

In Pursuit of A King Part 4

We've been talking about pursuing a king during Advent. We talked about the wisemen who came asking "where is the one born king of the Jews?" They didn't know who he was, they didn't know his name, they just knew by some revelation that a king was born. We talked about Simeon who came into the temple in pursuit of the king. He didn't know his name, but he had additional information. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he wouldn't die until he had seen the one Luke referred to as "The Lord's Christ," the Messiah. Last Sunday we talked about what kind of king this king was, contrasting him with other earthly kings. This morning I want to focus on who this king is and on what is revealed to us when we find him and discover his name.

It's interesting when Herod inquired of the teachers of the law and the chief priests where the Messiah was to be born, they told him the Scripture said he would be born in Bethlehem. They knew where he was to be born. If they had bothered, they could have told Herod and the Magi some additional facts. They could have told him from the writings of the prophet Isaiah what this king was to be called. **"...the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel – God with us." Isaiah 7:14. "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**

Who is this king, that he will be called "God with us"? Who is he that he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace? What kind of name is this? What does it mean?

In our culture, a name is often chosen because we like the way it sounds. I don't know that people give too much thought to the meaning of a name anymore. Remember when Frank Zappa named his kids Moon Unit and Dweezil? Jay Z and Beyonce named their daughter Blue Ivy. When we were expecting our first child, I suggested if it was a girl we name her Sunshine so I could sing "Sunshine, on my shoulders makes me happy." You can see how that turned out. Meet Sarah. For our second I suggested if it was a girl we name her Prasha. I just made up the name –thought it sounded cool. Prasha Dawn. And that's why her name is Rebekah. Two for two. How does the name sound? John Johnson told me about a pastor in Mississippi that had three daughters, "Shonda, Shondi and Shondalie." Then there was the lady that found inspiration

at Walgreens and named her twin girls, Visine and Murine. We just think about how it sounds and go with it, but not so in Eastern culture. The bible places a great deal of emphasis and importance on the name of a person. The name is chosen because it reveals something about that person or even a place. Think how often in the Old Testament we read, “And he called that place...” It revealed or recalled to mind a special event that had occurred at that site. Names of people and places had meaning.

The name was meant to give us information regarding the nature or attributes of a person or a thing. We understand purpose and the nature of a thing by its name. Sometimes anyway. This is a coffeemaker. “Really, what does it do?” Its’ purpose is in its’ name. It makes coffee. “This is a bookshelf. A cupholder. A pencil sharpener.” We know what it does. “This is a frito chili cheese wrap from Sonic.” Got it. If I tell you I’m the regional manager of quality control and inventory assessment for the bio-technical and robotic division of Vandelay Industries, I’ll understand if you say, “what do you do?” But if I tell you I’m the dishwasher at Freddie’s Steak House I’m not expecting you to ask, “Oh really, what does your job entail?” The name gives you information about me and the nature of my work.

A name creates expectation. I wrote a book about Chief John McPherson. No one asked me if he was Italian or Swedish. They expected him to be a Native American. A name gives information. Names have power to set destiny, to release or deny potential in people. Names can be prophetic, self-fulfilling. “How’s my little preacher?” Names can be like labels hung around someone’s neck – stupid vs. genius, graceful vs. clumsy, bad girl or boy vs. good girl or boy. Names can tie us to the past (named after someone), and can tie us to greatness (“live up to that name” –Martin Luther King III.)

Names are important to God and he reveals himself to us by various names (By some counts there are 20 names). Jehovah Jireh, the God who provides, El Shaddai – the Almighty, Jehovah Raphe – the God who heals. In Exodus He is “the LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished.” His name(s) tell us about him, about his nature, his character. And that brings us back to the words of the prophet Isaiah about the birth of this king we’ve been pursuing. It was a name tied to an event as a sign to Israel and to all the people of the world. Matthew quotes the

Prophet Isaiah in his gospel. **“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel – which means ‘God with us’.” Matthew 1:23**

How significant is that?! God with us! His name is a sign announcing this powerful truth, that God is truly with us, among us. We are not alone. When the angel announced this to Joseph, it was after 400 years of silence, without a word from God or his prophets. Now, the silence is broken. God is back! God is with us. The darkness gives way to light. Everything changes for God has come among Israel again. God has stepped into history – our history!

When we speak His name, Immanuel, we confirm and affirm his presence, his involvement in our lives. What’s in a name? Evidence, affirmation, a sign. The king the wisemen came seeking, his name is Immanuel. God with us! Hallelujah!

Isaiah gives us further information by giving us additional names that describe this king, this God with us. **“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** Let’s look at this description for a moment.

“To us a child is born.” God is with us, but how? How does God come among us? A child is born! A king is born to us. God becomes a man. What a miracle. How does he arrive? He is born, like all children, but not like all children. He is born of a virgin. “Born” is a sign of his humanity. He came to be among us like all of us, born of a mother, only he was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born fully human but also fully divine and without sin.

“To us a son is given.” What grace, what love is revealed in those words. A son is given. Who among us would give up their son or daughter for another? Even if it was for a really good person or a really good reason, would you give up your child? God so loved us that he gave his son for us. A “Son is given” is a sign of his divinity. He was and is eternally one with the Father, the unique, only begotten, Son of God.

“The government will be on his shoulders.” He is the epitome of princeliness or executive authority. He is born to rule, a king ruling over a heavenly kingdom, a spiritual kingdom of which, by his grace, we are now a part. He is our Sovereign. He is our only King. He is the only one to whom we give our complete and undivided loyalty and allegiance.

“And he will be called.” His name is decreed. From the beginning, his destiny was known and his name decreed. Salvation was no afterthought. No one had to ponder what his

name would be; it was decreed by God from before the foundations of the earth. He will be called...

“Wonderful Counselor.” Literally it reads “wonder-counselor” where wonder means something like miracle. This word “wonderful” in the Hebrew is used 15 times of human acts where it means “what is out of the ordinary.” It is used 54 times of the acts of God and there its meaning is supernatural, that which for whatever reason, requires God as its explanation.

When we need something beyond what we can even imagine, we can’t even express it all in our prayers and thoughts and God comes through and does above and beyond anything we could think or ask for – when that happens, God is living up to his name: Wonderful.

Some say Wonderful should be separated from Counselor. Two separate names. He is extra-ordinary in his acts and also in his counsel, i.e. his guidance and the establishment and working out of his purposes in our lives. He is the Counselor beside us, with us, comforting us. He is near to the brokenhearted, giving us counsel and comfort and peace that passes understanding. He is Wonderful and he is Counselor and he is Wonderful Counselor!

Here is an interesting thought about his name. In Judges 13, Samson’s parents are visited by the angel of the Lord. Some suggest this is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. They were childless and the angel of the Lord tells them they are going to have a child. When Manoah asks the angel, “What is your name so we may honor you when your word comes true?” (no doubt planning to name the child after this man of God) this one identified as the angel of the Lord answers, “Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding.” Judges 13:18. The word translated as “beyond understanding” is a form of the Hebrew word Isaiah used for Wonderful. His name is too wonderful to be understood or even spoken.

What a name! It is beyond. It’s too much. His very nature is too wonderful for us. He is the wonderful counselor. His counsel is always right, his guidance and direction and purpose for us is always perfect, right, righteous, faithful, beyond what we could imagine for ourselves.

“Mighty God.” His name is Wonderful Counselor and also Mighty God. The word means powerful, warrior, champion, strong. God the Mighty Warrior. Who is this king and what is his name? He is Immanuel, the God who is with us. He is Wonderful Counselor, the one beyond understanding and He is Mighty God. The champion that is all powerful and able to deliver you, defend you, go before you and win the battle against the enemy of your soul, against every enemy that tries to defeat you or prevent you from being all God has called you to be.

There is no reason to run in fear for our King is the Mighty Warrior, the Mighty God. Whatever you are up against, the God who is with you today, Immanuel, is also Wonderful Counselor and Mighty God!

Isaiah said his name is also “Everlasting Father”. The king has come to reveal the Father to us. Jesus the Son shows us the heart of the Father, that he is concerned about the helpless, the little ones, his children. Some of you never knew your father, or perhaps had a father that was abusive, cruel, ungodly. Brian was saying this week how there are few good father role models in the Scripture. Perhaps that shows us how much we need to look to and cling to our perfect Heavenly Father and Jesus the Son has come to show us the Father. Jesus has come to show us the unconditional love, acceptance and forgiveness of the Father. In Jesus we see the Father that will never give up, that will go to the extreme to redeem us and reclaim us as His own. If you know Jesus, you know the father. If you have seen Jesus, you have seen the Father.

The bible describes God as **“A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows is God in his holy dwelling.” Psalm 68:5** My King loves as his Father does. My king defends as his Father does. I don’t have to be afraid because the king of the universe loves as the perfect Father. I am safe in him. My past rests in his loving mercy and my future is securely resting in his grace.

Listen to the words of Isaiah the prophet again. **“But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us, you, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.” Isaiah 63:16.** Listen to what I’m telling you: Others may forget you. Your earthly father may have disowned you, disappointed you, abandoned you, forgotten you, acted like you never existed or refused to give you his name, but you have a Heavenly Father that loves you, that has never given up on you. You aren’t alone. You have one that knows all about you and loves you and invites you to a family relationship that will never end. He is the Everlasting Father so he won’t ever die, quit, get too old or tired. He won’t give up on you. And this relationship isn’t temporary. It’s not just for awhile. It’s for eternity.

Isaiah said he would be called “Prince of Peace.” Think of that. The God who is with us is the prince of peace. Though there are spiritual battles to be fought and although the enemy of our soul continues to wage war, there is an inward peace that comes to us. The Prince of Peace has come and we are no longer at war with God, no longer in rebellion against his will. The Prince of Peace has come and now my sins are forgiven, I am reconciled to God and I know the

peace of God that passes understanding. Let him bring you that peace. Let him settle the war that rages in your heart and in your mind. He can do it because he is the Prince of Peace!

What a king! What a name! Immanuel. Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace. But the angel told Mary and Joseph to call him by another name. To Mary the angel Gabriel said, **“You will be with child and give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus.” Luke 1:31.** To Joseph the angel said, **“Joseph, Son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:20-21**

Jesus. “The Lord saves.” Savior. A powerful, all-encompassing name. Jesus was likely a very common name in first century Israel. It was a name that connected him to the people. It was a sign of who he was and what he had come to do. He came to save his people from their sins, to save us from our sins, to save us from ourselves, to save us from hell.

Our King is Savior! Immanuel has come to be with us so he can save us. Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace has come to save us from the destructive path we’ve been on, to save us from sin and save us from ourselves so we can be rightly related to God and experience peace. He has come to save us and change our life and our eternal destiny. The bible says **“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 10:13**

Whatever you need, call on his name. He will save you from your sin. He will save you from yourself, from sickness, from addiction, from that destructive lifestyle, from bondage, from fear, depression, from your past. He is Jesus, the Savior, our King and Sovereign and Lord.

“Joseph, call his name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.” Salvation is found in his name. **“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12** He is Savior and Lord, Rescuer and Deliverer. If you call on him, he will do what his name says he will do – he will save you from your sin.

The angel announced to the shepherds on the night of his birth, **“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:10-11** It’s good news for everyone. A Savior is Born. He is Christ, Messiah, the promised one, the anointed one. And he is Lord. Lord over all.

A Savior is born for you. For me. For all the people. And Mary and Joseph called him Jesus. What a name! What a king! Immanuel, God with us. Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. He is with us today. Rejoice for he has come to save us from our sin!