

November 28, 2004
A.M. Service – First Sunday of Advent
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“Wonderful Counselor”

Isa 9:2a,6a NLT

“The people who walk in darkness will see a great light...For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the government will rest on his shoulders. These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counselor...”

Can you believe it is the first Sunday of Advent? I love this time of year. I love the decorations. I love hearing the Christmas carols. Of course ...

No one can fracture a Christmas carol better than a kid. Sing along with these new takes on old favorites:

Deck the Halls with Buddy Holly

We three kings of porridge and tar

On the first day of Christmas my tulip gave to me

He's makin' a list, chicken and rice.

With the jelly toast proclaim

Sleep in heavenly peas

Oh, what fun it is to ride with one horse, soap and hay

Come, froggy faithful

You'll tell Carol, "Be a skunk, I require"

Noel. Noel, Barney's the king of Israel.

The main thing I love about Christmas is hearing again the story of the Birth of Christ. The point of Christmas is Jesus Christ.

Isaiah wrote, “a child is born to us, a son is given to us.” Jesus fulfilled this prophecy of Isaiah. As we saw last week Isaiah wrote during a dark time in History and promised that “The people who walk in darkness will see a great light.” That Light is a person and that person is Jesus.

(John 1:1-14 NLT) In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 He created everything there is. Nothing exists that he didn't make. 4 Life itself was in him, and this life gives light to everyone. 5 The light shines through the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

6 God sent John the Baptist 7 to tell everyone about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. 8 John himself was not the light; he was only a witness to the light. 9 The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was going to come into the world.

10 But although the world was made through him, the world didn't recognize him when he came. 11 Even in his own land and among his own people, he was not accepted. 12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. 13 They are reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan--this rebirth comes from God.

14 So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father.

Jesus, the child, the Son of God Isaiah prophesied about was God in human form who gives life and light to all who believe in Him and accept Him. Isaiah said you will know Him because (Isa 7:14-15 NLT) the Lord himself will choose the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel--'God is with us.'

Isaiah gave another way for us to know Him (Isa 9:6 NIV) "And he will be called Wonderful Counselor..."

In the Hebrew language to say someone will be called (have a title or name), and to say someone will be (describing what one is like) is often the same. Hebrew names many times described a person's attributes. (Jerry means "Mighty Warrior" Okay, so I'm not Hebrew! I do belong to the Patchogue Mighty Warriors' Softball team). Wonderful Counselor is not just a title for Jesus but describes His attributes. Because He is, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace He is Wonderful and a Wonderful Counselor.

This is just what a world in darkness needs and is crying out for, a wonderful counselor who can show them a way of life that works.

Isaiah said that when the Messiah comes He will be a wonder of a counselor, an awesome, amazing advisor or guide and we will be in awe of Him. His attributes will be such that these words appropriately describe His power and work.

WONDERFUL

By "wonderful" is meant anything wonderful or great, as a miracle [He would do wonders just as God did wonders in Egypt, at the Red Sea and the Jordan.] But it is more than that it means that He and His works will be exalted above any other beings or works. He and His works are separated from the ordinary course of events, and are suited to excite amazement, wonder, and admiration, whether it be miraculous or not. ***These titles and qualities distinguish Him as the Messiah.***

Wonder is a word that expresses everything in relation to the Redeemer. For the Messiah was wonderful in all things. His love is wonderful and it was a wonderful love by which He came from the Father; the manner of His birth was wonderful; His humility, His self-denial, His sorrows were wonderful; His mighty works were wonderful; His dying agonies were wonderful; and His resurrection, His ascension, were all suited to excite admiration and wonder. Jesus inspires admiration and wonder.

What really excites you? What gets you so charged up that you can't stop talking about it? For me it's my wife, my son, my church. It's sunsets and other natural wonders. It's a good meal with close friends or loved ones and things that make people laugh. It's talking about Jesus, praying with someone to accept Christ as his or her Savior. It's my wife's pumpkin pie and many of her other baked goodies. I use to like Roy Rogers fried chicken and how I'd love to have some pepperoni, provolone cheese and some nice Italian bread.

How about you? What's on your list? During this Advent season I wish we could see Jesus as the One who excites and thrills us more than anyone or anything else.

I am related to Chuck Mangone. Our fathers grew up together in Rochester NY. Back when cousin Chuck was doing very well, his dad, Frank, who usually travel with his son, would call my dad whenever they were in the NYC area. Chuck Mangone had just come out with his new album, "Feels so good" and was going to be performing at the Bottom Line in Greenwich Village. Dad got his usual phone call from Frank Mangone who offered my dad free tickets to see Chuck. My dad called me and invited Ann and I to come along. I had some friends who were really into Chuck Mangone's music at the time and I asked dad if I could invite them. My dad said that would be okay and we all went to the concert. When it was over Frank brought us back stage to meet Chuck Mangone. I told him I was his cousin and he said, "Yeah, I seem to have a lot of cousins now I never knew I had before." He gave us a few minutes of his time and we chatted but I noticed that my friend was awestruck and speechless. He told me afterward that he just couldn't believe that he had actually spent those few minutes in the presence of Chuck Mangone, his favorite, and most popular jazz musician at the time.

Why don't we feel that way about Jesus? Why isn't our hearts filled with awe and wonder like that whenever we are in the presence of The Almighty God? Chuck Mangone, who's not enjoying the same popularity he had back then, is just a musician. How does that compare with spending time with the Creator of the Universe and the Savior of the World? And when did God ever tell you He could only give you a few minutes of His time? Do we take God for granted? Many times we have opportunities to be with Him in a deep intimate way but does it produce the sense of awe it should? I remember the first time I personally met Dr. Larry Crabb, a Christian counselor and author. I was thrilled as we talked and I asked him to autograph one of his books for me. But I want Jesus to be the One that thrills of my life. Dr. Crabb is a wonderful counselor but he is not *The Wonderful Counselor*.

COUNSELOR

The word *Counselor* that Isaiah used denotes one of honorable rank. It is expressive of ***great wisdom, and of qualifications to guide and direct the human race.***

Jesus a wonderful counselor because He is God – By Him God has given us counsel. He is the wisdom of the Father, and our wisdom. He is the wonderful counselor, a wonder or miracle of a counselor; in this, as in other things, he has the pre-eminence; no one teaches like Him. He alone has the words of Eternal Life. He is not only our wonderful giver of joy but ***Jesus is our “Counselor” who comforts us in our time of deepest need, rescues us when we’ve lost our way, and shows us a way of life that works.*** Although we don’t want difficult days, it’s actually the dark days of fear and suffering that draw us closer to God than ever before. He is not only God of the good times in life but the God, Lord, Master and Counselor in the difficult days and that is when our love for Him will deepen. When life hurts us Jesus loves and cares for us. He will come to us in our time of need to be our Counselor.

Good advice comes from those who genuinely love others. No one can love us as perfectly and unconditionally as Jesus. Those who love are able to give tough advice that doesn't hedge around the truth. Christ loved us enough to die for us, and He also loves us enough to talk straight to us. Because His love is complete, He gives us life-changing challenges and advise.

Jesus is justly called wonderful because He is both God and man. He is wonderful because He is God; But He was also human and so a Counselor who can relate to all men and women, who can touch the deepest need and touches the very core of who we are.

In the Christmas story everyone who comes in contact with the Christ child is filled with awe and wonder: Mary, Joseph, the shepherds...that’s how I want it to be in my life. But the fullness of the Christmas message is that this Child who has been born, the Son that has been given to us, is not only our wonderful giver of joy but is also the Counselor.