Good to be back & thank everyone for last week, esp. Roger

Prayer service 6pm

Ministry meeting 1/7/23 - 9am

Prayer

Unto Us...

Isaiah 9:6

12/11/22

Christmas, for some, can be an especially discouraging time of year. One often hears of those suffering from “seasonal depression” or the “holiday blues” as they contemplate the loss of a loved one, a failed marriage, unemployment, or perhaps a child who simply won’t come home or even the financial pressure of being unable to provide gifts for their family.

But I have good news for you today! You have a reason to rejoice that far exceeds the combined effect of the difficulties and disappointments you may be facing. The reason comes in the form of six gifts from God! Now these gifts aren’t the sort of gifts that you find wrapped with ribbon and bow and placed under a tree, but these gifts are embodied in one person: Jesus Christ. Listen closely: Look at our scripture today.

* Isa. 9:6

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (KJV)*

These gifts are six glorious truths concerning the person of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

But before we begin to unwrap them, one by one, there are a couple of things to note.

* First, when the prophet says his name shall be “called” Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, etc., he does not mean that Jesus actually bears these names, as if his mother Mary might have said: “Go tell ‘Wonderful Counselor’ that dinner is ready!” Rather, these names or titles are descriptive of his character and personality. He IS the kind of person the names portray him to be.
* Also, these are not merely the names or titles or descriptive phrases of some ancient historical figure. These are more than lyrics in a chorus or words on a Christmas card. These names and titles express what Jesus is to you, in you, and for your sake.

So, I suggest that you read this passage personally: “For to ME a child is born, to ME a son is given . . .”

Each gift has a tag with a single word.

**(1) Sympathy**

When the prophet declares that to us a “child is born” and a “son” is given, he highlights the fact that Jesus was and is a human being! Fully God and fully man. Wholly human and wholly divine. Both the son of a virgin peasant girl and the Son of Almighty God!

What significance does this have for you?

* Simply this, that “*…it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters,[a] so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. 18 Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.”* (Heb. 2:17-18).
* In other words, “*we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things just as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let’s approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help at the time of our need*.” (Heb. 4:15-16).

There is no temptation or trial that he cannot understand. There is no struggle or sadness with which he cannot sympathize. There is no hardship or difficulty for which he cannot provide strength to endure.

**(2) Supremacy**

The “government”, declares the prophet, “shall be upon his shoulder.” If Jesus is more than able to shoulder the weight of the world, he can surely bear your burdens!

Contrast this with the structure of our government and its separation of powers. The Legislative, Judicial, and Executive branches are designed, among other reasons, so that no one person or group of individuals should bear the weight of the whole. But Jesus rules alone!

Supremacy of power and authority rests with him. He is the King of kings, President of presidents, and Judge of all judges.

Colossians 1:15-16 says “*15 Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation,16 for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see*

*and the things we can’t see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him.*

Merriam-Webster’s dictionary defines supreme as “highest in rank or authority” or “highest in degree or quality.” In essence, there is none better. The supreme of something is its ultimate. Jesus is the ultimate in power, glory, authority, and importance. The supremacy of Christ is a doctrine surrounding the authority of Jesus and His God-nature. In the simplest of terms, to affirm the supremacy of Christ is to affirm that Jesus is God.

When we understand the supremacy of Christ, we have a more accurate view of Him. We more fully understand the depth of His love; we are more able to receive and to respond to His love. The supremacy of Christ is central to an accurate view of His Person, His work, our status as believers, and the Kingdom.

Terrorists may destroy, politicians may posture, armies maneuver and nations threaten, but Jesus Christ sits on the throne in unchallenged and unassailable supremacy!

**(3) Sagacity**

He is the “Wonderful Counselor”!

Sagacity is the quality of having or showing understanding and the ability to make good judgments: Can you think of any situation in which Jesus said the wrong thing, or spoke out of turn, stuck his foot in his mouth, or remained silent when his words were needed?

The word wonderful in this passage literally means “incomprehensible.” The Messiah will cause us to be “full of wonder.” The word is much weightier than the way it’s used in normal conversation today—we say things are “wonderful” if they are pleasant, lovely, or the least bit likable. Jesus is wonderful in a way that is boggling to the mind.

How does He show He is the “wonderful” One?

* In His power to heal (Matthew 4:23),
* His amazing teaching (Mark 1:22),
* His perfect life (Hebrews 4:15),
* and His resurrection from the dead (Mark 16:6).

Jesus taught many wonderful things that are counterintuitive to the human mind:

* “Blessed are those who mourn” (Matthew 5:4).
* “Rejoice and be glad” in persecution (Matthew 5:11–12).
* “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you” (Luke 6:27).
* Jesus’ kind of wonderful is awe-inspiring and superior to any other kind, for He is perfect in every way (Matthew 5:48).

The second part of the Messiah’s title is the word counselor. In ancient Israel, a counselor was portrayed as a wise king, such as Solomon, giving guidance to his people. Isaiah uses this word again in his writings to describe the LORD: “*This also comes from the LORD of hosts; he is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom.”* (28:29)

Jesus is a wise counselor.

* “He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person” (John 2:25). He is able to advise His people thoroughly because He is qualified in ways no human counselor is.
* In Christ is “hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3), including the knowledge of all human nature (Psalm 139:1–2).
* Jesus always knows what we are going through, and He always knows the right course of action (Hebrews 4:15–16).

His counsel is unfailing and flawless, perfectly suited to the situation, always practical and prudent. There is no problem on which he needs to “study up” or refer to a professional. He is the professional! There are so many times I feel frustrated with myself to those confused or in need, “I’m sorry, but I don’t know what to tell you.” Jesus is never lacking for advice or an answer to satisfy our souls.

Christ’s position as our Wonderful Counselor means we can trust Him to listen to our problems and guide us in the right direction. We can be sure He is listening because He told us to pray to

Him about our worries (Philippians 4:6; James 1:5). We can be certain He has our best interests at heart because He loves us (1 John 4:19). And His love is so wide and deep (and wonderful) that we cannot fully understand it (Romans 5:8).

And as a bonus... He’s not simply a good counselor or wise counselor but a wonderful counselor. And not only are there wonderful things about Him, He is himself a wonder!

**(4) Sovereignty**

He is the “Mighty God”.

Jesus is not only able to give perfect advice; he is also able to supply us with the power to heed it. He is able to enable you to achieve what he advises! When people leave my presence, taking with them what little wisdom I may have provided, I’ve done all I can do. I can’t energize their wills or empower their hearts or stir their souls to act on what they know to be true. When I preach a message, I can’t make you change, adhere to it, or even make you listen to it...But Jesus can!

Of the six truths about Jesus in this passage, this is the one non-Christians despise the most. The world is willing to acknowledge the “baby” Jesus, “away in a manger,” helpless, cuddly, and vulnerable. Christmas is o.k. if that’s as far as it goes. At this point it poses no threat to one’s sin and pride and personal autonomy. Speak and sing if you must, of swaddling clothes and the tiny, tender infant. But then declare that this babe in a manger is also the Mighty God, Holy, Infinite, Sovereign over all, and they want nothing to do with him. Jesus in a manger is one thing. Jesus on a throne is something else altogether!

Jesus is SOVEREIGN!

**(5) Sensitivity**

Why this word to describe Jesus as “Eternal Father”?

The word “Father” is a descriptive analogy pointing to Christ’s character. What does a “father” do? What image is evoked by the word? I suggest he has in mind the tenderness and sensitivity of a compassionate and affectionate father.

Jesus imitates and reflects his Father. Jesus works as his Father works. Jesus imitates his Father; he does what he sees his Father do. Jesus said, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” And he also said, “The Son can do… only what he sees the Father doing.” (John 5:17,19)

It is the security and love he provides, as well as protection and provision. Jesus, therefore, is fatherly, father-like, in his treatment of us. This is similar to what the psalmist had in mind when he said, “*as a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him*” (Ps. 103:13).

**(6) Serenity**

He is “the Prince of Peace”!

He is the source of all serenity. He himself “is our peace” (Eph. 2:14), having broken down the barriers that divide us from one another and, most important of all, the barriers between us and God (cf. Romans 5:1).

A day is coming when he will establish peace among the nations and subdue all opposition to his rule. But now, in the present, he is here on your behalf to bring peace and joy and tranquility and calm to your heart. “*I have said these things to you,”* spoke Jesus, “*that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33).

At Christmas, children often spend time dividing up the presents under the tree, counting who in the family has the most. Today I’m here to reassure you that you will never go gift-less, not now, not on Christmas morning, nor any other time of the year if you have Jesus.

The six gifts from God were and are specially wrapped and delivered this morning ... for you in the gift of Jesus. He is

* a sympathetic friend,
* a supreme and unchallenged Lord overall,
* wonderfully wise, and always has the right way to go
* always able to act on behalf of those who trust him,
* sensitive and caring and compassionate
* and the giver of all peace and comfort and consolation.

This gift was given to you and for you specifically…Will you receive this Gift of gifts today?