

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Second Sunday in Advent, December 10, 2017

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 66, 56:1-2, 106, 99, 59:1-2.

Lessons: Isaiah 9:1-7, Titus 2:1-14, John 1:1-14.

Sermon Text: Isaiah 9:6-7.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

The birth of a child is a joyous occasion, especially for a Christian family. Our Christian family gathered here is about to celebrate the birth of a child – again. In two weeks the Christian church on earth has designated a day to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the very Son of God. With Isaiah we celebrate,

“FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN, UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN!”

- 1. He shall rule with all power,**
- 2. And his kingdom shall endure forever!**

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.” The eternal Word is being made flesh for us, for our benefit, to take our place in atoning for sin. But not only for us, the family of God gathered together here, but, as we read in Scripture, *“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”* (1 John 2:2)

Never forget that Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, came to earth to earn eternal salvation for all, and made that salvation the personal possession of anyone simply by believing it. The Word of God is clear about that: *“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”* Mark 16:16

The words of our text give us the reason for all the joy Isaiah has just been talking about – the new great King. By the miracle of prophecy, Isaiah describes Immanuel – the name means “God with us” – in greater detail. He is here described as a child with unlimited potential and power.

God gives his people – that is “us”! – a child who will redeem us and make peace for us with God. That is the ultimate reason for joy. How can a child bring such joy? Well, when parents, especially Christian parents have been waiting for a child, that child is welcomed with great joy.

But this child is not just another child born on earth; this child is someone special and unusual. His coming is tied to all the prophecies of his work. These very words give us a clear and complete picture of the Savior and his work, providing vivid details that are still treasured by God's people. Isaiah wrote seven hundred years before Christ came to earth. Two thousand years after Christ, we still turn to the words God gave Isaiah as we celebrate the coming of this child born in Bethlehem.

If we allow the words of God to speak for themselves, believers will find comfort in the grace of God that sent his Son to us so that we might believe in him and have everlasting life.

“And the government shall be upon His shoulder.” First, Isaiah tells us, the child will have all government resting upon him. He will have all power in heaven and earth in order to govern, protect, sustain, and control all things. This is absolute and unlimited power, the divine authority in its fullest sense, which rests upon him. He is, from his birth, in complete possession of the eternal power and Godhead. Jesus claims such authority and power is his in Matthew 28:18: *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power [all authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”*

The New Testament repeatedly assures us of the Savior's claim. But a carpenter's son with all power? Clearly, this is not the kind of worldly power one might find in the figurehead King Herod or the great power of the Roman Empire at the time of Christ. Christ's kingdom was not of this world, as he told Pilate when Pilate commented: **"You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, 'You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.'**" John 18:37 (NIV)

Yet Isaiah's description here emphasizes the power and even the deity of the child, just as the names given to the child do.

"And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor." The child will also be a wonder, not only because of His birth, but because His entire essence is a miracle. He will be extraordinary, a marvel, a miracle beyond what any human might think or imagine. He will exceed what is possible for any human child. This child is God and man in one special extraordinary person – a wonder, a miracle! We cannot comprehend the mystery of the child who is almighty God and at the same time a little child born of a virgin. We can only stand in awe of the miracle of God in human flesh with us and among us.

He not only knows the right and proper counsel or advice in every difficulty of body and soul, He also carries out his plans for the benefit of men. Some tie the word counselor to the word wonderful, making it one concept, "Wonderful Counselor." Others separate the words to mean two separate things, Wonderful and Counselor. Whichever variation we read does not change the comfort we find in the passage. In either case, the child is a counselor. He does not need to surround himself with advisors as every human ruler does. He already knows all things. His counsel, or advice, is the grace of God, the plan by which God would rescue all the world from sin, death, and the devil. Luther rightly says that his counsel is his Word. By the counsel of his Word, the Messiah has guided believers since the Word of God was first given to mankind.

If there was any question about whether or not this child is God, the next title dispels it completely. He is called **"The Mighty God."** The Messiah, true man that he is, is at the same time above all, God blessed forever, altogether identical with Jehovah, **"The Everlasting Father,"** himself the living, eternal God, whose fatherly love and faithfulness surrounds all believers with a care far surpassing human understanding. The words given by the Holy Spirit here tell us plainly that he is true God. The words **"Mighty God"** are the same words used in the next chapter when Isaiah says, **"A remnant . . . will return to the Mighty God"** (10:21). In both passages the reference is clearly to the supreme God of Israel, the only true God. This title is attributed only to the Lord, the true God. These words make it plain that the Messiah would be not only a man, but also God, the Mighty God.

The child is also **"Everlasting Father,"** which refers to the work and business of this king, not his person. He continues to add children to his family as he leads more and more people to believe in him. This statement applies to all believers: **"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."** Galatians 3:26 Faith makes people God's children, as Paul wrote to both Gentile and Jewish Christians in Rome (Romans 4:16). And what's more, this child always had the heart of a father toward his own people. He cares for his followers wisely, faithfully and tenderly.

Isaiah also tells us that the child is the **"Prince of Peace,"** who has restored the right relationship between God and man. He made peace by abolishing in His flesh the enmity which existed since the fall of man. We read about that peace in Ephesians: **"For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near."** Ephesians 2:14-17

How humanity has longed for peace through the ages! Peace, in human terms, will never come until the world ends. Jesus himself told us that as long as the world endures, there will be wars and rumors of wars. (Matthew 24:4-7). The Messiah came to give a different kind of peace. Jesus said, **"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid"** (John 14:27). His peace is connected to his work of redemption. He satisfied the justice of God, which demanded payment for sin. He offered himself as the atoning sacrifice for sin. Because of that, we are at peace

with God through Jesus. That peace *"transcends all understanding"* (Philippians 4:7), is beyond all human understanding. .

Mankind is looking for the wrong peace if we only desire the death and destruction of war to cease. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, has restored peace with God. He has removed what caused all discord, strife, and war – sin. His peace is greater than anything we might imagine. And it is beyond anything that anyone else could ever achieve. His peace became a reality when he appeared, but perfect peace does not exist where sin is present. We must wait until he returns and purges our sinful nature for perfect peace. But that does not diminish the truth that he is the Prince of Peace now.

"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."

In order to extend the boundaries of his spiritual kingdom, he brings about a condition of eternal, unending peace between God and man. The kingdom of Christ is the kingdom of David, continued and established in the spiritual sense, *"establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever."* Because Christ endured the judgment and the punishment of sin, and satisfied the justice of God, this brought about the foundation of his kingdom. He builds up his Church on the fact of his atonement.

The King whom Isaiah pictures here is an eternal one whose kingdom will never end. The coming of this child fulfills the promise given to David that the Messiah would come and reign forever. God told David: *"When your days are over and you go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor. I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever."* (1 Chronicles 17:11-14).

And so Jesus has come. By his suffering, death, and resurrection he has declared all the world right, or just, in the eyes of God. The world is justified and righteous because Christ's blood cleanses us of all sin. This has already occurred for us in the New Testament era. We do not wait for it to come in the future as did the first hearers of Isaiah's message. We distort the passage if we make this kingdom to be some kind of earthly kingdom of justice and righteousness that is yet to come. A hope for such a millennium is empty and cannot be based on the words of Isaiah or on any of Scripture. The Messiah laid down his life to establish his kingdom, and he will reign as King on David's throne "from that time on and forever."

"The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." All this was fulfilled in the Son of Mary, of whom the angel says: *"He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. . . . That Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."* Luke 1, 32-35.

Isaiah assures the people of his day that it will happen just as he described it. The Lord of hosts stands behind these prophecies. His zeal will not waver. Before it happened, Isaiah's readers may have wondered if it would ever happen. Their homes would be destroyed. Men, women, and children would die at the hand of invading armies. The survivors would be led away captive to Babylon. Yet it would happen as foretold. God said so and stood behind his words.

That confidence extends to us. We can be confident that God wants us to have eternal joy, peace, and happiness through faith in his Son who was sent to redeem us. May we even now share that kind of joy with one another! Amen.