



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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December 24, 2011  
Candlelight Worship  
Pastor Randy Ott

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 96](#)  
Gospel Lesson: [Luke 2:1-20](#)  
Sermon Text: [Isaiah 9:6-7](#)

### Mysterious Names

Light and darkness is a theme that you hear often in Scripture. There's another phrase that's used often in Scripture. This one is used a little differently than we use it. It's the phrase of mystery, a mystery long hidden now being revealed. A mystery in Scripture isn't something that someone is going to solve or find all the clues and figure it out on their own. A mystery in Scripture is something that has to be revealed to us and explained to us and actually made able to understand by the work of the Holy Spirit alone. Scripture often talks about these spiritual truths that are spiritually understood and if you don't have the Spirit, it's just not going to make any sense to you.

When you consider these names that Isaiah spoke of (and we just sang in the third verse of the hymn, *the Prince of Peace for me*), these names that Isaiah said were fulfilled there in Bethlehem, if you were reading these names some 700 years beforehand, they had to seem pretty mysterious. The salvation of the people is going to come from a child who is God, who is everlasting, who is almighty, and who is Father, it gets a little confusing, doesn't it?

For you and I on this side of it looking back, we can read that and we are familiar with these words. We've heard them often, but I don't think you and I could even begin to understand these mysterious names except that our God has sent the Spirit into our hearts so that we can see exactly what they are going to be and what that child is.

So this evening, just take a few minutes to think about these mysterious names and try to imagine yourself 700 years before the Messiah came trying to figure out exactly what this would mean, and what he would be. It just shows us that as God tells us in Scripture "His thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His thoughts and His ways above our thoughts and ways." (See [Isaiah 55:8-10](#).) It's only by his grace that as you and I sit here this evening we could even begin to understand the truths here.

In Chapter 7, Isaiah had said that God would give the people a sign of His salvation. It will be the virgin will be with child and give birth to a son. In Chapter 9 He comes back and talks a little bit about that Son again. "*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.*" The government being on his shoulders, that means he is going to rule. He is going to have power. He is going to have authority. You and I can look at that and see that fits Jesus. Jesus said "All authority on heaven and earth has been given to me" (see [Matthew 28:17-19](#)) before he gave us the Great Commission to go and tell other people who He is and what He has done for us.

But can you imagine trying to think about this? This child was born and He is the great governing thing? It sounds kind of confusing.

Then it says *“he will be called Wonderful Counselor.”* The word that is used for Wonderful there is stronger than that. It’s literally that He’s a wonder, a counselor, like a sign and a wonder, to back up the message God spoke through Moses. Remember how God enabled Moses to perform signs and wonders; the staff to the serpent and back again and all the different plagues. These were signs and wonders to show that God was at work. Here this child would be a wonder, something that we would be amazed at. Something that would be out of the ordinary. What they had already heard in Chapter 7, born of a virgin, that was certainly a wonder, a sign, a wonder, something out of the ordinary.

You and I look at it now and we can see that Jesus Christ is a wonder. God became flesh. God left heaven and became one of us. That’s a wonder, something that is certainly wonderful. It’s a wonder. It’s incredible to think that God would act in this way to do something that is completely beyond our imagining.

Part of the sign, the wonder that he would give would be that he would be a Counselor, a Counselor who sets a course of action and then follows it through, the one who gives advice. Those are all rolled up into that word.

You and I can see how that fits Jesus, right? He set his face towards the cross at Calvary to carry our sins to it. He didn’t turn from the left to the right away from it because he knew how desperately you and I need it. So he set the course of action and he followed it through, but he certainly speaks to us and gives us advice. His counsel is his Word. You and I can still read it every day. We can sit at the feet of Jesus and hear him as he speaks to us through Holy Scriptures.

A Wonderful Counselor, this kid will grow up and be that, but Mighty God? That had to seem awfully confusing to them. Would he be human or would he be God? A child is going to be born, but this child is going to be Mighty God. It certainly tells us that the one who would be born is divine. You and I know, as we’ve seen from Scripture as the Spirit is revealed to us, that Jesus is true God and at the same time he is true man. You and I can’t quite understand how that could be, but that’s what God says, so we believe it. But we have the benefit of hindsight looking backwards, right?

That child is going to be Everlasting Father. It’s not that easy to grasp that a child is Everlasting Father. From our point of view, he obviously had a beginning there that night in Bethlehem, but because he’s Mighty God, he had no beginning. He is eternal. Before there was time, there was this child, true God from all eternity. But calling the child Father as well? That’s who he would be to us. We are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. He continues to bring people into the family of God. It’s something we could never figure out unless God had revealed it to us.

Prince of Peace...most princes extended their kingdom through warfare. David was perhaps the greatest warrior king Israel ever had, yet this Prince who would reign on David's throne forever would rule and conquer, not by shedding someone else's blood but by shedding his own blood to make peace between us and God because you and I aren't born with that peace. You and I are separated from God, but our God acts in such an amazing way to bring about peace. He sends his own Son into world. God himself becomes human. He lives perfectly in our place and then dies in our place with all of our sins. The way He establishes this peace between us and Him is absolutely amazing. It's something that, Lord help us if we ever stop being thrilled at this knowledge of the depth of our God's love for us and what He was willing to go through.

Because he establishes this kingdom in such an unusual way, an unearthly way, His kingdom can be forever. Earthly kingdoms come and go, but His kingdom is forever because His kingdom is not of this world, as He told Pilate. His kingdom is in our hearts and in the hearts of all Christians throughout time, until that day when His kingdom is revealed for all our eyes to see after He raises all the dead and those who are His own live for Him, body and soul, together with Him forever in heaven. That's how He establishes a kingdom that doesn't end. Certainly it's a kingdom that comes under attack.

Think of how hard it must have been for the people of Isaiah's day who were soon going to be carried off into captivity to focus and think about all these things about this child that would come and be their Savior. They were just really concerned after they got in exile about getting back to Jerusalem, back to the land of Israel. They were looking for a Savior that would deliver them from those kinds of problems. Their vision got dropped a little bit from where God wanted it to their day-to-day lives.

You and I can shake our heads from time to time on how they didn't understand that the Messiah was going to be an eternal Messiah and a spiritual Messiah and not just to restore David's glory, but these promises that He would rule on David's throne and over His kingdom forever, that's what they understood. That's what they saw. That's what they were focused on. That's what they were distracted by.

God's kingdom as rule in our hearts today is just so often attacked in the same way, isn't it? God wants us to focus on His love and His forgiveness and His mercy and His grace and how He loves us in spite of who we are, not because we do this or do that, but just because He is love. So often at this time of the year we can get real distracted from those truths, can't we? We rush and hustle and bustle and have to get the right gift. Then we have to do this and do that. We aren't making lists about who is naughty and nice. We are making shopping lists of all the things we forgot to get the last time we went to town, so we have to go back again. We can get really distracted so that we aren't really focused on the birth of Christ but more on the holiday traditions that we are used to, right?

There's nothing wrong with those holiday traditions. They can be a wonderful blessing from our God. But Satan is always going to be working hard to keep you and me

focused on just the traditional part of things and hopefully get us to forget about what we are celebrating. That's always a danger.

That's why our God is such a blessing to us, because He's so patient with us. He's so loving and He's so forgiving. He tells us that Christ died for even those times that we get distracted as we celebrate His birth. He died for those times that we focus on the wrong thing at this time of the year, or we forget to find the peace and comfort of a Savior for our sins when our holiday preparations don't go exactly the way we had wanted.

He's there. With His Spirit and with our fellow Christians, He leads us back to the one thing needed. That's that the zeal of the Lord Almighty accomplished this. God spoke of it 700 years before it happened. The zeal of the Lord accomplished a Savior who has names that maybe we don't always appreciate and maybe those who came before Him didn't completely understand, but the zeal of the Lord Almighty accomplished this truth that led us to believe we are forgiven, we are loved, heaven is ours. That's what God reveals to us in His wonderful names.