



The Coming King: Wonderful Counselor

The First Sunday of Advent

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5:7 (NIV)

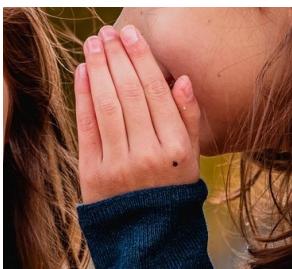
Isaiah 9 is all about the Messiah, and the first of the names Isaiah uses in this prophecy about Jesus is “Wonderful Counselor.” That seems like a strange introduction to a baby, but remember, Isaiah isn’t just talking about the babe in the manger. He is talking about who and what that babe will grow up into: the Coming King, and that king is the Wonderful Counselor.

A counselor is one who listens, one who cares, one who gives wise advice and walks with us through challenges. A counselor is also a confidant, someone we can trust with the depths of our heart. It's someone with whom we can be completely honest and authentic, our truest selves, and still be accepted. A counselor may or may not approve of everything we *do*, but he will always accept *who we are*. How true of our Wonderful Counselor. We know we can lean on Him, trust Him, and find total acceptance with Him.



I've heard it said that “God loves us too much to let us stay the way we are.” While I understand the idea, the reality is that even if we never grow into more kind, honest, godly people, He won't love us any less. Like any good counselor, He will encourage us to strive toward being our better selves, but He won't shame us or browbeat us. He won't force us to become some sort of Christian clone, marching through life in lockstep obedience to anyone's ideal, not even His. Our Wonderful Counselor seeks to lovingly guide us toward the most Christ-like version of the individual He created each of us to be.

As He guides us, we can bring Him our hurts, our failures, our secrets, our brokenness, and the coming King, the Wonderful Counselor, will hold all those things in confidence and love, just as He holds each of us in love. Whether we thrive or fail, whether we face joys or challenges, even if we betray Him, we always remain in the loving care of our Wonderful Counselor.



What secrets of your heart do you want or need to share with the Lord?

How has the Wonderful Counselor walked with you this week/month/year?

Exercise

1. Lift this exercise up to the Lord, asking Him to highlight what He wants you to notice.
2. Read the passage below, stopping at any words or phrases that catch your attention. Sit with the word or phrase, meditating on it and asking God to show you why this word or phrase caught your attention. After you've meditated on the thing that caught your attention, continue reading the passage, stopping at any other words or phrases that strike you, and discussing with the Lord what you've noticed.
3. Take a few moments to sit quietly before moving on to the next step.
4. Slowly read the passage a second time, again pausing when something catches your attention. This time ask God to show you what He wants you to know or do in light of the word or phrase that you've noticed. Wait to hear what the Lord may put into your heart or mind. (You may sense a strong impression or just what seems to be a fleeting thought. Don't dismiss anything.)
5. Take a few moments to sit quietly before moving on to the next step.
6. Slowly read the passage a third time, just letting God's Word soak into you.
7. Finally, sit quietly for a bit, and allow God to continue to work in you.

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

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.
Of the greatness 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.

Isaiah 9:6-7 (NIV)