklin Graham on his Facebook page, this past Wednesday, stated that "for some time I have been saying that Muslim immigration into the United States should be stopped until we can properly vet them or until the war with Islam is over. Donald J Trump has been criticized by some for saying something similar. Research shows that there are 2.75 million Muslims living in the United States. According to a poll commissioned by the Center for Security Policy, 51% of Muslims living in America believe "Muslims in America should have the choice of being governed according to sharia or Islamic law instead of the U.S. Constitution. 29% agreed that violence against those who insult Mohammed is acceptable, and 25% agree that violence against America can be justified as part of a global jihad. Among males under the age of 45, that number rises to 36%. And 29% of males under 45 believe that violence against America is justified in order to make sharia the law of the land. This is frightening. What do we do in the face of all this? As Ray Ortlund has said, "Look at Jesus. As the *Wonderful Counselor*, he has the best ideas and strategies. Let's follow him. As the *Mighty God*, he defeats his

enemies easily. Let's hide behind him. As the *Everlasting Father*, he loves us endlessly. Let's enjoy him. As the *Prince of Peace*, he reconciles us while we are still his enemies. Let's welcome his dominion."