

27.12.20 am

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Preacher: Duncan MacPherson

[0 : 00] Good morning everybody and welcome to our morning service. It's a pleasure to be with you once again and for us to meet on this Lord's Day.

We will commence by having words sung to us from Psalm 2, Psalm 2 and verses 7 to 11. I shall read these from the prose version in the NIV. I will proclaim the decree of the Lord. He said to me, You are my son. Today I have become your father.

Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter. You will dash them to pieces like pottery. Therefore, you kings, be wise. Be warned, you rulers of the earth.

Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

[1 : 05] These verses, Psalm 2 verses 7 to 11. The sure decree I will declare, the Lord hath said to me, Thou art mine only son this day, I have begotten thee.

Ask of me and for heritage, the heathen I'll make thine. And for possession I to thee will give earth utmost line.

Thou shalt as with a weighty rod of iron break them all. And as a potter, thou shalt them dash in pieces small.

Now therefore, kings, be wise, be taught, ye judges of the earth. Serve God in fear and see that ye join trembling with your mirth.

Let us pray. Lord our God, we come into your presence again, rejoicing in the fact that you are the great and majestic God over all creation.

[3 : 00] And you are the great God who has sent your son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, we might not die in our sins, but that we might live forever. We thank you for these verses which speak of the Lord Jesus Christ and his incarnation coming to this earth, being born in a stable and living Lord God amongst his people.

And Lord, living as a man from the day he was born until the day he died. And then going to the cross, taking our sins upon his shoulders. And Lord, taking the punishment that was due to us upon him.

That Lord, we might be set free. That our debt might be cancelled. And that Lord, we might live forever in your presence. What a wonderful privilege that is.

And what an amazing plan of salvation you have. And you have put into effect. Lord, and as we meet here this morning, our hearts are filled with praise once again.

Even if our voices, when we come together, are not able to sing out. But Lord, you know all circumstances. You know our hearts. And Lord, you see to the very bottom of our hearts.

[4 : 16] So you know that Lord, as we come to you, we are coming in a spirit of gratitude. That Lord, we have the opportunity to worship. And that Lord, we have the privilege of knowing you, the living God.

And Lord, we thank you that as we meet, people are meeting across the world. Despite this pandemic, people still come together to praise your name. And we pray for all of the congregations this day who are meeting in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That Lord, your spirit would be there amongst them. That you, Lord, would be pleased to bless. And that Lord, as a new year, will shortly come upon us.

And we pray, Lord God, that we may yet soon have that privilege of meeting in greater numbers. And the privilege, Lord, of singing your praises as your people.

But we thank you, Lord, that even now we can sing in our own homes, as many are doing. And that, Lord, we can pray in our own homes. For, Lord, we do not need to come to have an intermediate priest between us and you, as the Jews did in the days of old.

[5 : 30] But that, Lord, now in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have that perfect mediator who stands between God and men, the God-man, who gave himself as a ransom for all men.

And, Lord, what a privilege it is that we know the Lord Jesus Christ and we are united to every other believer in Christ this day and indeed forevermore.

And, Lord, we pray for those in our community this day who are not able to come to a place of worship. We pray for your blessing upon them and pray, Father, that you would give them words of strength and give them words of comfort from your truth.

We pray, Lord, for those who have no desire to be in a place of worship and pray, Lord God, that you would speak into their hearts and that you would draw them to Christ, that they would see the beauty and the majesty in this child who came to earth and in this man who died upon the cross.

And, Lord, we pray for your blessing upon our country as we continue to go through this pandemic. We pray, Lord God, for your blessing upon those who rule over us as they have to make decisions as to how much freedom we can have without letting the virus get completely out of control again.

[6 : 54] Lord, we pray that you would speak to young and old and remind them, Lord, that they are not in control and that, Lord, ultimately you are in control and therefore our rulers, Lord, must bow the knee before you and must call upon you, Lord God, for guidance and for strength and above all for mercy.

Lord, we pray for your blessing upon the rollout of the vaccination process. Pray that may be speedy and that the most vulnerable will soon be protected. And, Father, we pray that you would be at work in this world to bless all those who are working in healthcare, who are caring and who are carrying out essential work at this time.

And we pray, Lord God, that your presence would be with them and that you would bless them as they carry out their duties. Lord, we pray for your blessing upon your gospel worldwide today.

We pray that it would continue to advance across the world. We thank you, Lord, that many in Muslim nations are turning to Christ as they realise and understand the truth of Christ, the Messiah. And, Lord, we pray for India, Lord, where so many are still tied to Hinduism. And we pray, Lord God, that your church would be blessed there and that you would multiply the numbers coming to Christ in that great country.

[8 : 26] Lord, we thank you that China has so many Christians today despite ongoing persecution. and we pray that you give strength to your church and that you would bless your people and they would take great encouragement in knowing that the church worldwide is praying for them and no earthly force can overcome or destroy your kingdom.

Lord, we pray for those within our community who mourn today. We think of the recent tragedy and pray for your blessing upon all the family and pray, Lord God, that they would seek you in their time of distress and may you, Lord God, come close in this time.

We pray for others who continue to mourn lost ones through this year. Indeed, all those who have lost loved ones due to coronavirus and we pray, Lord God, that you would be working in hearts to remind people of the brevity of life and of the need, Lord God, to be prepared for eternity, to be reconciled to you and indeed to see that in Jesus there is reconciliation.

Father, we pray that as we look at your word today we would see this great message of reconciliation and peace that is in your word and Lord, enable each and every one of us to take hold of Christ and to walk with him the rest of the days of our life and all these things we pray in his name and for his sake.

Amen. Amen. Good to see a number of boys and girls here today. I hope you had a good Christmas time, did you?

[10 : 18] Yeah, despite the pandemic, no problems, none at all, that's good. I'm sure you've got lots of lovely presents. I'm going to share with you a great present that my brother gave me, a really useful thing.

It looks quite like a remote control, well it is actually a remote control. Have you any idea what this might be for? Television. Television, no, not for the television.

Any other guesses? Any other guesses what this might be for? Yep, have another go. A garage door?

A garage door? No. I'm afraid that wouldn't do me much good because I don't have a garage. the key is on the box. Now you won't be able to see this, I'm sure, but it says key finder.

Now this, this is a great wee tool, this, and it's designed to help you find your keys if you've lost them. So, there's six buttons on this, and they go from A to F, and they've each got their matching colour, and if you lose your keys, you just press the button, and what happens?

[11 : 37] You hear that noise, and that's great. Really knacky. Now people who know me know that this is really useful because I am forever losing my keys.

So, all I need to do is that, and I can find the keys if I've lost them in the house. In fact, I sent my brother a text saying, thanks Colin, that's a fantastic present.

The only problem is I lost my keys a week ago and I can't find them. And then, you have other times that you go looking for keys and things and you can't find them.

I've been searching through my bags before and I've gone to the car and gone to the house and everything, and I said, where on earth is that key? I can't find it. And if I had one of these, it would be really useful because it would tell me something.

I was like, where's that noise coming from? Ah, here it is in my pocket all along. That's the kind of thing that I do. I forget things and I know what will happen with my keys is I will suddenly find them in a place and it's like, that's where they normally are, you know?

[12 : 45] So it's a very, very useful tool. Can you think of some of the problems with this key finder though? What are the limitations? What will stop this key finder being useful?

I don't need to charge it but there are batteries in it and the batteries will wear down and that is a problem.

So if the batteries run out, nothing else. Yeah? Sorry? What if I lose that? That is the big one, isn't it?

Because I was thinking of that very thing myself because there's these lovely pictures here and what you're supposed to do with these wee tabs is you put one of these stickers on and again you won't be able to see the detail on these stickers but it's got here keys, handbag, a torch, a remote control and this remote control is about half the size of the remote control for my hi-fi and I regularly lose that in the house.

It's got a book, it's got a phone, an umbrella, lots of people lose umbrellas in other parts of the country, a wallet, I'm always losing that, a dog, you can hang one of these around your dog's collar, spectacles and a laptop and all you do is you put one of these in the bag with your laptop or whatever or there's even like wee sticky things you can stick it to your laptop and therefore if you can't find it in the house you can pick it up.

[14 : 17] A really useful tool but if you lose this you're not going to be able to find anything and I guarantee you I will lose this before long. The other thing as well is if it's too far away I won't be able to hear that sound or maybe it'll be too far away for this remote to actually speak to one of the tabs and it won't ring back so it's definitely very limited.

Do you think there are times when you're too far away from God and he can't hear you or he can't see you? Michael's getting a nudge.

No, there certainly aren't any times. David in one of his psalms says where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? And he said even if I settle on the far side of the sea even there your hand will guide me your right hand will hold me fast.

That's a lovely verse to think on. Even there your hand will guide me your right hand will hold me fast. And do you think it's possible that God could forget about you just as I can forget about where I've laid this or anything else?

No, that's right. We'll shake our heads. Definitely not because there's another beautiful verse in Isaiah and we'll be reading more from Isaiah later on this morning.

[15 : 53] And it says can a mother forget the baby at her breast or have no compassion on the child she has born? That's the question God asks. Can you imagine a mother holding her baby here?

Could she possibly forget? Not a chance. And yet God says though she may forget I will not forget you. God will never forget his people.

And God knows where each of us are at all times. He cannot forget us and therefore each and every one of us can go to him at any time and he will always hear us.

Remember these things and pray for me that I don't lose this. we'll say a short prayer. Lord our Father we thank you that you are the great and majestic God that Lord you fill the heavens and the earth.

You are everywhere at all times with all of your being. Just as Lord God you are here with us now. We thank you Lord that you are a great God who will never forget us.

[17 : 04] And even though Lord God we try at times to hide from you. Yet Lord there is nowhere we can run and hide that you cannot find us. And we pray Lord God for each and every one here young and old that indeed any who are trying to hide from you would find you in their thoughts and your presence in their hearts and that Lord each and every one would be drawn to Christ to trust in him and to love him with all our hearts.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Okay I think you're going off to Sunday school now. Amen. Amen. Our reading this morning is from the book of Isaiah and we shall read from chapter 8 in verse 11. We're going to be studying words in chapter 9 but by reading from this part in chapter 8 we can see the context in which the promises of the son and of the child are given to us and it's a context of oppression and suffering.

Isaiah chapter 8 and verse 11. The Lord spoke to me with his strong hand upon me warning me not to follow the way of this people.

He said do not call conspiracy everything that these people call conspiracy. Do not fear what they fear and do not dread it. The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy.

[19 : 05] He is the one you are to fear. He is the one you are to dread and he will be a sanctuary. But for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.

And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare. Many of them will stumble. They will fall and be broken. They will be snared and captured. Bind up the testimony and seal up the law among my disciples.

I will wait for the Lord who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob. I will put my trust in him. Here am I and the children the Lord has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the Lord Almighty who dwells on Mount Zion.

When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists who whisper and mutter should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?

To the law and to the testimony. If they do not speak according to this word they have no light of dawn. Distressed and hungry they will roam through the land. When they are famished they will become enraged and looking upward will curse their king and their God.

[20 : 17] Then they will look towards the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom and they will be thrust into utter darkness. 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 honour Galilee of the Gentiles by the way of the sea along the Jordan. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

On those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy. They rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest as men rejoice when dividing the plunder.

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. Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning will be fuel for the fire.

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.

[21 : 39] Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

the zeal of the Lord almighty will accomplish this. Amen. Let us pray. Lord our father we thank you for these great words.

We thank you that every word has been inspired by your Holy Spirit and that Lord we see them today and we can see the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ in them.

enable us Lord as we look at your word this morning to see Christ and to see your majesty and the glory of your plan of salvation.

These things we ask in Jesus name. Amen. we're going to look at words in Isaiah chapter 9 but before we do that I actually just want to turn to Luke chapter 2 to read a few verses here as well to set the context for our own meditation this morning.

[22 : 58] so if you would like to turn to Luke chapter 2 and we're going to read from verse 4 and then we'll turn back to Isaiah.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea to Bethlehem the town of David because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

While they were there the time came for the baby to be born and she gave birth to her firstborn a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn and there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby keeping watch over the flocks at night.

An angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified but the angel said to them do not be afraid I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

[24 : 06] Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel praising God and saying glory be to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven the shepherd said to one another let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has told us about. So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the manger.

When they had seen him they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherd said to them but Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

The shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen which were just as they had been told. And we'll take verse 19 as a point of return to Isaiah.

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. And we're going to look in particular in Isaiah 9 at verse 6 and the words at the end of that verse which give us a number of names for the Lord Jesus Christ.

[25 : 25] He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Imagine if you will Mary a couple of days after the birth of her child sitting in that stable waiting for all those people who have filled Bethlehem for the census to clear out.

of the village so that she and Joseph can find a proper place to stay. And she's sitting there and looking at her child and thinking of all these amazing things that have happened to her and all the promises that she has been given.

She ponders these things in her heart and it would do us good to ponder these things as well today. There she was going about her normal life when the angel Gabriel came to her and announced that she was going to become pregnant with the Messiah.

She then went to stay with Zechariah and Elizabeth. Elizabeth being her cousin who was considered to be too old to have children but now everybody knew that she was expecting a child. And in quite remarkable circumstances because her husband had been in the temple where he had been told this news and because he didn't believe it God had said to him he would remain silent until the child was born.

[27 : 01] So there we have the high priest coming out of the temple and he can't speak so the people knew that something had happened. And we have Mary going to stay with Elizabeth and Zechariah.

And it would be something quite remarkable. Can you imagine Zechariah's frustration and thought of Mary coming into the house with this news and he himself would have a job telling her so much of what had happened to him.

And yet the reality would be that Mary herself was probably illiterate. It would only just be a few people would be able to read typically the priests and they would be reading the scriptures and people would go to the synagogue on the Sabbath and they would hear the scriptures read.

So Mary herself may have been thinking back to scriptures she had read and those which point to the Messiah are important scriptures. But similarly Zechariah on hearing her story would almost certainly have been able to look to these verses we have today.

And whether he was able to communicate in some manner with her or to call someone else and get him to read those scriptures it's difficult to know. But I'm pretty certain in my own mind that Mary would have been familiar with these verses particularly in her context and would have striven to understand them.

[28 : 33] Isaiah 7 and 14 tells us that the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Emmanuel God with us.

What a promise that was given to Mary. And imagine her just now sitting and looking at the child in the manger and thinking of these words from verse 6 chapter 9.

He will be called wonderful counsellor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace. Quite a thought when you look at your child and you think those titles apply to him.

And she had given birth and the shepherds came down with that message of peace that they themselves had been given on the hillside. She had not yet had the kings come to worship and bow down before her son but in due course they would.

And verse 7 tells us of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

[29 : 53] what a thought that this little child would be reigning on David's throne and his kingdom would be far greater than David's kingdom would ever be.

And the question that arises in our mind and would probably have arisen in Mary's mind to some degree would be how could this child be all of these? In Isaiah 3 and verse 4 when God is speaking words of judgment to the people through Isaiah he says I will make boys their officials mere children will govern them.

This was a word of judgment upon the nation for their rebellion. So he was saying he was going to make children rule over them and if you look in the history when you see very young rulers it tends not to be very pretty in history and indeed in the history of the nation of Israel.

But what he was then saying here was that this child would be a ruler and what we have here is God saying that he was going to take his own judgment and turned into a blessing for the people. No wonder why Mary pondered all these things. So I just want to look this morning at these four titles that we have for Christ and for us to consider them and to consider what they can teach us today.

[31 : 24] First of all we have this great title Wonderful Counselor and I suspect that most of our thoughts immediately think that this is a title that is normally associated with the Holy Spirit and but if we think to John 14 and 16 Jesus didn't simply say that he would send a counsellor but he said he would send another counsellor to be with his disciples.

If someone is going to be a king they need to be able to give wise counsel. They need to be able to rule their people well. And sovereigns always have that challenge in remaining loved by their people and having their people respect them and not rising up against them and wanting to throw them out of power.

Our own Queen is much loved and if we think back to the speech and the address she gave to the nation early on in the days of lockdown people felt she got everything just right on that occasion and we're appreciative once again for the role that she plays in the nation.

But if we think back 30 years to the time when Princess Diana died and there was no word was coming out of the palace at that time.

There was great unhappiness within the nation and in the press and there was essentially a demand that the Queen come out and speak to the people.

[33 : 05] At times it can be very difficult being a sovereign and yet the King, the wonderful counsellor that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ is someone who never puts a foot wrong, who always gives wise counsel.

Kings are normally surrounded with counsellors so that they do not make mistakes and yet the counsellors themselves are only ordinary people who themselves are fallible.

but in Jesus we have a counsellor who needs no counsellors of his own. And think of the qualities that a counsellor needs.

First of all they need to have knowledge when they're dealing with peoples and with all of their people and indeed with individuals who come to them. And one of the key roles that counsellors will play is asking people to tell them their story, their difficulty first of all so that you can get to know the situation.

Jesus knows everything. And he is a counsellor who's dealt with more cases than any other in the whole of history. I wonder how many hundreds of millions of people who have put their trust in Christ have received counsel from him down through the ages.

[34 : 26] His knowledge surpasses anything that any worldly counsellor can have. a second quality that a counsellor needs is to have understanding. If you have knowledge but you don't have understanding you're going to get into difficulty very quickly.

But Jesus understands what it is to be human for he himself knows life in all its fullness. Having lived on this earth as a man for more than 30 years he knows what it is to be human.

And a third important attribute that a counsellor needs is that of sympathy or compassion.

You can have lots of knowledge, you can have lots of understanding but if you're not sympathetic to those that you're counselling, to those that you are advising you are not going to be loved.

They are not going to take your counsel. But Hebrews 4 and 15 tells us that Jesus who is our great high priest is one who is not unable to sympathise with our weaknesses.

[35 : 37] He can sympathise with everything that we experience because he himself was tempted just as we are. and in this counsellor we see those elements, that kingly element, that priestly element coming together in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think of one difficult situation that Jesus faced when Lazarus had died and he went to comfort Mary and Martha. Martha came to him first of all and said if you had been here my brother would not have died.

but she was still able to express her faith and say but even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask. Mary on the other hand couldn't even speak.

And Jesus when he saw her he was driven to tears. The Bible simply tells us that Jesus wept.

He said nothing to Mary but to Martha when asking her what she thought about the resurrection of the dead ended into a conversation with her that drew out that wonderful declaration from Christ.

[36 : 53] He who believes in me will live even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. If Martha had not been in that distress and if Jesus had been in too much of a hurry to comfort her we would never have received those wonderful words to Mary and to Martha.

And he said I am the resurrection and the life. I went on to prove it by speaking the important words to Lazarus. Looking at that tomb and simply crying out Lazarus come out.

He had very different approaches to three quite different people. and yet we have there his knowledge his understanding and his sympathy coming together in each case to give them exactly what they needed and to show and to demonstrate to them that he himself had the power over life and death and he was the one who could give life.

And when we look at that we just have to say to ourselves indeed what a wonderful counselor Jesus is. What a wonderful person he is.

One of the commentators was writing that if you actually look at the way these words are written the word that we translate as wonderful is written in a way that's more than simply an adjective to describe the counselor.

[38 : 24] Yes it is a description of the counselor as a wonderful counselor but it is in effect saying that he is a wonder himself. He is marvelous and it speaks there of a wondrous Christ.

And the only other place that particular word is used in a similar form is in the book of Judges. If you remember the birth of Samson he was promised to his mother.

But as far they prayed that God would send somebody to tell them how to look after this child that they were going to be given. And the angel of the Lord came to him in Judges 13 and he asked the angel of the Lord what is your name?

And the reply he got was my name is beyond understanding it has in the NIV but if you look in the footnote it says my name is wonderful.

It's using that same word. And so there we have that hint and that clear link between this wonderful counselor and the fact that Jesus is indeed the living God himself.

[39 : 38] So that takes us on to our second title. Mighty God. Imagine Mary looking at that child in the manger and saying to herself mighty God.

Now she was a person of faith. She trusted God implicitly. She simply accepted what the angel promised her and she rejoiced in it.

But she must have been thinking to herself looking at that child. How does a mighty God come to reside in this little baby? This baby that I have to look after.

I have to feed, I have to clothe. And yet when she sang her song herself and sang praises to God in Luke 1 and 49, her words were, the mighty one has done great things for me.

So imagine making that link, her automatic praise to God as the mighty one. And then the words here in Isaiah of the mighty God. God. And if we look in our context here we can see some of the might of this God.

[40 : 51] Verses 4 and 5, 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. Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

The Assyrian empire was a great empire. And in chapter 8, in verses that we did not read, Isaiah is told to name his son quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil, as a warning that the Assyrian empire was going to come and crush Israel.

And down through the centuries, they'd had these empires come and go, Assyria and Babylon, the Medes and the Persians. They were now under the boot of the Roman Empire.

All these empires coming and going, and yet here, in the context of this baby coming to the world, God was saying to the people that these empires would be shattered, they would be broken by this child that was to come.

The bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor would be taken away. Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood would be burnt.

[42 : 13] The garments of these foreign armies would be stained in blood with the blood of the Israelites and other nations they had conquered. So they were mighty armies and yet God was saying all of this will go and this child will be a mighty God and a mighty king before men.

And in verse 7, the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. His peace, his government, his kingdom would continue to grow.

And it's very name that she was called to name the child Jesus, meaning he saves. Mary would have been asking, I'm sure, quite reasonably, and we look down at that situation and we say, if in reality this child is a mighty God, what is he doing here in a stable amidst all this poverty and amidst this great crush and massive mankind who were in Bethlehem at that time.

If Jesus is this mighty God, here we have in this stable the creator of the universe, the raiser and destroyer of nations.

We have the deliverer of Israel. We have the God who took Israel out of Egypt in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night that towered above the nation of Israel.

[43 : 50] By day and by night these two great towers were going before them and yet this God who was in this cloud and this fire is now in this baby in the manger.

God and here she was sitting in the midst of the Roman Empire and she's being told that this child is mightier than all kings who have been and who ever will be.

Quite a challenge to faith to believe such things when you're in such a situation. He's a wonderful counsellor and a mighty God. thirdly an everlasting father.

This is a term again that we think is perhaps somewhat unusual to apply to Christ because we always think of Christ as the son.

Indeed we have it in our context here. To us a child is born, to us a son is given and Mary was told he will be son of the most high.

[45 : 00] So it's an unusual term to apply to Christ. But Jesus himself wasn't afraid of linking himself incredibly closely to his father. He was happy enough to say in John 10 and 30 I and the father are one and to say the father is in me and I in the father.

In verse 38 of that chapter he was speaking there and we have clear indications there of the fact that ultimately Jesus because he is God is one with God.

And while we recognize correctly and completely that in God there are three persons father, son and holy spirit and each of them have their own particular roles yet none of them is exclusive because God is one and each of them are so closely linked we cannot exclude one aspect of the Godhood from the other.

But I think here the expression to a large degree is also symbolic and I think if we can think of for example an individual being talked about as being the father of his nation some of the colonial countries or former colonial countries in Africa and Asia were led by resistance movements or by political movements against the rule of the colonial empires and today people look back and describe so and so as the father of the nation and we look back in our own history and we can think of Robert the Bruce as being father of the nation because of the victory that he won at Bannockburn and eventually getting Scotland recognised as its own independent country and in this context we can look at Christ and say he has come in order to fulfil his own purpose and to create his own kingdom and he is the first in that kingdom and as such he is the father of it and possibly the closest description we have from Christ's own mouth that can draw this out as well is Christ speaking of himself as the good shepherd and if we think of the good shepherd going out there and looking after all the little ones in his care and making certain that none of them are lost and when they are sick and ill he treats them and brings them back to health that is a kind of fatherly care that Christ has over his people and that care is not simply something for the present but it is an eternal care one that will last forever and therefore

Christ can rightly be called everlasting father our fourth title is prince of peace and Jesus certainly is one of royal lineage in Luke 1 and 32 Mary was told that God would put the child on the throne of his father David and here we have Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem the town of David itself and we are told that Joseph was of the royal line from David Joseph was much more humble or in a much more humble position in life in his days as a carpenter but he was a direct descendant of David and here we have Jesus' claim to be in that line of royalty and therefore to take the throne of David and in a text in chapter 9 verse 7 we have he will reign on

[49 : 04] David's throne and over his kingdom establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever his kingdom is that eternal kingdom and he is ruling it as a king and he's not simply any ordinary royal personage he is a prince of peace the message that the shepherds were given was on earth peace to men Mary would have been contemplating that for many days after they had gone and looking at a child and thinking of this message of peace being given to her but actually coming through her son the prince of peace the reality about peace is in order to get it you need to have reconciliation first Jesus came to reconcile man to God each of us here by nature are rebels against God's rule and it is only when we confess our sin and trust in Christ that we are reconciled to God but more importantly he came to reconcile God to man if you think of a small kingdom in rebellion against a mighty empire that small kingdom may hold up its hands at some point and say yes we got it wrong we now want peace if the empire isn't happy with what that small kingdom has been up to and the ruler of that empire decides he is not going to accept that request for peace he will just walk over the top of it and crush all the rebels who are within that land most important that God was reconciled to us and that is why Christ was there in that manger as a baby because he came to reconcile us to God and God to us and he came there to live as one of us to live the life of any other human being that we might be reconciled to God and that God might be reconciled to us for he is the one who ultimately paid that price upon the cross with his own life in order to bring peace into our lives and now he is leading us in a triumphal procession and you can look that up in second Corinthians as he essentially carries out his victory procession through the world as his rule as his reign as his kingdom continues to grow and he continues to establish and uphold it with justice and righteousness forever four wonderful titles wonderful counselor mighty God everlasting father prince of peace but we mustn't just sit there and think of these as four wonderful titles so in closing

I think it's important that we apply these titles to ourselves and ask ourselves some important questions and first of all if Christ is a wonderful counselor what should we do the answer obviously is come to him if we have in him this wonderful perfect counselor who knows everything who understands everything who has sympathy for every condition in human life how can we not come to him we've already seen the examples of Lazarus and Mary and Martha but there are a multitude of others in scripture that speak to every condition in life some people can come directly to Jesus like the Roman centurion who came to him and said who told him about his servant being ill and asked Jesus to heal him and Jesus says right I'll come right now and the centurion said to him no I'm a man in authority and if I say to a man go he goes and if I say to him come he comes so if you just give the word I know that he will be healed and sure enough Jesus healed that man's servant instantly and expressed his astonishment at the faith of that Roman centurion there's someone who

came to Christ looking for him and seeking for Christ to work in his own life on the other hand some people are not particularly looking for Christ and you can think for example of the widow of Nain who was burying her son and Jesus came along and touched the coffin and said to the young man to get up and he got up and came out of that coffin she met with Christ in a most remarkable way others unfortunately others have to be dragged before Christ before we will even look to him think of the woman who was caught in adultery and who was dragged before

Jesus and the crowd around her and asking Jesus what he reckons should be done the law was quite clear the woman was to be stoned to death there was no other penalty and people were wanting to know what Jesus answer would be in the last century there was a young Jew got fascinated with reading the scriptures of the new testament and was coming to believe that Jesus truly was the son of God because whenever he looked he could not fault Jesus logic and he got to that passage and to that point and he shut his bible and he said to himself okay what would I do in this situation and he could not think of an answer until he opened his bible again and he read let him who has not sinned cast the first stone the people left and the woman was left on her own with Christ Jesus alone could forgive her sins because he was the one who would take the punishment that the Lord demanded he alone could pay that price upon the cross David was to write with you is forgiveness therefore you are feared that woman was in terror of her death but that day she left in fear and hopefully love of Christ as her the due penalty that was upon her was not paid that day by herself but Christ was willing to forgive her and take that penalty upon himself what a wonderful counsellor and wonderful words I don't think any of us wants to be dragged to Christ it's far better if we will come to Christ like the Roman centurion but the reality is that we must come to him and for those who are already believers we must live in him for if he is a wonderful counsellor why do we so often seek the counsel of the world why is it that so often we live as though

[57 : 04] Christ was not present and as if he did not have what we needed each of us must come to this wonderful counsellor and do so on a daily basis is Christ a mighty God well if he is why resist him why continue to resist and reject Jesus because if he is mighty God there will come a day when you cannot reject him when you cannot resist the power that he has he is reigning on David's throne and over his kingdom he is establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness and that throne will last forever there is no point in resisting the mighty God is Christ the everlasting father then enter his family and live like a proper son don't live like a prodigal among the pigs and among the waste of this world

Jesus is there to accept us come into his family and is he a prince of peace then accept Jesus terms for peace he is the one who has paid that price he is the one who has come into this world to provide reconciliation that each of us might be saved if we would only trust in him I was reading the other day the words of an American evangelist speaking on 2nd Corinthians 5 and 20 be reconciled to God and speaking on this reconciliation he said and now all things are ready and God is inviting and beseeching you to accept his mercy what is the reply of your heart do you not like the terms of this treaty you are required only to be reconciled to God what can be more reasonable than this is it hard for you to feel sorrow for sin is it hard that you should be required to love

God to confess sin and forsake it is this hard or is sin so lovely and so desirable that it appears hard and unreasonable that you should be required to hate and oppose it with all your heart why then will you not renounce it sin and sin so noble a thing in itself and so desirable in its consequences that you cannot part with it that you will lay down your life your eternal life for its sake that's quite a thought will you lay down your life for sin's sake Jesus came to bring reconciliation and that is the reality you will either lay down your life for sin's sake or you will come to trust in Christ who laid down his life for our sins that we might have eternal life let us ponder these things and let us make right decisions let us pray

Lord our God we worship you again today and marvel in you that you would send your son into this world the one who you named wonderful counselor mighty God everlasting father prince of peace peace and we thank you lord that he was indeed willing to live on this earth to experience the temptation of sin and to resist that each and every day to an extent that we could never understand and yet lord to an extent that we can truly rejoice in because in resisting sin he fulfilled the law and lord we thank you that he went to the cross and took our sins as he took the sins of so many sinners and lord paid their price and we pray lord god that each of us here today in this building and each of us watching online would be able to say that their trust is in this wonderful counselor that their hope is in this mighty god that they have every confidence in the everlasting father and that lord they

were willing to follow and serve the prince of peace both now and in eternity lord we pray in your grace you bless these truths to our heart and enable us lord to live for your glory and to the honour of the name of the lord jesus christ in whose name we pray amen we shall close by singing the well known hymn we shall not sing but we shall listen to this hymn being sung child in the manger infant of mary outcast and stranger lord of all child who inherits all our transgressions all our demerits on him fall once the most holy child of salvation gently and lowly lived below now as our glorious mighty redeemer see him victorious over each foe and so on hymn 180 from the red book child in the manger infant of mary child in the manger infant of mary outcast and stranger lord of all child who inherits all our transgressions all our demerits on him fall once the most holy child of salvation gently and lowly live below now our more glorious mighty redeemer see him victorious so each foe prophets foretold him infant of wonder angels behold him on his throne worthy our saviour of all their praises happy forever at his own to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ Amen