

## Wonderful Counselor

Today we start our new Christmas series that we are calling, **Gloom to Glory (A Promise of Hope)**. This will be a 4 part series where we will look through one of the most famous Christmas passages that we find in scripture. As Christmas has found its way into our homes and lives once again; I've recognized that it came fast for some and for some; they've been waiting patiently. It seems as if we have two groups of Christmas people; the ones who wait till after Thanksgiving to get in the holiday spirit or the ones who skip Halloween and Thanksgiving and jump straight in. Regardless of where you find yourself in this holiday season, one thing is for sure; Christmas is here! For some of you, this Christmas will be a special one and for some; this Christmas will be hard. Maybe you were able to add to the family, or the family will be missing a few. Maybe the budget was tight or you were able to flex a little more this year. Whatever the case may be for you and your family, our goal over the next 4 weeks is to help you recognize the promise of Hope that our Father has to offer in this holiday season.

In chapter 9 in the book of Isaiah, the prophet was sent by God to speak a word of HOPE to the struggling nation of Israel. Not just a word of hope, but a word of assurance and above all that; He gave a promise! A promise that would change the course of history. A promise you and I are still standing on and holding onto. A promise that is unchanging and is eternal! **A promise that takes us from "gloom to glory!"** If you have your Bible, turn with us to chapter 9 of Isaiah and I will pray for us before we jump in..

What if I told you this morning that Christmas is more than just Christmas carols, cards and food. It's more than just a good feeling when opening presents. We're living in a facebook and instagrammable worthy culture and everything is depicted on feeling and what things seem to look like. What if I told you that Christmas is actually much darker. What if I told you that Christmas isn't to highlight the joys in our life, but to actually shine light in the darkness of our gloom! In scripture, Christmas does not appear when life is all put together, but actually presents itself in the midst of our darkness and our inability to get out of it on our own. Our Christmas traditions can actually be the complete opposite of what we see in scripture. We are not saying to throw your traditions and activities away, but we are asking you to re-evaluate what Christmas means to you? There are those who enjoy it because it brings about good feelings, but there are those who NEED it because it offers HOPE in a dark world.

For Isaiah, Christmas meant hope. Hope of a child bringing glory to a gloomy situation! Israel found themselves in a place you and I can find ourselves in and that's needing a Savior. God's people were in trouble. Assyria was quickly becoming the world's superpower. It wasn't because of political influence, military dominance, or even finances. It was God! God was raising them up to bring justice against Israel because of their unfaithfulness! So how could Israel overcome such a dominant force such as Assyria? God.. **God was bringing justice so He could bring the Savior!**

Even in the midst of judgment, God had a promise! Even when we're unfaithful, God remains faithful! While we are sinners, God saves sinners. While we walk in darkness, He brings the light! **While we walk in gloom, He brings glory!**

**Isaiah 9:1-6**, "Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—

**2** The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. The Israelites just didn't see darkness but actually walked in it! No difference for us; **Ephesians 5:8**, "**For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light!**" It's not just that we were in darkness, but it was in us. It was our identity! Who was it that Isaiah considered the "people?" It was the people of Galilee. The location of Galilee in Israel put them as the first ones to get hit by foreign armies. They didn't just have a hard season, but a hard life. They knew what it was like to suffer. Isaiah makes it clear that hope comes first to those who suffer the most. Where did Jesus start His ministry? Matthew 4 says Galilee! Jesus was saying that He was the light that Isaiah spoke about in Isaiah 9!

**3** You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. No wonder as the light spreads, the gloom is replaced with joy and rejoicing! What is this joy? Isaiah uses the metaphor of a farmer and a warrior. A farmer when they work hard and receive their reward and when the warrior celebrates after victory. But notice the first word, YOU! The farmer, the warrior, you and I; we didn't do anything, it's all God! God does all the work and we rejoice! God plants and we harvest, He fights and we get the rewards! God's people were walking in darkness, but God had a plan!

**4** For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. Do you know the story of Gideon? He was an unlikely hero who God used to lead an army against Midian! An army that was 32,000 strong, but cut down to 300. Why? Because God wanted them to know that it was His battle, and that He can overcome all odds! Gideon's little army in the hands of God caused such a panic to the Midianites, that they killed themselves. Isaiah is telling Israel and us, God is about to bring about this type of miraculous victory again!

**5** Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. This means the battle is over! The victory is complete! There will be no more need for warriors or the shedding of blood! Not by Israel's strength or ours, but

God's. We step on the battlefield after God has always won. As one commentator states, "We celebrate *his* victory as if it is *our* victory because in Christ, by grace, it is."

Then we get to verse 6 where Isaiah tells us how all of this is possible..here is where we will plant ourselves over the next 4 weeks as we dive into how the coming Messiah would become not just Israel's Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace, but our's as well.

**6 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.**

Verse 6 can be considered the climax of this whole chapter. It gives us the answers to our greatest difficulties in life. Anxiety, worry, stress, fear, even death itself. The answer is found in one person; a child! That's not what Israel was expecting to hear or us! Our imagination of a Savior isn't a baby, but somebody coming in on a white horse saving the day. There is nothing weaker on earth and more dependent on someone than an infant. Yet, when God saw fit it was time to wage war on sin, He brought a baby! What is God doing? He is doing what He always does, He's overturning our expectations and building upon our redemption story that is marinated in His miraculous power.

Isaiah says that the government will be on His shoulders. Not ours. We don't hold the authority, or the weight of this world, but He does. Isaiah then gives us the four ways the Messiah will govern..by being the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

With time remaining today, we want to see how Jesus being the Wonderful Counselor brings us from a place of gloom to a promise of glory. For most people, they either seek no advice from anyone or they are listening to the wrong ones. Whether it's from our heart of pride where we think we have it all together and need no help or us seeking advice from people who don't have our interests at all. Sometimes too many voices are just that, voices. We are not saying not to seek mental health specialists (counselors, therapists,) matter of fact; we are advocates. Btw, we are working through a "mental health series," in February. Please keep that in prayer. But, God gave us the greatest counselor we could ever need, JESUS! In the New Testament, Jesus provides us 3 promises of hope as our wonderful counselor

### **Promise #1: He Knows Our Need Before We Ask**

The beautiful thing about Jesus being our wonderful counselor is that He needs no introduction to our needs. He's omniscient, He knows everything! How amazing it is to know that Jesus just doesn't know you, but knows what you're dealing with on the inside. He knows the circumstances and the fine details. He knows what the past, present and future looks like, and He wants to counsel us in the way that not only is best for us but brings our Father glory.

**He knows the past:** Jesus knew the woman at the wells' past, yet He didn't turn away. How many times have you felt shame and guilt for what you had done, and felt like you couldn't approach the throne? Jesus knows the deepest and darkest secrets of our pasts, yet still invites us to an intimate and personal relationship. Offering counsel on how to maneuver and obtain victory over our sin.

**He knows the present:** Have you ever heard someone say, "You just don't know what I'm going through, you can't understand." That's a possibility for us, but not Jesus. **Hebrews 4:14-16**, "14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. 16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." We have a Savior who knows our present pressures, present circumstances, and our present trials. He knows because He can empathize better than anyone

**He knows the future:** There is no one that has the credentials to know the future outside of the One who created it. In counsel, we may not receive the exact answers or the plans that have been set for us, but we believe in faith that they are for our good.

Jesus knowing our past, present, and future allows Him to counsel us wholly! There's no part He doesn't know. In return, He knows exactly what we need before we ask. He knows the mess, the dark, the situations and knows what's coming. For some that may be scary, but for all it should bring hope. Not only does He know what we need before we ask, He also...

### **Promise #2: He Knows He Can Help Us**

How frustrating is it to ask for help, and the one who is supposed to be delivering help is clueless? Have you ever been on the phone with technical support and the conversation goes sideways? You either can't understand them, they can't understand you; now you're both confused. The PROBLEM is not being resolved, yet they think it is. Or, they just simply don't know how to resolve it. Jesus doesn't have any issue with resolution to situations!

**There are those that have tried Jesus' help and testify of His goodness:**

**John 6: 68-69**, "68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."

What a statement from Peter. Where do we go to get answers for the evil in the world? Whom do we trust in when everything around us is falling apart? Where can we turn when trying to overcome the evil in our own heart? Where do we go to find real love, a sacrificial love? Peter says, Jesus, the wonderful counselor.

## **There are those that have not tried Jesus' help and He's inviting you.**

**Matthew 11:28-30**, “**28** “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Jesus calls us to call out and to come home to Him. He's the great shepherd. No matter if He has 99 sheep safely in the pasture, He's still looking for the 1. He came to this world on that first Christmas long ago to reveal the love of God for the human heart and soul. Now, He calls you to come to Him. He is the only One with the rest that is needed for the troubled soul.

Jesus knows there is nothing He cannot help us with, the problem is not Him, but us. How often are we submitting ourselves to His counsel knowing that He knows what He's doing? Scripture is filled with accounts of those whose lives were dramatically changed when they allowed Jesus to bring counsel to their lives. The question is whether or not you will?

## **There are those that have tried Jesus' help and are still waiting for healing.**

This is so common among believers. Just because you know Jesus and have surrendered your life to Him, does not mean struggling will pass you by. Matter of fact, if you do know Jesus, expect to struggle. Expect to wait. Expect to have to battle the waves and storms. The struggle is undeniable. Thankfully, we have Jesus who knows what's best for us in the waiting. Paul talks about this in **2 Corinthians 12: 7-10**, “...therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. **8** Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. **9** But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. **10** That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” Paul of all people, had a thorn. One that kept him from being conceited. God gave Him a revelation earlier in Corinthians, and then a thorn so he couldn't brag on what God had allowed Him to see. But, without suffering, we can't experience verse 9 where God says, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” If you never receive the “help/healing” your seeking for, is Jesus still enough? Is He still enough? Paul thought so. Do you? **Oftentimes, We don't know what is best for us. The Help we want isn't always the help we need.** If you're in a season of waiting, don't give up. Keep pursuing. Keep holding on. Keep the faith. Hold on with perseverance. Here's why! Whether or not the healing comes, **His grace is sufficient! His power is made perfect in weakness.** There's a real possibility that we can miss out on who God has called us to be if there was never a weakness to keep us grounded!

Promise #1 is that He Knows exactly what we need, Promise #2 is that He knows he can help us, which leads us to promise #3..

### **Promise #3: He Is Always Available**

If we are being honest, things would be totally different if Jesus wasn't always available. Would it really matter if He knew what we needed or we knew He could help, if we knew He wasn't available? Don't get this twisted, we're not saying Jesus is genie in a bottle or Santa clause, but what we are saying is that Jesus is always available. He's always present. When it comes to counsel, Jesus doesn't make us wait. Now, I know you may have prayed and didn't get the answer when you wanted, but that doesn't mean Jesus was late; It means you were rushing. It means you were inconvenienced. It means your timing and His timing aren't the same.

Jesus' desired to give access to all who came calling. From fisherman to outcasts, regular folks to religious rulers, to sinners of all types, no one was blocked. They came to Him in the streets, places of worship, in towns and in the country and even in places others didn't want to go. Jesus gave them the access they needed, so He could speak the truth they needed. It's no different for you and I.

**Hebrews 7:24-25, "24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. 25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."**

This is the promise of hope Jesus gives by always being available to us. First, He lives forever! Secondly, Jesus saves COMPLETELY! He saves wholly, all parts, from all sin! Don't miss that and to be honest that is enough of a promise; but there is more. Jesus lives to intercede for you and I! Always! In other words, we can come to Him at any time! It means Jesus is alive at the right hand of the Father right now. He makes it possible to be in the presence of God.

**1 Timothy 2:5-6, "5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time."**

Jesus is interceding, while Satan is accusing. The beautiful part of Jesus interceding is that the accusing is falling on deaf ears in Heaven because of Jesus' FINISHED work on the cross!

The finished work on the cross brings victory to humanity. It brings light to the darkness. It brings the promise of hope into fruition. It brings us from a place of gloom to glory!

#### **Invitation:**

Have you invited the light of the world into your darkness? Do you realize you need His help?

What burdens are we trying to carry that you should be laying at the feet of the Father's feet?

Can you testify of His GOODNESS right now at this moment?

What are you struggling with that the Wonderful Counselor wants to help you overcome? Will you let Him?