

December 4, 2019 + Midweek Advent 1 + Pastor Curt S. Backhaus
St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church (WELS), Tomah WI

Isaiah 9:6 | EHV

For to us a child is born.

To us a son is given.

The authority to rule will rest on his shoulders.

He will be named:

Wonderful Counselor,

Mighty God,

Everlasting Father,

Prince of Peace

“Jesus” —Name above All Names

Wonderful Counselor

“He’s a good listener” we say about a dear friend. Or, “she gets it; she understands me.” You’d look for those same qualities in a counselor you choose to visit.

Counselors are trained to be listeners. They listen well to their clients so they can help them distill and understand their own thoughts and feelings. They listen carefully with the goal of helping their clients discover for themselves what would be helpful for their lives.

The counselor’s job isn’t to insert themselves into the process; they don’t direct or give advice. Instead, like a wise and trusted friend, they help their clients find their own solutions for life. Often the counselor’s goal is to help their client figure out what steps they need to take on their own, how they must change themselves in order to improve their life and circumstances.

When Isaiah calls the coming Messiah a Wonderful Counselor, don’t think of a counselor in that contemporary sense –as someone who just listens but keeps their distance and doesn’t get involved. Sure, think of Jesus as your greatest friend, but not as just a listener who helps you help yourself.

Literally, Isaiah names Jesus a “Wonder who counsels.” In the language of Isaiah, Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor because the words he shares with us is a wonder, a miracle, the miraculous counsel that only a gracious God could give.

Counselor Jesus wasn’t coming just to listen to us with a heart full of loving care and a sympathetic tear. No, Jesus was coming to us in the most intimate and amazing way by taking on our very nature, becoming fully human, our true Brother. What a miracle! What a wonder!

Counselor Jesus wasn’t coming to help us discover how we could help ourselves. Rather, he was coming to act on our behalf and so help us in our sinful helplessness. What a miracle! What a wonder!

Counselor Jesus wasn’t simply going to enable us to understand our sin, but to take our sin onto himself and pay for it with his own life. What a miracle! What a wonder!

Counselor Jesus wasn't going to help us change ourselves; he was going to change our status before the holy God. Jesus' bloody cross and empty tomb prove that we are holy, perfect, and righteous in God's eyes. What a miracle! What a wonder!

Counselor Jesus wasn't coming to teach us coping skills; Jesus promises to live in us and so enliven us to live beautiful lives of love as he works in us and through us. What a miracle! What a wonder!

In his person and in his saving work, Jesus is the "Word made flesh." He is God's Word of counsel to sinful, dying ears. In his own words, written in Scripture, Jesus counsels sinners to put their hope in him who died for them and rose again. In the ministry of his church of believers, Jesus continues to counsel all who will hear with the powerful gospel: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life!" What a miracle! What a wonder!

Jesus –our Wonderful Counselor! Amen.

Dear Jesus, Coming Savior and King, though our ears are often slow to listen and our hearts slow to learn, please keep speaking to us, counseling us to repent, to turn from ourselves and turn to you and believe the good news, and so live a joyful life with you. Amen.