

**He Will Be Called...Wonderful Counselor**  
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Today we are starting a new message series as we begin the traditional season of preparation for Christmas called Advent. A long time ago, followers of Jesus decided that it would be a good idea to spend some time in spiritual preparation and anticipation of the celebration of Jesus' birth, so they set aside the four Sundays before Christmas Day as a season called Advent – from the Latin word, Adventus, which means “coming”.

So this year, as we prepare for Christmas, we are going to look at some of the names used in an ancient prophecy to describe what the Messiah would be like. Isaiah 9:6 is a very famous prophetic passage and in it the prophet Isaiah uses 4 names to describe God's messiah, so we will be using these four names over the next 4 weeks to help us prepare for the celebration of God becoming flesh.

As we're getting started, I want to invite you to take out the sermon outline and study guide...

I want to ask how many people out there are expecting a child soon and are going through the process of choosing a name. I know we have lots of babies around here, so there are many more who went through this naming thing pretty recently. It can be a tricky thing to choose a name. There are books that are written for the express purpose of helping you pick out a name. For those of you who are choosing names, there are some rules out there that nobody really tells you about. You kind of have to discover them on your own. Do you know what I mean?

For example, if you or your spouse ever dated anyone before you met each other, that name is off limits forever and ever, amen! Right? If your parents or your spouse's parents ever knew someone with the same name you are considering, and that person was just a little weird, slightly odd or just plain different, then that name is also off limits! The names of all the bullies or mean girls you went through school with are out! If you are a teacher, then I'm going to guess that there are some former student's names that will not make the cut! And here is maybe the most important one. Dad's it doesn't matter what has been predetermined. When mom has done all that work, she has the right to change her mind!

The whole naming process can take a lot of effort, and it's important. Names often have meanings or they carry the legacy of someone we admire. In the ancient world, names were more than just identifiers; they were descriptive of the nature of a person.

What we're going to do with this series is look at four names given to the coming messiah from the passage in Isaiah chapter 9. Now this prophecy is about 700 years before Jesus was born and it was uttered by Isaiah at a time when there was lots of turmoil when Israel was feeling threatened by the Assyrians. Isaiah was declaring that God would provide a messiah to take care of his people and this is how the prophecy went...

***For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*** Isaiah 9:6 NIV

Today we're going to look at the first name used to describe Jesus in this passage. “Wonderful counselor”. These two words in Hebrew are “pele' ya'ats”. Pele, means amazing Brazilian soccer player. No pele means more literally, “beyond understanding, or too wonderful for words.” Ya'ats means “to guide or counsel”. So the messiah is described as the “the wonderful counselor” or “the guide who is beyond comparison”.

If you think about it, for someone to be able to counsel you well, they have to know something about you. And when you look at the way God choose to fulfill this passage, by taking on flesh,

becoming human and living among us, then I think we can see that God certainly had this desire to know us.

To be a wonderful counselor, he needs to know us and what we are going through. This is what the author of Hebrews describes in chapter 4:15-16...

***For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.***

So what does this wonderful counselor come to do? He comes to help us in our time of need. This high priest, our savior, our wonderful counselor has been through what you are going through. He has been tempted in every way that we are. He understands your pain, he understands your hurt, and he knows the struggles you fight. This passage from Hebrews reminds us that we can be confident about God's grace and mercy because the wonderful counselor has been where we are. And guess where he comes to meet us? In our times of need.

There may be lots of us here today who are in significant times of need. The good news is that we have a wonderful counselor, Jesus. And this wonderful counselor wants to lead us to healing and wholeness.

Before we can truly experience wholeness, we need to recognize where we are sick. Jesus comes for the sick. When Jesus came, he came to those who were in need. Do you remember the story of the time when Jesus calls Matthew, who is a tax collector, to be a disciple, a follower? You remember that tax collectors were corrupt and were working to collect money for a foreign power and that they were seriously despised by everyone, especially the God-fearing, good people.

So when Jesus calls Matthew, Matthew gets so pumped that he throws a big party and he invites all his friends to come and meet Jesus. Now friends of tax collectors are not any better than tax collectors themselves, so the God-fearing good people have a bit of a fit. "Jesus what are you doing hanging out with the corrupt, the unclean, the defiled people?"

Look at what Jesus said to them. It is in Luke 5:31-32. NIV

***Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."*** This is the good news. We need to remember that Jesus is the wonderful counselor who comes for the sick.

So I'm curious, where are you sick? Where do you hurt? Because truthfully, we're all sick at one point or another. Just because of sin in this world, we all battle with weaknesses and vulnerabilities and dysfunctions. Where are you sick?

If we sat down face to face and had a conversation, maybe I could see some part of your sickness, and you could maybe get a glimpse at mine. And if I saw yours and decided to press you on it, some of you might resist. You might say, "Hey, don't go there. Leave me alone. I don't have a problem with this. I'm fine."

For others your sickness may be so obvious that it's futile to try to deny it. Some can hide, they can mask it, but others, it's just obvious for us all to see. Where are you sick?

The holidays have a way of magnifying things. They make the good things seem better, and they make the bad things seem worse. The holidays often magnify our sicknesses. Where are you sick?

It could be that like so many people today, you're just depressed. You wake up every day wondering how you're going to get through the day. And you have no hope that tomorrow's going to be any better. You're simply depressed...this heaviness, this weight, hopelessness.

Some of you may be living in fear. You're always worrying, always wondering what's going to happen. Nothing's good enough, things could get worse and you live with this anxiety.

Some of you are stressed. You're looking at your to do list and thinking "how can I ever get this done? How can I shop for everybody, money's tight, we've got family coming over, the house is a mess, it's crunch time at work and there's the threat of more lay-offs." And you're living under layer upon layer of stress. Where are you sick?

Some of you are lonely. You see happy families around and you say, "Why can't I have that? Why do I go to bed alone, why do I eat alone? I hate it. Hate it."

Some of you may have relational sickness. The holidays are great for that. You have issues with your family and you just don't want to address them. Instead of being excited about being with family over the holidays, you dread it. You don't want to be there. Maybe you've been hurt or you know that someone else has been deeply wounded and you're angry...you're furious, so you just don't want to be anywhere near someone who can call you a brother or sister and do that kind of thing. Where are you sick?

We're all sick at some place in our life. Acknowledge yours and answer the question. Where are you sick?

Remember the good news...there is a wonderful counselor. His name is Jesus and he came for those who are sick.

So let's take just a few more minutes to look at some biblical principles about how we find healing with the wonderful counselor. There are three things we're going to look at here and the first one is that we must **be brutally honest with the counselor**.

We need to be brutally honest with the wonderful counselor because the greatest road block to the counselor's ability to bring healing to us is our failure to be honest with him. Honest opens the door to the healing power of Jesus.

There's a great story in John chapter 4 about a woman who was like so many of us. She just wanted to be loved and be accepted. And she thought if I just meet the right person, then life will have meaning, but she picked some bad guys and ended up going from one man to another and ended up giving up on marriage and was living with another man when she met Jesus. Jesus was obviously very different and he was having a serious conversation with her when he asks her to go get her husband and come back. At this point, she could have told the truth and the conversation would continue, or she could have done what many would do and hid behind her lies.

She decides to tell the truth. "I have no husband" she says. And Jesus says, "Yes, I know. I know your longings and your failures and your sickness. And if you knew who I was you'd ask me for the kind of water that renews, restores, heals, and fills your deepest thirsts."

The woman ends up bringing the whole town out to the well to meet Jesus, the wonderful counselor, who healed all her wounds, so that they could be healed of their sicknesses too.

Maybe today is a good day to be honest with Jesus...maybe scary honest, uncomfortable honest. Because if we're pretending that it's all good, then we're hiding and the counselor can't work with masks and deception. Honesty is our way of giving Jesus permission to change our life. Be brutally honest and say, "Jesus, I need your help with \_\_\_\_\_."

So the first way to open up for healing is to be brutally honest. The second thing is **to listen to the counselor's voice**. If you want to know how important God thinks this is, look at the story of the transfiguration in Mark 9. Do you remember this story? Jesus takes the 3 closest disciples, Peter, James, and John up on a mountain for a mystical, amazing experience. While they are there, Jesus is transfigured into a spiritual being and Moses and Elijah join him. James and Peter and John are watching this and they are blown away, and they're like "what do we do? What do we do?" And Peter says, "I know something we can do. Let's build an altar here just like Abraham and Jacob did at the places where they encountered God." That's when God interrupts to tell them what they really need to do...

***Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"*** Mark 9:7 NIV

The counselor has some things you need to hear...you may not want to hear them, but you need to hear them...so listen to what Jesus wants to say to you.

It's a fair question to ask "How does Jesus speak?" And my response is that there are lots of ways that Jesus speaks to us. The primary way I believe that Jesus speaks is through the scripture. He will use the scripture to speak about something that is going on in your life. Another way Jesus can speak is through inspired preaching. He may use a preacher's words to speak to you about

something he needs you to hear. Jesus may speak to you through other people. He may speak to you through a daily devotional or through that still small voice that is inside of you. There are all kinds of ways that Jesus speaks to us.

If you listen, you can train your soul to hear his voice. Have you ever been in a crowded place with lots of kids and heard someone yell “Daddy” or “Mama” and know that it was your child? How did you know? You have trained your ear to know that voice. Jesus pretty much promised us that we would know his voice. ***My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*** John 10:27 NIV. You can recognize the voice of the wonderful counselor as you learn to listen to him.

So we need to be brutally honest with the counselor and we listen for the counselor’s voice and then thirdly, **we do what the counselor tells us to do.**

I know that seems obvious, but how many times do you pay a doctor for his or her expert opinion and then not do what they tell you to do? I get kidney stones. I’ve had four bouts with them in the last 12 years. The doctor says that the best way to prevent them from forming or to keep the ones that are already developing from getting any larger is to drink lots of water. So while the memory of the pain is still relatively fresh, I do what the doctor says, then after awhile, I stop intentionally drinking water.

I think we do this same kind of thing with Jesus. We don’t do what Jesus tells us to do sometimes because it doesn’t seem to make sense to us, or sometimes because we simply don’t want to. If I’ve learned anything during my journey as a follower of Jesus, it is that he often asks me to do something that I either don’t want to do, or that doesn’t make any sense to me to do.

There’s another story in the gospels about a guy who was like this. He was a very moral person, but he had a sickness. He loved his things. If he lived today, he would be into his house, and cars, and image and comforts. Kind of like most of us, I think. He came to Jesus and asked him what he needed to do to inherit the kingdom of God. Jesus said, “You know the commandments, keep them.” The man responds, “I have, since I was a boy”. Look at what happens next...

***Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*** Mark 10:21 NIV

The first thing we learn is that Jesus looked at him and what? Loved him. Let’s just stay here for a minute. Think about this. Jesus knew this guy’s sickness, but still he loved him. And because Jesus loved him, Jesus told him something that he didn’t want to hear, but needed to hear. What was Jesus’ motivation? Love. He loved him. He wants to set him free from his sickness, so he tells him what he needs to do. In most of the healing stories Jesus ends up telling the people who are healed to do something. “Get up and walk, take your mat and go home, show yourself to the priest”. For this man to be healed he needed to do what the counselor tells him to do. But he can’t. And he isn’t released from his sickness.

Jesus, because he loves you, may tell you something you need to hear but don’t want to hear. Because he loves you and wants to heal you from your sickness. People, if we are not willing to do what he tells us to do, then we are not worthy of being called Christians, Christ followers. If we won’t do what he tells us to do, then we’re not following him. We just want him to ease our conscience so that we can keep on living just as we are. He did not come for us to live defeated, un-victorious, unfulfilled lives. Do what he tells you to do to.

The wonderful counselor came for the sick. He came to heal the sick, release people who feel oppressed and set people free who feel imprisoned by addiction, loneliness, anger, or depression. There is only one savior, only one wonderful counselor, only one God made flesh, only one who is willing and able to heal your sickness today. His name is Jesus...and he is the good news for today...