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Wonderful Counselor

Isaiah 9.6-7

Series: The Child-King

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The Village Church

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I. The Explosion of Light

A. Various authors have put it this way:

1. The Big Bang event ... describes how the universe expanded from an initial state of high density and temperature. ... Various cosmological models of the Big Bang explain the evolution of the observable universe from the earliest known periods through its subsequent large-scale form.... These models offer a comprehensive explanation for a broad range of observed phenomena, including the abundance of light elements, the cosmic microwave background (CMB) radiation, and large-scale structure. The overall uniformity of the Universe... is explained through cosmic inflation: a sudden and very rapid expansion of space during the earliest moments. ...
2. ... Crucially, these models are compatible with the Hubble–Lemaître law—the observation that the farther away a galaxy is, the faster it is moving away from Earth. Extrapolating this cosmic expansion backwards in time using the known laws of physics, the models describe an increasingly concentrated cosmos preceded by a singularity in which space and time lose meaning (typically named "the Big Bang singularity"). ... In 1964 the CMB was discovered, which convinced many cosmologists that the competing steady-state model of cosmic evolution was falsified, ... since the Big Bang models predict a uniform background radiation caused by high temperatures and densities in the distant past. A wide range of empirical evidence strongly favors the Big Bang event, which is now essentially universally accepted.... Detailed measurements of the expansion rate of the universe place the Big Bang singularity at an estimated 13.787 ± 0.020 billion years ago, which is considered the age of the universe. (Wikipedia: The Big Bang)

B. If you prefer the succinct version of this event you might consult **Genesis 1.3**

1. **“And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.”**
 - a. Indeed! An explosion of light marked the creation of the universe!
2. Robert Jastrow (head of the theoretical division of NASA and the founding director of NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies): Astronomers now find they have painted themselves into a corner because they have proven, by their own methods, that the world began abruptly in an act of creation to which you can trace the seeds of every star, every

planet, every living thing in this cosmos and on the earth. And they have found that all this happened as a product of forces they cannot hope to discover.

3. Jastrow: For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.
- C. The scientific discovery of a beginning point for the universe is one of the most stunning scientific developments in the last hundred years
 1. Supplanting theories which have reigned supreme in cosmology since the time of Aristotle
- D. And yet, as stunning as these discoveries are (and they are stunning!), another explosion of light took place 2,000 years ago – a mere blip on the cosmological time scale
 1. And yet an explosion of light that marks an even more significant milestone for humanity
 2. The birth of Jesus Christ – the incarnate Son of God
- E. **Isaiah 9:2** (NKJV) —
 1. 2 **The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light**; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.
- F. The context for this message is the deplorable spiritual condition of Judah during the time of Ahaz
 1. The moral darkness of the land would lead eventually to the collapse of Judah as it would earlier for the northern kingdom of Israel
 2. And yet, God, in His grace, has a message of hope in the midst of the darkness
 - a. There would always be a remnant, a believing Israel, a faithful covenant people – sustained by the zeal of the Lord Himself
- G. **Isaiah 9:1** (ESV) —
 1. 1 But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.
 2. That's the land which was the track-land of oppression of the people of Israel and Palestine
 - a. For the movement of conquering armies – whether the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, throughout ancient history – ran through “the Galilee of the Gentiles”
 - b. The land of the north was the first to know conquest
 - c. Those in Galilee knew destruction, knew slavery, knew oppression
 3. And yet, from that very land, the grace of God would make that land glorious
 4. And so Isaiah would proclaim,
- H. **Isaiah 9:2** (ESV) —

1. 2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.
- I. He would go on to say, **Isaiah 9:3–5** (ESV) —
 1. 3 You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
 2. 4 For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.
 3. 5 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.
- J. Peace would supplant conquest; the very tools of war themselves would be destroyed
 1. And yet, it would not be enough for Isaiah (God, really through Isaiah) to speak only of a respite for Israel
 - a. The prophecy – as they often do – telescope into the future
 - b. Speaking of an even more glorious light
 2. The coming of Messiah
 - a. The One who will right every wrong
 - b. Bring peace in the place of enmity
 - c. Salvation – not just from conquering armies, but from the enemy of our souls
 - d. An eternity of glory
 3. For Isaiah would then say...
- K. **Isaiah 9:6** (ESV) —
 1. 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
 2. and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
 3. and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor,
 4. Mighty God,
 5. Everlasting Father,
 6. Prince of Peace.
- L. For our Advent season – which begins today – that will be the text we will unpack in preparation for our celebration of the coming in the flesh of Messiah Jesus
 1. And it is an explosion of light
 - a. Light in the midst of darkness
 - b. And our world is dark indeed
 2. But in the midst of it all comes the great light shining

II. **The Surprise of the Child**

- A. Look with me first at the surprise of the child
 1. Some of you are familiar with surprise children
 2. We get to know one another – we ask about family
 - a. “Tell me about your children.”
 3. “Well we have, let’s say, four children...
 - a. Our son Seth is 29
 - b. Our daughter Grace is 26

- c. Our second daughter Ellen is 19
 - d. And then we have Jordan – he’s 6!”
- 4. “Oh my! You had a surprise!”
- 5. That’s the surprise child we usually think of
- B. But that’s not the surprise child in this text
- C. **Isaiah 9:4–5** (ESV) —
 - 1. 4 For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.
 - 2. 5 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.
- D. The expectation for deliverance is a warrior!
 - 1. “... as on the day of Midian” echoes the deliverance of Gideon
 - 2. The expectation is for an even greater Gideon-like warrior
 - 3. But then he says,
- E. **Isaiah 9:6** (ESV) —
 - 1. 6 **For to us a child is born...**
- F. A child!
 - 1. That’s the surprise
- G. Ray Ortlund, Jr.: God’s answer to everything that has ever terrorized us is a child. The power of God is so far superior to the Assyrians 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 Jesus.
 - 1. Ortlund: When we get close enough to the secret of world peace to see it clearly, what do we discover? Against our expectation, we find weakness overwhelming power and foolishness outfoxing wisdom... Everything else has failed. However improbable, the gospel must be true. God does not need our strength or brains. Jesus Christ crucified is the only Savior and King of the world.

III. **The Gift of the Son**

- A. **Isaiah 9:6** (ESV) —
 - 1. 6 **For to us a child is born,**
 - 2. **to us a son is given...**
- B. The surprise child is a gift – a son is given!
- C. Gifts are pervasive during the holiday season – not just Christmas, but even for Hanukkah for our Jewish friends
 - 1. Every since we ourselves were children, the gifts are probably what enthralled us about the season!
 - 2. Certainly there were certain surprise gifts under the tree
 - a. A lot of the time we thought we knew what they were, but feigned surprise!
 - b. But many times, there were surprises
 - 3. But who has ever opened a box with a male child?
- D. And gifts are a reflection of the giver

1. And the giver is God
2. And God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness
- E. Gifts from God are acts of His grace toward us mired in darkness
 1. Toward us who, in our sin, have transgressed His righteous law
 - a. And have trampled on His character
 2. And yet, here He is – overflowing with grace and mercy
 - a. To us undeserving
 - b. To us desperately needy
 - c. To us deplorables!
 3. And what a gift!
- F. **James 1:17** (ESV) —
 1. 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...
 - a. Father of lights! What a surprise!
- G. **Romans 6:23** (ESV) —
 1. 23 For the wages of sin is death,
 2. but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- H. The gift is free
 1. It costs us nothing – though it cost God everything, His own Son on the cross
- I. The gift is eternal life
 1. That's what makes this explosion of light even more glorious than the big bang!
 - a. The universe had a starting point – not eternity!
 - b. The universe as we know it may even have an end point – not this gift
 - c. This gift will last forever
 2. We've never had a present under the tree that would last like this gift

IV. **His Government**

- A. But there's more!
 1. This child governs!
 - a. He has a government!
- B. **Isaiah 9:6** (ESV) —
 1. 6 ... and the government shall be upon his shoulder...
- C. He comes, not to be cuddled and coddled
 1. Not to be nursed and nurtured
- D. He comes to reign and rule!
 1. But what a rule it must be!
 2. Nothing like we've ever encountered
- E. We've had lots of rulers and governors
 1. Some good and some bad
 2. Some competent and some incompetent
 3. Some weak and some strong

4. Some even violent and ruthless
- F. But this Messiah, this child will be utterly unique
- G. **Isaiah 9:7** (ESV) —
 1. 7 **Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end,**
 2. on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
 3. to establish it and to uphold it **with justice and with righteousness**
 4. **from this time forth and forevermore...**
- H. An ever-increasing government
 1. An ever-increasing peaceful government
 2. A government of peace with no term limits!
 3. A government of justice and righteousness
 4. An eternal government
- I. Jonathan Edwards: He is a king of the most unparalleled clemency and grace. Never was any kingdom ruled by a government so mild and gentle and gracious. He is exceedingly gracious in the manner of his ruling his people by sweetly and powerfully influencing their hearts by his grace: not governing them against their wills, but powerfully inclining their wills.

V. **His Name**

- A. So who is this governor, this king, this Child-King?
 1. Well, He is named in our text
- B. Names are significant in the scriptures
 1. They often provide explanation of one's character
 2. And this one is no exception
 3. It's an unusual name
- C. **Isaiah 9:6** (ESV) — 6 **... and his name shall be called...**
 1. His name – singular
 - a. Just one name
 2. But then, another surprise
 - a. One name, but multiple names
 3. Must have been British
- D. **Isaiah 9:6** (ESV) —
 1. 6 **... and his name shall be called**
 2. **Wonderful Counselor,**
 3. **Mighty God,**
 4. **Everlasting Father,**
 5. **Prince of Peace.**
- E. The child's fourfold name!
 1. And we'll just focus on the first this morning
 - a. And the others in the remaining days of Advent
 2. The child is **Wonderful Counselor**
- F. But we cannot consider this name in its compound form just yet
 1. We need to break it apart to capture the essence of Isaiah's words

VI. **His Wonder**

- A. He is “Wonderful Counselor”
 - 1. And all the English translations use the adjective form of “wonder”
 - a. Wonderful Counselor – describing what kind of counselor He is
- B. But that’s not exactly the way Isaiah puts it
 - 1. Isaiah uses the noun form of the word
 - a. He uses **pele’ (Hebrew)**
 - b. Which means **“wonder”**
 - 2. And in doing so, he raises the power of name exponentially
- C. Example from the world of superheroes
 - 1. We have “Wonder Woman”
 - a. William Marston was a Harvard educated American psychologist
 - b. But he also wrote comic books
 - c. And he created the character Wonder Woman
 - 2. Now he could have called her “Wonderful Woman”
 - a. That would have been fine – a character who was a wonderful woman
 - b. But that wouldn’t have worked in a comic book for a super hero, would it?
 - c. There are lots of wonderful women
 - d. We have lots of wonderful women right here!
 - 3. No – he called her “Wonder Woman”
 - a. And all of a sudden, he had a superhero
 - b. Because instead of using an adjective, he used a noun
- D. Literally, this child, this Son who is given
 - 1. Is “Wonder Counselor”
 - 2. Because this Messiah Jesus is not just wonderful
 - a. He is Wonder!
- E. **Psalm 78:12 (ESV)** —
 - 1. 12 In the sight of their fathers he performed wonders in the land of Egypt, in the fields of Zoan.
 - 2. The psalmist refers to the wonders performed by God on behalf of Israel in Egypt
 - a. The plagues
 - b. The parting of the Red Sea
 - c. The pillar of cloud, pillar of fire
 - 3. These are only things that God could do
 - a. God-like things
- F. **Judges 13:18 (ESV)** —
 - 1. 18 And the angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?”
 - 2. Here the angel of the LORD is God
 - a. Or as some theologians would say, a pre-incarnate appearance of Messiah!
 - 3. **Wonderful = incomprehensible**
 - a. One translation: “too wonderful for you to understand”

4. Literally, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonder”
- G. Edward Young: The Old Testament usage of this word compels us to the conclusion that it here designates the Messiah not merely as someone extraordinary, but as One who in His very person and being is a Wonder; He is that which surpasses human thought and power; He is God Himself. To designate the Child with the word ‘wonder’ is to make the clearest attestation of His deity.
- H. So, as we are introduced to the name of this Child-King, right out of the gate we encounter the Deity – God Himself
 1. No pussy-footing around
 2. No dancing around the subject
 3. No hinting or prevaricating
 4. No implied or hidden meaning
- I. No! The Child is God!
 1. Young: All the following designations are influenced by or stand under the shadow of this first majestic name. This Child who is born for us is Wonder.

VII. His Wisdom

- A. Then there is Counselor
 1. **Colossians 2:3** (ESV) — 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
- B. **Isaiah 11:2** (ESV) —
 1. 2 And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
 2. the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
 3. the Spirit of counsel and might,
 4. the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
- C. **Isaiah 28:29** (ESV) —
 1. 29 This also comes from the LORD of hosts;
 2. he is wonderful in counsel
 3. and excellent in wisdom.
- D. So again – there is this identification of this Child, this Son as God
- E. All the leaders of the world have advisors
 1. In our system of government, the President’s cabinet serves as advisors, as counselors
- F. Not in this Child’s government
 1. There is no cabinet
 - a. He is the Advisor
 - b. He is the Counselor
 2. He needs no other counselor or advisor
 - a. Because He is Wonder
 - b. He is beyond understanding
 - c. He is incomprehensible
- G. So, who are your influencers?
 1. That’s a new category, I’m told, in the world of social media

- a. There are people, who, based on those who follow them on social media, who are said to be influencers!
 - 2. Truth be told, the category wasn't invented in the days of social media
 - a. There have always been influencers
 - b. There have always been counselors
 - c. None of us have gotten to this point in our lives without them!
 - 3. Maybe they were parents
 - a. Or teachers
 - b. Or professors
 - c. Or friends
 - d. Or athletes
 - e. Or authors
 - f. Or – horrors – actors on TV and movies!
 - 4. Hopefully, they were positive influencers in one way or another
- H. But one thing is certain – they were no Wonder Counselor
 - 1. This Child who is born
 - a. This Son who is given
 - 2. Has all the right ideas
 - a. All the right strategies
 - b. All the right responses
 - c. All the right advice
 - 3. For everyone in every circumstance
- I. **Isaiah 9:6 (ESV) —**
 - 1. **6 For to us a child is born,**
 - 2. **to us a son is given;**
 - 3. **and the government shall be upon his shoulder,**
 - 4. **and his name shall be called**
 - 5. **Wonderful Counselor...**