

Jesus, Wonderful Counselor – Isaiah 9:6-7
Sermon – Pastor Joe Davis
Union Baptist Church – December 23, 2018

INTRODUCTION

Listen to these words that were spoken and written down 700 years before the very first Christmas:

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. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

May the Lord bless the reading of his Word from Isaiah chapter 9, verses 6 and 7.

God gave the world a major “heads-up” in this prophecy about the coming Savior he would send to the world...a Savior who would be in the form of a human child and yet would be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. And this unique child would be so much more than just another world leader who would rise to power and enjoy a long and peaceful reign; but then die like all the others, never to be seen again. No, this child would have a never-ending reign over a kingdom that would go on forever and ever.

Can you think of any earthly kings whose reign never ended? And can you think of any kings from history whom people lovingly and freely called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace? Wouldn't it be amazing to have a king who fit that description? Well, the good news is we do. His name is King Jesus...Mighty, Eternal God, who took on flesh as a human child around 2022 years ago; lived, loved, died for our sins, rose to life again and is now inviting all people to live at peace with God under his rule and reign, filled up with his presence and power and accomplishing God's will on earth right now.

That's life in the kingdom of God...a life available to all people through simple repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Is that where you're living right now? Have you accepted his love gift to the world that he offers to all people through his death on the cross for our sins? If you haven't, I hope and pray that you'll do so today. What an amazing thing it would be if you walked out of here today at peace with God, forgiven of your sin and beginning a new life where Jesus, Mighty God, becomes your Everlasting Father, your Wonderful Counselor and your Prince of Peace. What a Christmas gift that would be!!

During this season of remembering our Savior's birth, we've been digging deep into each of these names of Jesus revealed in the book of Isaiah. So far we've considered him as Mighty God and Everlasting Father. This week we're going to focus on Jesus as Wonderful Counselor. Wouldn't it be great to have the wisest person in the universe and the one who created it all as your personal counselor for everything you go through and face in life? Well, that's just what Jesus wants to do for everyone who has begun new life with him in his kingdom. He wants to be your Wonderful Counselor...your teacher who is always by your side.

Is Jesus truly your Counselor, your Teacher, in life right now? Do you think you need him as a counselor for your everyday life or have you got this? Dallas Willard has some helpful thoughts on this question I want to share with you before we dig into Scripture. He says:

[In your life], "Who teaches you? [Who counsels you?] Whose disciple are you? Honestly.

One thing is sure: You are somebody's disciple. You learned how to live from someone else. There are no exceptions to this rule, for human beings are just the kind of creatures that have to learn and keep learning from others how to live...

Probably you are the disciple of several 'somebodies,' and it is very likely that they shaped you in ways that are far from what is best for you... You are quite certainly, as I am, the student of a few crucial people, living and dead, who have been there in crucial times and periods to form your standard responses in thought, feeling, and action...

Originally, we are the disciples of our parents or other family members most intimately related to us. Usually this is very good. They may be dear, strong people who know God and walk in his ways. It has been mainly so for me and for many others. But not always. Our original family connections may be anything from mildly debilitating to disastrous... [And yet we learn how to live and deal with life in the home environment we were raised in.]

[Now along with our parents and family members] we [then become] disciples of our teachers, then of our playmates and [friends] – on of the most potent of ‘discipling’ relationships – then perhaps again of our teachers. But now, in our teens and twenties, our teachers play quite a different role. They do much to set in stone the...more or less consciously chosen self-image that will make or break us in...life.

These last teachers often include some very glamorous and powerful people. They may indeed be teachers – instructors of some type, as in the armed services, or even academic professors. But they may also include public figures of various kinds: artists, musicians, writers, professionals. Nearly always they convey to us a strong impression of what life as a whole is all about... [And the influence they have on us and our priorities and focus in life is greater than we often realize.]

It is one of the major transitions of life to recognize who has taught us, mastered us, and then to evaluate the results in us of their teaching. This is a harrowing task, and sometimes we just can’t face it. But it can also open the door to choose other masters, possibly better masters, and one Master above all.”

And of course that one Master above all is Jesus, Wonderful Counselor. There is no one who can more wisely and perfectly guide us through life in the world he created than Jesus Christ. Is he really teaching you in your day-to-day life? Let’s look at Scripture now and see what we learn about Jesus as Wonderful Counselor, and how we as his disciples, his students, can really be taught by him in our day-to-day lives.

THE BEST TEACHER: *JESUS AND HIS WORD*

First, let's see how Scripture reveals to us *The Best Teacher*, the best Counselor. You may have noticed that at the end of those verses I opened with today from Isaiah about the coming child to be born, was this phrase: ***"The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."*** Who is this Lord of hosts? Well, for those of you who were here for our message on Jesus as Mighty God, you'll remember that appearance of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament where he identified himself to Joshua as *the Commander of the army of the Lord*...in other words Jesus communicated that he is Lord of the angels of God, who are also called the heavenly host. Scripture seems to indicate that Jesus himself is the Lord of hosts and listen to how Isaiah again described him in chapter 28, verse 29:

This also comes from the Lord of hosts; he is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom.

If you want excellent wisdom and wonderful counsel for your life today, look no further than Jesus Christ, the Lord of hosts. And after all, who could be a better teacher and counselor than the One who created the entire universe and everything in it, including you and I. Jesus the Son, along with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, Three-in-One God, are the only completely trustworthy and reliable source of truth in the world today, and their truth, their counsel, is readily available in God's written Word, the Bible. We're invited in the Bible to pay attention to it as to a lamp shining in dark place.

The best teacher is Jesus and his Word. In a world that's more and more rejecting the existence of absolute truth and leaving people in the dark with no flashlight – no way to find their way through the pitfalls and dangers of life – Jesus holds out the flaming torch of the Word of God and invites us to hold it tightly and let it guide us past the cliffs, the quicksand, and the deadly traps that the enemy has laid all around. Jesus offers us his wonderful counsel, his excellent wisdom, through the written Word of God. And listen, from Psalm 19, how wonderful that Word is:

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; 8 the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening

the eyes; 9 the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. 11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

The Wonderful Counselor offers his wonderful counsel through the written Word. Its perfect, its sure, its right, its pure, its true. And when we meditate on it with humility and trust in the wisdom of our good God and seek to put it into practice, it revives our soul, it makes us wise, it bring us joy, it lets us see clearly, and we find the great reward of learning how life works from the one who created it and still sustains it all. It's more valuable than fine gold and more pleasant to the taste than the sweetest honey. The best teacher is Jesus and his Word.

THE BEST TEACHER'S GIFT: *HOLY SPIRIT, COUNSELOR*

But that's not all. The best teacher left his followers with another amazing gift that was given shortly after he returned to heaven following his resurrection. For all who would become his disciples, his apprentices, through repentance and faith in him, Jesus promised a mind-blowing gift: the Holy Spirit. *The best teacher's gift is Holy Spirit, Counselor.* God's Holy Spirit would literally take up residence as Helper and Counselor and Comforter in all people who trusted in Christ alone as their Lord and Savior. This was such a great gift, in fact, that Jesus told his disciples it was to their advantage that he was returning to heaven. He said, as recorded in John chapter 16, verse 7: ***Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper [the Counselor] will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.***

Why would this be better than having Jesus with them in human flesh? Because the Holy Spirit would be with them and in them at all times wherever they would go in life. Jesus, during his time on earth, had the limitations of a human body and couldn't be everywhere at once. He could only interact with and be with a limited number of people at a time. But the Holy Spirit would be able to dwell inside every true follower of Jesus Christ, empowering them and teaching them and giving them everything they needed to navigate life and accomplish God's will. It would be like having Jesus, Wonderful Counselor, with them at all times and in all places.

This counseling and teaching role of the Holy Spirit is emphasized in both the Old Testament and in the words of Jesus in the New Testament. Isaiah described the Holy Spirit as ***the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord*** (see Isaiah 11:2). Jesus called him the ***Spirit of truth*** and said “...***he dwells with you and will be in you*** (see John 14:17). “...***He will teach you all things and bring to remembrance all that I have said to you*** (see John 14:26). “...***He will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you***” (see John 14:13-14).

Not only has Jesus, Wonderful Counselor, given his followers the written Word of God, he’s also given us the Holy Spirit, Helper, Counselor, who is with us at all times and ready to guide us into God’s truth, help us remember it, and give us specific direction for specific situations. He will teach you all things. He will guide you into all the truth. He will take the words of Jesus and declare them to you.

The original Greek for the word translated, “Helper,” or “Counselor,” in these verses is *parakletos* and literally means, “called to one’s side,” with the power to give help and assistance (see *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). In this word we get the picture of Jesus sending the Holy Spirit to our side; and more than that, actually placing him within each of us, to guide us into truth and strengthen us with God’s power in our day-to-day lives. Now that’s a good gift that keeps on giving! *The best teacher’s gift is Holy Spirit, Counselor.*

THE ONLY WAY TO BE TAUGHT: SEEKING, LISTENING AND DOING

I hope you’re starting to get the picture that Jesus, Wonderful Counselor, is giving us every tool we need to receive his wonderful counsel, his excellent wisdom, in our day-to-day lives right now. From his written Word, which includes 4 different accounts of his own life and teachings, to the Spirit of truth he places inside his followers, Jesus has made available to us everything we need to live in the wisdom and truth and counsel of the One who created everything!

But did you know its possible for us, even with the Spirit living inside and the Word of God in our hands, to still miss out on the wonderful counsel of the Wonderful Counselor? We can still go through our lives and not actually live in

and follow what he is seeking to teach us, even if we have a lot of head knowledge about it. And that's because WE have a crucial role to play if we want to actually benefit from the counsel of the Wonderful Counselor. You see, Jesus has done and is doing everything he can to make his wisdom and counsel readily available and accessible to us. But if we aren't actively looking for it, listening to it, and then responding to it, we won't benefit from it. And this brings us to our final point for today and that is this: The only way to be taught by the Wonderful Counselor is through seeking, listening and then doing what he says. Seek, listen and do.

In the various jobs I've had over the years, I've had quite a few opportunities to train other people to do my job. And I've also had a wide variety of people to train. Some have been teachable. Others have not. One girl I trained at an accounting firm in Alaska seemed to be paying attention and acted like she understood what I was teaching her, but when she actually started doing the job it became obvious that she hadn't understood what I was telling her. Others I've trained think they already know everything and the best way to do the job, and it's quite obvious as I try to train them that they're just going through the required training, but aren't learning a darn thing and are planning to just "reinvent the wheel" their own way and throw out any systems that are already in place.

But there have been a small number of people who have given me a warm glow as I train them, and that's because they displayed all three practices of a good student, a good disciple, a good trainee: *seeking, listening and doing*. They were **seeking** to learn from me. They really believed I had what they needed to do the job well and not waste time "reinventing the wheel." And they were intently seeking me out to learn from me. Secondly, they were really **listening** to what I was teaching them. They took notes. They asked questions. They asked for clarification on things they didn't understand. And finally, they actually got to work **doing** what I taught them to do. They were committed to putting into practice what I taught them and understanding how it works and why instead of just assuming they knew better and could just do it their own way from the get go.

Oh the joy of a good student, a good apprentice! Of a person who seeks, listens, and then does. And my friends, this is also how we allow ourselves to be taught

by the Wonderful Counselor. And unlike a few things I tried to pass on to my job apprentices, none of his practices and teachings are overkill or OCD or a little on the anal-retentive side. His counsel is perfect and always what is best and most effective.

Listen to how the Word of God and Jesus himself affirm each of these actions of a teachable person. Let's begin with **seeking**. God makes it clear that he wants us to seek him if we want to learn from him. He's not going to force himself on us or make us receive his counsel. He expects us to seek him diligently if we want him and what he has to offer us.

Jeremiah 29:13

You will seek me and find me. When you seek me with all your heart,

Luke 11:9

And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Matthew 6:33

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

So, receiving and benefiting from the wonderful counsel of Jesus begins with diligent seeking of it. But then it involves careful and humble **listening**. And HOW we listen is so important. Take notes. Ask questions. Look for full understanding. Do you remember from last week what God the Father spoke out of the cloud at the Transfiguration of Jesus – when he was revealed in all his glory? What was the one thing the Father wanted to communicate to us about his Son, Jesus? Listen carefully to what he said in Luke 9, verse 35:

“This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!”

Listen to him. That's what God the Father wanted us to do with his Son, so I'd say it must be pretty important! ***Listen to him!***

Jesus took this a step further and said, in Luke 8:18: ***...take care HOW you listen.*** In fact, he gave a whole parable about how to listen. He described some who

hear his words, but it goes in one ear and out the other and doesn't benefit them whatsoever. Others hear his words and they sound wonderful, but they don't really let them sink in and take root and when life gets hard they just throw out what he said and get back to life as usual. Others hear and believe the words of Jesus, but many distractions – the worries, the riches, the pleasures of life – keep them from really putting it into practice and bearing fruit. But then we have those who have taken care HOW they listen: they listen carefully and intently to what Jesus has to say, they hold it tightly and believe it's true, and the beautiful result is that over time, with patience, they bear fruit. The wonderful counsel of Jesus benefits them beyond what they could have ever imagined.

And this brings us to the third key practice of a teachable person: actually **doing** what the teacher tells us to do. We've sought the teacher out to learn from him, we've listened carefully to what he's taught us. Now we complete the training by putting it into practice. And if we never get to this final step, we've missed the whole point. The Wonderful Counselor doesn't want to just give us a bunch of head knowledge so we can look wise and smart and intellectual and tell others how to do things. No. he wants his counsel to bear fruit in our own lives for our good and the glory of God, and that will only happen when we're willing to take the final step and DO what he tells us to do.

Listen to Jesus' words in Luke 6, verses 46-49:

46 "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not DO what I tell you? 47 Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and DOES them, I will show you what he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

When we just listen to Jesus, but never actually do what he says, we can expect that when life gets tough our house will come crashing down with a great fall. But when we seek him, listen carefully and then DO what he tells us to do, no matter how hard, our house will have a solid and unshakable foundation that will stand

up to the floods, and hurricanes and disasters of life. ...**[Jesus] said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"** (Luke 11:28). The blessing comes in the doing, the keeping of it.

APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

Is Jesus, Wonderful Counselor, teaching you in your daily life? Can you honestly describe yourself as his student, his apprentice, his disciple? Dallas Willard has a great little phrase that describes what it means to really be a disciple of Jesus. He says: *If I am really a disciple of Jesus, "I am with him, to learn from him, how to be like him."* That's what a true disciple of Jesus is. And we learn how to be like him in the everyday stuff of our own lives...our jobs, our home life, our hobbies, our relationships at church. In everything we do in our day-to-day lives we learn to be like him. Jesus wants to teach us, counsel us, guide us, empower us in all of it as we live in his presence, learn from him, and then start living like him in the real stuff of life. And when we let him do this, we can expect WONDERS as we walk in his wonder-full counsel!

Have you decided yet to really follow Jesus and learn from him how to live your life right now? The opportunity and the benefits of doing so are beyond what we've understood. Yes, putting his teachings and the rest of God's Word into practice will look totally different from the way the rest of the world is living. It will be hard to break your old beliefs and habits and natural responses that you've been comfortable in all your life. But it really is the best way to live life and when we get serious about it we'll wonder why we waited so long to get after it. Jesus described the opportunity of living his way in his kingdom as like finding a treasure buried in a field. When you discover it, you sell everything you have to buy that field without a second thought about how much it costs.

I truly believe that if we could really see Jesus right now as he is and understand the amazing opportunity we have to live right now in his presence, in his counsel and empowered by the Holy Spirit, everything else would pale in comparison and we would want nothing more than to seek above all life in the kingdom of God. Lord, open our eyes. Teach us to seek, listen and do your Word. Jesus, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace wants to live with you and I and guide us through real life as we simply seek him, listen to him, and

then do what he tells us to do! May we accept his invitation today and walk into the New Year becoming more and more like him as never before.

If you're here today and this sounds great, but you haven't yet even begun a relationship with Jesus. I want to invite you to do that today. Here's a simple prayer that if you pray and mean it, can lead you through the only doorway into new life with Jesus in his kingdom, forgiven of all your sin, at peace with God, and ready for him to guide you and change you and fill you up with his presence and power and wisdom.

A Prayer to Accept God's Gift of Salvation through Jesus:

God, I've lived a life of rebellion against You and I want to change. Jesus, I believe
You're the only One who can save me and change me.

I believe You died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead.

I surrender to You as my Lord and Savior and invite You to take charge of my life
from here. Teach me to live life with You
and like You by Your power. Amen.