# Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God — Delivery Transcript

**Isaiah 9:6–7 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, December 13, 2020** · *Advent 2020*

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I know it did to you all as well. If you have a Bible, we'll be in Isaiah chapter 9 this morning. And a lot of the singing this morning was about the name of Jesus. And if you ever ask the question, what's in a name? It's a pretty interesting question. Names have significance, have had significance. If you go back to Bible times, how names show up in the Bible, they will oftentimes tell you a lot about the character you're reading about or dealing with. One of the first names you come across in the book of Genesis is the names of Esau and Jacob.

And I think these are original names. One of the ways I can imagine that Esau got his name is when he was born, he was covered in hair. And so they thought to themselves, hairy baby, let's call him Esau, which means hairy. An original name there. The next one after Esau was born came Jacob. And Jacob was holding on to the heel of his brother Esau, and so they said, Wow, he's a heel catcher, let's call him Jacob, which means heel catcher. So, an original name as well. It doesn't just mean heel catcher, of course, it's kind of a, not necessarily a deceiver, but a supplanter, someone who kind of connives and things like that.

Of course, you know the story of Jacob and Esau. Later on, Jacob actually gets his name changed to Israel. After wrestling all night with an angel, the angel of the Lord, which some people say was like a revelation of Jesus Christ. That's a different sermon for a different day. But after wrestling all night with the angel, his name is changed to Israel, which means wrestling with God. So it tells you something about his experience, about his life. On the negative side, names can sometimes tell you about some events that transpire that are important to a person, or negative events that impact a person.

I joke that I'm named after a character on General Hospital and my mom was into the soaps. That's kind of a silly name. There's another name in the Bible called Ichabod. You guys ever heard this name? Ichabod. What a terrible name. It means the glory has departed. Could you

imagine being on the playground and you bring your friend up, hey mom, this is Ichabod, his name means the glory has departed. You would say, get away from that boy. You don't need to play with that boy. But the reason he got named Ichabod is because during that moment or during that season, the ark of the covenant had been taken, or stolen, and that was the place in which the glory of the Lord dwelled, and when it was taken, it had that impact on the people of God.

And so when that baby was born, they called him Ichabod, I guess as an expression of grief. It's terrible for him to live a whole life with the name Ichabod because of that one event. But that's how names come to fruition. My own children, their names have significance. My firstborn child we named him Blaze and I knew I wanted my firstborn child to be named Blaze, even if it was a girl. I was going to try. Because in my college days I was processing a lot of intellectual questions and a lot of spiritual doubt, and I read a book by Blaise Pascal.

It's actually not really a book. It was published posthumously after he died. And it was these little collections of writings called the Pensées. That's the French name for little writings.[1] And they collected all of these little pieces of paper together and published them as a book called the Pensées. And it was an apologetic for the existence of God in a kind of a postmodern culture of questioning and doubt. And he made an argument for God and the reasonableness of God and the futility of living life without God. And it turned the lights on for me, really helped me make sense of a lot of my doubts and questions and brought about a spiritual renewal in my life.

So I said, I want my firstborn child to be named Blaze. And I don't know if he'll grow up to be like Blaise Pascal, but an event in my life is how he got his name. Addie Jo has a significant name. Her name Addie comes from Audra's grandma who was named Patricia, so it's kind of a play on that. But we looked up the meaning of the name Addie and should have known better, but her name means strong as a bear. Who would do that? And it would be bad if we just called her Addie, but we call her Addie Jo.

And that Jo is a feminine form of the word John, which means grace of God. So when I get really angry with Addie Jo, which hardly ever happens, but on occasion, because she's strong as a bear, sometimes you get kind of frustrated and I have to remind myself, God is gracious, you know, you got to be patient. So it kind of fits together. Briggs, we couldn't figure out a name for Briggs. We struggled and struggled and struggled with it and we were driving to Fort Worth one day trying to figure out the name.

And the name Briggs came up. I said, I kind of like Briggs. We could say gettin' Briggy with it, which, if you're a child of the nineties, you know that's a Will Smith rap song. A lot of this will go over heads of some of the people in this room, but as soon as we heard that phrase getting Briggy with it, we thought that's perfect. He'll be a thirdborn party child, a party

waiting to happen. But it means a bridge builder, someone who makes connections, and the Lord did use Briggs to build bridges in a lot of ways.

And so people live up to their names. Names tell you a lot about the events around a person's life. When Jesus was born and the angel comes to Mary, they say you're going to call your child Jesus and the name Jesus means deliverer or a rescuer. And of course Jesus delivers his people from their sins. He rescues people. He's our deliverer. It actually comes from the Hebrew Yeshua, which means salvation belongs to the Lord. But before Jesus got his birth name, Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah chapter 9 some titles or some names of Jesus, anticipating his birth, and that's what we're going to look at this morning in Isaiah chapter 9 verse 6.

And we've been looking at this passage for the last couple of weeks. We've seen the context of the darkness that the people of God were experiencing as a nation. They were in a moment of crisis. Isaiah prophesies there is a light that is going to dawn. This light is going to penetrate the darkness. It is going to save you, deliver you, and overthrow the bondage and shackles that you're experiencing in your life. And this is the kind of deliverer that's coming. He says, "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."

So to us a child is born, to us a son is given. Now that would have obviously been surprising. You're telling me this big deliverer is coming as a baby? Naked and vulnerable and dependent. It was counterintuitive. It was coming, as we saw a couple of weeks ago, through the unexpected region of Naphtali and Zebulun. But it wasn't just a child, it was a son that was given. That was a royal title of kingship of deity. It's given by God, and so this idea that God is giving this kingly figure to the people of God, and the government will be upon his shoulder.

And when they heard government, they probably thought what we think: the government is some physical institution where decisions get made. So you have the city of Abilene, the government of the city of Abilene. That's how decisions get made in our city. There's government and institutions. It's the apparatus through which decisions are made, and there is a sense in which, when Jesus establishes his earthly kingdom, there will be a physical institution, a physical government, in which decisions are made. But I believe a lot of this phrase here was fulfilled when Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God.

Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. When we talk about the kingdom of God right now, we mean the rule and the reign of Jesus Christ in our hearts. He is the person through whom all of our decisions are made. And I believe these names, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, these are motivations from Isaiah to the people of God for why Jesus is a king that can be trusted. He is someone through whom we

can bring each and every one of our decisions, because he is a king who is worthy of our trust.

And so in your notes, the names given to Jesus establish why he is a king worthy of trust. A king before whom you can bring every single decision. And what we're going to do this morning and next week is to really drill down into each of these names. And this morning we're going to deal with two of them. The first one is Wonderful Counselor, and the second one is Mighty God. And the first one, some people actually disagree, because in the King James Version there's a comma right here, also in the American Standard Version and a couple of other translations.

So it's wonderful, counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of peace. And so scholars debate, is it Wonderful Counselor or is it Wonderful, Counselor? And I guess this is what people do to get PhDs. They write books over these commas. In the original Hebrew, there were no punctuation marks, and so there really is no way to know if you found the original manuscript to determine because there was no commas in the first place. To me it's somewhat of a moot point, because if he's wonderful and he's a counselor, he would be a wonderful counselor, right?

So he could be both, but wonderful just means awesome. It's the root word wonder. It just means not boring at all. And Jesus is not boring. He is awesome. When I was working for Lynn Ingram at Ingram Cleaners, that was his favorite word to use. That is awesome! But it was over laundry and I'm thinking that's a big word for laundry. I don't know, Lynn. Awesome belongs to the Lord. He's awesome. You have doctors and nurses; they'll try and give years to your life, but only the Lord Jesus actually gives life to your years.

Amen. He makes your life invigorating, exciting. If you'll give your life to Christ, if you submit to his leadership, if you let your government rest on his shoulders you'll never be bored. Your life will be exciting and fulfilling. And he's wonderful. He's a wonderful counselor. And the word counselor just means someone who gives advice or who guides you from a place of authority or a power or position. I was reading this week on these names and I came across a sermon by Charles Spurgeon. You guys ever heard of him? The Prince of Preachers?

He preached a very, very long sermon on like one word. I'm not going to do that. But I thought it was really interesting when he talked about this word counselor. He did a survey, Old Testament and New Testament, of how Jesus serves as a counselor, and boiled it down into three basic ways. I really like these. He says that Jesus is a wonderful counselor. But he functions as a counselor three ways. First, he's in counsel with God prior to the creation decree. Second, he's our counselor before God. He argues our case before the Lord.

And then lastly, he is our counselor from God. He gives us wisdom to make personal decisions in our life. And that really is the case. If you look at the ministry and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, he functions in each of those ways as counselor. He's a counselor with God. If you go all the way back to the book of Genesis, the first time we really see, I think, a proof of the Trinity is in Genesis chapter 1, verse 26, where God says, let us make man in our image.

And some people say that's a royal we. I don't know that that's a royal we. I think this is the Trinity in council with one another talking about how the creation is going to go. We know from other passages in the New Testament that creation was made through the Lord Jesus Christ. He was not born when he was a baby. He did not get created at birth. He was the one who birthed all creation. If you go to John chapter 1, it says that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

So they were in counsel with one another. And not only that, all things, verse three, all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. He was in counsel with God. Before the creation decree. There's another passage in Colossians 1:16 that says the same thing. All things were created by him in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. Dominion, rules, authorities, all of it was created through him and for him. He was in counsel with God before the creation. He's also our counselor before God, meaning he pleads our case.

If you read through the book of Romans, this is the picture I get when I read the book of Romans. You have this heavenly courtroom, and you have the prosecutor prosecuting the case against us and our sin. And you read Romans 1, 2, and 3, nobody wiggles out of it. I don't care how bad you are, how religious you are, nobody's safe. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And so our enemy, the accuser, sits in the seat of the prosecutor and he throws his accusations, and the truth of the matter is we have no defense because the sin is true, we're guilty as charged, but Jesus, our counselor, stands up and says, yes, the things that the accuser is saying is true, but the remedy has already been made.

And he argues our case before the judge, our Heavenly Father, and says atonement has been made for these crimes. This person is guilty, but shall not be punished because I was punished in their place. And so Romans 8:1 opens up with this picture of that there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Why? Because Jesus is our counselor has canceled the law of sin and death. He's our counsel before God in terms of atonement and salvation and justification. He's our counselor before God when we pray. Sometimes when you're really going through a time in life that's difficult and hard, you don't even have the words to pray.

You're sitting at the hospital bed or in the ICU room and you're thinking to yourself I don't even know what God's doing. I don't know what his plan is. I don't know if I should pray this

or pray that. I don't know what the right answer is. So all you do is just have these utterances, these groanings, this speechlessness, and Romans 8:26 says even in those moments, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings that are too deep for words. The Spirit of God intercedes for the saints according to the will of God and causes Paul to say in the next verse, Romans 8:28, Therefore I know, even though I don't see it now, I know that God's going to work all things together for good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose because Jesus is my counselor with God.

He's my counselor before God. He's pleading our case. He has not abandoned me. I'm not an orphan. If it's not good then God's not done and I'm going to keep having faith in the Lord because he's my counselor. Romans 8:31 and following is this big climax of this: you're guilty but you're not punished because of Jesus our counselor. He says, who's going to condemn? Who's going to bring any charge against God's elect? I'm sorry, in verse 30, yeah, verse 31. I'm sorry, verse 33, who's going to bring any charge against God's elect?

It is God who justifies. Who's going to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died, more than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who is indeed interceding for us. And he closes, I'm convinced, neither death nor life nor angels nor demons nor things present nor things to come, powers, height, depth, anything in all creation, nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Why? Because he's our counselor. He is our counselor before God. He was in counsel with God.

But he's also our counselor from God. And maybe this is more of what Isaiah had in mind when he talked about Jesus as our wonderful counselor. He's someone given to us by God to help us in making wise decisions. He gives us spiritual wisdom, not only the spiritual wisdom to see the truth about who he is and what he came to do and our proper response, but even spiritual wisdom for how to live our daily lives in a practical way. People look for answers in all kinds of places today. I didn't bring my phone up with me, but I was going to ask Siri some spiritual questions.

Have you guys ever done that? Ask Siri spiritual questions. She doesn't know the answers. I checked again this morning, because her answers change. I checked this morning, I said, Siri, does God exist? And she says, it's a mystery to me. So she doesn't know. I said, Siri, what is the meaning of life? And she said, Nietzsche can tell you, or something along those lines. She was kind of funny about it. It was cute, but wrong. Because Nietzsche can't tell you what the purpose of life is. He tried and he was wrong.

But people look for answers and want answers, and they're asking things like Siri and Google, but Jesus has been given as our counsel. He answers those big questions of life: how did we get here? And what went wrong? What's wrong with the world? And what's wrong with me? And how do I make myself right? And how do we make the world right? And where are we headed anyway, and what's going to happen after we die? All those questions are

answered in the Lord because He's our counselor from God. And again, as I mentioned, it's a word that means someone who guides you through a problem from a position of authority.

So in your notes, I say Jesus is a counselor who has the empathy to understand your problem and the wisdom to work out a solution. I don't know if anybody's ever done any counseling, but counselors are helpful in a lot of ways. But a lot of counselors sit there and listen to your problems and you pour your heart out to your counselor. And after about an hour of talking, you feel a lot better because you finally got it out. But then they say something along the lines of, what do you think you should do?

How does that make you feel? And it's helpful. That's nice. It's good to get it out, but it doesn't give you a solution to your problem. Or if you call your friend up in the middle of the night and you pour your heart out to your friend. I can't believe he did this and said this and who in their right mind whatever. And your friend sympathizes with you and goes, I can't believe they did that. You have every right to be angry. You feel better, but it doesn't give you an answer to your problem.

Jesus isn't that kind of counselor. He doesn't counsel like a therapist or a best friend. He counsels from a place of authority. He says, I have answers to your problems. And not only that, he's sympathetic, or empathetic. The author of Hebrews talks about this, that Jesus is not like the other high priests who were kind of, you know, they were the priests. They didn't have normal everyday people problems. They were kind of sheltered from that kind of experience. They were God's man. But Jesus isn't a great high priest who's unable to sympathize with us in our weakness.

He's not somebody who had a perfect life. He's able to sympathize with our weakness. Why? Because he was tempted in every respect, just like we are, yet without sin. So that means two things. Number one, he's empathetic. He knows what you're going through. He's been through the kinds of things that you're going through. But not only did he get through and go through the things you're going through, he did it without sin. Meaning he did it the right way. He knows the answers. He knows the paths you need to take to avoid the landmines and the pitfalls.

And when he counsels you, he counsels you as someone who has both of those things in tow. He understands what you're going through and he can give you a way out. An illustration I've heard is it would be like the difference between a woman who has read about having babies, seen people have a baby, read books on what it feels like to have a baby, and her telling you the experience of having a baby from that perspective, versus someone who's actually had the baby telling you this is what it's going to be like.

And Jesus is someone who's actually had the baby. He's experienced the pains of childbirth. Well, not literally, he's a man, but you get what I'm saying. He's been through it. He feels

what you're feeling. Maybe not specifically down to the detail, but he knows exactly the kinds of emotions you're processing, the kinds of hurt that betrayal or lies inflict, the stress and anxiety of not having certain financial security. He didn't have a place to lay his head. He wasn't a wealthy man. He knows what it feels like, and he has the wisdom to give you a way forward.

And not only that, it actually gets better, believe it or not. Not only does he have the empathy to understand the situation and the wisdom to give you an answer, Jesus's empathy and wisdom are also accompanied by supernatural power. Woo! So he's mighty God. He's a wonderful counselor, but he's also mighty God. And believe it or not, if you go back to that passage in Hebrews chapter 4, verse 16, he follows this picture of Jesus as a great high priest who's not unable, but he's sympathetic with us in our weakness because he's been tempted in every way that we are.

Let us with confidence, not shame, not uncertainty, not wishful thinking, no, with confidence, draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. He can help because he has power. He doesn't just have empathy. He doesn't just have wisdom. He has sovereign power to change things and bring things into being that did not yet exist and to change hearts and to change minds and to twist outcomes and intervene in the affairs of man, and so you come to him with faith and confidence, knowing that when you pray, he doesn't dismiss you.

He hears you when you pray. He cares about the things that you are troubled over. He has empathy, wisdom, and power, not only to give you advice, but the power to bring the plan to fruition. Now that doesn't always mean that his plan is what you want. Sometimes he'll give you a solution that you say, I don't know about that, Lord. I don't think that's the right path to go down. I don't know about you allowing this to happen and that to happen, it sure looks like you don't know what you're doing.

But sometimes his counsel is not always tasteful, but his counsel is always good, and he's always got the power to bring about his perfect ends and receiving or experiencing Jesus as the wonderful counselor and the mighty God means not just having the humility necessary to admit your weakness, but also to admit your hardships and difficulties. It's not just about repentance and humility. It's also about faith and trust that his wisdom is right, his plan is good, and he's powerful enough to do as he's promised to do. He's a wonderful counselor, he's a mighty God.

And the last thing that I think we need to remember about Jesus as the wonderful counselor and the mighty God is his power is not some Force. It's not Star Wars, right? It's not something you kind of channel and release. Christianity teaches that this power is something that you and I can experience right now through the Holy Spirit. That the Mighty God, the

Wonderful Counselor, can live in us right now, in our hearts, through the Holy Spirit. Jesus doesn't just give us an answer. He doesn't just give us some power for a time being.

He gives us himself. The eternal God comes and lives inside of you and inside of me through faith or through repentance and faith. And when we feel weak, we can actually be strong because He lives in us. You remember when Moses was being given his assignment to tell Pharaoh to let my people go? And he says, I don't know, Lord, I've got a stutter and I'm not good at speaking, and who do I say sent me? You remember what the Lord said? Tell him I am sent you. I was reading an Advent book by J.

D. Greear, and he pointed out that for God's people when they heard the name of the Messiah, this deliverer, they weren't thinking about some generic God who's making this promise. They were thinking about the covenant faithful God, Jehovah, or Yahweh, whose name means I am. And when we feel in our life I can't, we need to be reminded that we have a God who is I am. And any I can't-ness that we have in us will always be overcome and outweighed by his I am-ness, because he'll do what he's promised he'll do.

And he did it for Moses and he did it for Gideon. He did it for Daniel. He'll do it for you and for me. So when we ask the question, man, Christmas is so interesting, isn't it? Because sometimes Christmas, it's so joyful and so happy and so many people look like they have it all together, but a lot of times it's some of the hardest times of our lives. Those are the seasons you actually lose somebody you love. Those are the seasons you feel alone. Those are the seasons where big decisions get made, life-changing decisions.

And it's easy to let those anxieties and unanswered questions cause you to lose faith and say, who's going to sort this mess out? Where am I going to go? How am I going to get there? Nobody's listening to me. My marriage is falling apart. And after every one of those questions of anxiety and restlessness in our soul, we need to be reminded and hear the Lord say, I am. I am. Who's going to figure this out? I am. Who's going to provide for these needs that are about to show up on our table?

I am. Who's going to give me the sustenance I need to not go back to my old way of life or to find some pill or some drink or some needle to fix my itch? I am. I've already given you everything that you need. It is in you now through the Holy Spirit, if you'll but receive it, live in light of it, live by faith as if it's true. And that's the Christian life. The Christian life is believing Jesus is the wonderful counselor. He is the mighty God. He is the great I Am.

And I'm not just going to believe it up here. I'm going to live it out in my hands and in my feet. You go back to the book of Acts and you see the early church turn the world upside down. You see a guy like Peter. Hillbilly, redneck Peter, preaching in boldness, thousands of people getting saved. He would not say Jesus gave me a great education and now I'm smart.

He would say I'm still dumb as an ox. But I'm filled with the spirit. It's not because of my wisdom or my eloquence.

Paul said the same thing. It wasn't persuasive speech that planted the church in Corinth; it was a demonstration of power. It was the Holy Spirit. Every time that God shows up in the book of Acts with these magnificent miracles, it's preceded by people who are prayerful and filled with the Spirit of God and then speak the gospel with boldness. That's how the world got turned upside down. And I wonder if we've forgotten that this is how the Christian life is lived. It's not just knowing the right answers. It's not even just reading the Bible and going to church and doing mission trips and serving in the hospitality team and doing all of those things, those things are good, but it's doing those things in the Spirit's power.

It's doing those things in faith that if God doesn't, then it won't because God is the only one who can. It's a reminder for us that Jesus is the only mighty God. We're not the mighty God. He's the mighty God. And man, I really feel like COVID has been an opportunity for us to be reminded that whatever counsel we thought we were trusting in, if it wasn't the Lord, it got proven to be a fool. Whatever power we were trusting in, whatever security we were trusting in, if it wasn't the Lord, it got exposed to be inadequate.

And a reminder for us as God's people especially that if we're going to move forward, if we're going to persevere, if we're going to see a new day, a new dawn, God show up in powerful ways, it won't happen unless and until we become a people who walk by faith that Jesus is the wonderful counselor. He is the mighty God. And so as we wrap it up this morning, I just want to challenge you to examine your heart to see if these things are so. Am I relating to Jesus as the wonderful counselor?

Here's one of the ways you can know that. Are you feeling anxious? Are you super worried about what's yet to come? Are you feeling rebellious? God gave you a clear choice, a clear answer, a clear direction, and you're saying, ooh, you sure you saw all the things I was telling you about? Those are symptoms of a heart that's not yet fully trusting. That's not yet fully there. They're little diagnostic questions you can ask yourself. Maybe ask yourself the question, when's the last time I really heard from the Lord? When's the last time in a church service we all discerned from the Lord, The Lord's in this place.

He's giving us a word. This is what he wants us to do. When's the last time you experienced communion with God and the presence of God and power in your life? I know it can be scary when God calls you to walk through something outside your comfort zone, and I know it can be a little bit intimidating when your whole world falls out from underneath you as 2020 has done for most of the nation. But there's nothing more peaceful in your life or my life than living in the center of the will of God.

And walking by faith, he really is wonderful. He is the Counselor. He's the Mighty God, and as we'll see next week, an Everlasting Father who never leaves us as orphans, and the Prince of Peace. And if our government would rest on his shoulders, and by that I mean not just the U.S. government, though that would be nice, but your government, your personal government, if your decision making would be filtered through the grid of his authority and his power, if you would live underneath the rule and the reign of the sovereign Lord Jesus Christ.

Of that government, there will be no end. It will be peace forevermore. And that's the invitation of the Lord to each and every one of us this morning. And if you're watching online or if you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, then this is what the Christian life is. You enter into the Christian life through repentance and faith. I asked the question early on, what's in a name? And in the name of Jesus really is everything. If anyone calls on the name of the Lord, they'll be saved. And if you don't have a personal relationship with Christ, then after the service you can come up and talk with me about that.

Right there where you're sitting in your pajamas or your room or wherever you are, you can reach out to us, comment on the thread, or send us an email or text us. Our church phone number is 325-692-2360. But let's respond in faith as the Lord leads. Father, we thank you for this time. We give you our hearts and our minds, our bodies, our will. Help us to experience you as the wonderful counselor and the mighty God. Help us to reject fear, to embrace faith to live as if your word really is true and you really will do what you've promised to do.

And for those of us, this is just easy talk. It's hard to put into practice. I understand that. And so where the talk is cheap or the application is complicated, would you give wisdom for what this looks like? And we pray it in Jesus' name.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "the French name for little writing"; *Pensées* is French for "Thoughts," the title given to Pascal's posthumously collected notes. Sources: Wikipedia, "Pensées" ("The Pensées (Thoughts)..."); Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Pensées" (published posthumously, 1670). ↩