

## Your God Is Too Small

Isaiah 9:6

"Is she a religious fanatic?" A friend of mine once asked me that question, inquiring about a young woman who was also a good friend of mine. I think he was wanting to ask her out on a date, and was concerned that she might be too religious for him. I answered gently, "She's a Christian."

"I know, I know," he responded. "But is she a religious fanatic?" I gave him the same answer.

In the eyes of that young man, this girl he was asking about was a religious fanatic. She was very sincere in her faith and very much committed to Jesus Christ. And that man's question revealed a problem of many people in this great country of ours. That problem is this: in our society, church is fine, religion is fine, God is fine, certainly the Christmas holiday is fine, but don't get carried away. Belonging to a church is very acceptable, but being a religious fanatic makes you a social outcast. You can be a fanatic about football, a fanatic about your job, your family, and even about politics. But a religious fanatic makes people uncomfortable.

For the most part, our society does not want to get rid of the idea of god, since that belief is so much a part of our culture. But many people want to keep that belief in its place. Many people want to keep god in a little boxed labelled "Sunday Morning". And they really get uncomfortable when that box gets opened other days of the week. I could say correctly to many people, "Your God is too small!" Never is that more evident than by the way many people celebrate the Christmas holiday.

The idea of a little baby who had to be born in a manger is a

very appealing story, which accounts for much of the worldly popularity of this great holiday. Babies are popular, they always get lots of attention and affection. But Christmas is not about a little baby. Christmas is not the story of a little Palestinian baby boy being born to a poor and obscure mother and father in a small middle eastern town some 2000 years ago. And Christmas certainly is not the story of a fat man with a white beard flying all over the world, in a sleigh pulled by reindeer, bringing lots of toys to children.

Isaiah 9:6 tells us the story of Christmas. "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given." That certainly talks about a baby being born. But this would be no ordinary baby. That verse goes on. "And the government will be upon His shoulder." That baby will be a ruler, a great governor. Indeed, his government will last forever, and carry on the kingdom begun under King David.

v.7

That is a clear part of the message delivered by the Angel to Mary in,

Luke 1:31-33 "You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

And his names are given here,

v.6 "And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

If you really understand the meanings of those very significant names, then I cannot say to you, "Your god is too small." For these names describe a huge God, a powerful God, and as we will study this afternoon, a mighty God.

The story of Christmas is the story of Jesus' incarnation, who is our wonderful counselor. Remember from this morning that the word wonderful means supernatural or miraculous. It is a clear description of God.

The second name given for Jesus Christ is "Mighty God," also a clear description of his deity, emphasizing his power, his divine power. And Jesus Christ is to be our mighty God, ruling and governing every area of our lives. What exactly does that name "Mighty God" mean, and what does it tell us about Jesus Christ?

### **I. JESUS CHRIST IS A MIGHTY WARRIOR.**

The words emphasize military victories. Strong association with military strength. These words say that Jesus Christ is a military leader and a war hero.

Illus: War heroes have always had a special place in this country. They are immediately given honor and status. Gen. Dwight Eisenhower returned from WWII and was elected President. That precedent has been well established in our history, from Gen. George Washington to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. Other Presidents who were war heroes include Andrew Jackson, William Henry Harrison, Zachary Taylor, John F. Kennedy, and George H.W. Bush.

In our country, war heroes are special people. So it was in Israel. The Hebrew word here for God is a familiar name, the name El, "L.". It is a name of strength and power, sometimes meaning nothing more than someone who has power or authority, not always God himself.

But the name el is often used in a compound name, God of gods. Or the Lord God. Or God Most High, or God Almighty, which is the Hebrew El Shaddai.

Here in Is.9:6, the compound is the mighty God, or the mighty warrior. Or possibly, God the mighty hero. A description of Jesus Christ. As a mighty warrior, what does Jesus accomplish?

#### **A. He brings about perfect justice.**

Listen to these words addressed to a King, the mighty one, words which are quoted in Heb. 1 to prove they speak about Jesus Christ.

Ps. 45:3-6 "Gird your sword upon your side, O mighty one; clothe yourself with splendor and majesty. In your majesty ride forth victoriously in behalf of truth, humility and righteousness; let your right hand display awesome deeds. Let your sharp arrows pierce the hearts of the king's enemies; let the nations fall beneath your feet. Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom."

Ps. 89:13-14 "Your arm is endued with power; your hand is strong, your right hand exalted. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you."

Another description of the Lord's justice.

Jer. 32:17-19 "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. You show love to thousands but bring the punishment for the fathers' sins into the laps of their children after them. O great and powerful God, whose name is the LORD Almighty, great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds. Your eyes are open to all the ways of men; you reward everyone according to his conduct and as his deeds deserve."

Jeremiah describes the mighty God! And his justice includes punishment. Isaiah speaks of a remnant of Israel that will return from the exile. The rest of the people will be destroyed because

of their unfaithfulness.

Isa. 10:20-23 "In that day the remnant of Israel, the survivors of the house of Jacob, will no longer rely on him who struck them down but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God. Though your people, O Israel, be like the sand by the sea, only a remnant will return. Destruction has been decreed, overwhelming and righteous. The Lord, the LORD Almighty, will carry out the destruction decreed upon the whole land."

The mighty God brings about justice. And his justice includes the idea that,

### **B. He conquers his enemies.**

Is.9:44 "For You have broken the yoke of his burden And the staff of his shoulder, The rod of his oppressor, As in the day of Midian. 5 For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle, And garments rolled in blood, Will be used for burning and fuel of fire."

The Bible certainly talks about the defeat that Jesus Christ will bring to his enemies, uses the familiar language of warfare.

Ps. 2:6 "Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion." 7 "I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' "

There is a future description of this, also.

Rev. 19:11-16 "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe

dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

That, my friends, is a description of Jesus Christ. A far cry from the meek and mild little baby many people think about at Christmastime. Jesus Christ is a mighty warrior. He is a war hero, and he will bring perfect justice and perfect judgment to this world, for he treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.

That isn't the normal Christmas message message, is it? But it is a message we must remember! Jesus Christ is a mighty warrior.

But how can we escape his perfect justice? How can we escape the fury of the wrath of God Almighty? For we, too, deserve that wrath.

Rom. 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Rom. 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death." Eternal death.

So how can we escape from the justice of this mighty warrior? Well, he is also a mighty savior.

### **II. JESUS CHRIST IS A MIGHTY SAVIOR.**

He is a mighty warrior with the power to conquer his enemies, but he is also a mighty savior with the power to save his people from their sins.

An angel also spoke to Joseph, telling him in Matt. 1:21 "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Hebr. 7:25 "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

### **A. We are saved by God's power.**

That salvation is illustrated by the salvation which God accomplished for his OT people of Israel, intended as a type of the salvation which we have in Christ. And that salvation was announced ahead of time through the prophet Moses,

Exod. 6:6-8 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: `I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.'"

Salvation was accomplished by God's power, for he is a mighty savior. Listen to another description of that salvation,

Ps. 106:8-12 "Yet he saved them for his name's sake, to make his mighty power known. He rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up; he led them through the depths as through a desert. He saved them from the hand of the foe; from the hand of the enemy he redeemed them. The waters covered their adversaries; not one of them survived. Then they believed his promises and sang his praise."

Ps. 77:13-15 "Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God? You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples. With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph."

Jesus Christ, the mighty God, has the power to save. And that was the purpose of the incarnation, when he took the form of a man and lived on this earth. He is a mighty savior.

That message of salvation is described to us more clearly in the NT, and that message is called the gospel, or the good news. The good news is that we can escape God's wrath, and we can escape his perfect justice. We can escape the punishment that sins deserve, and we can be saved, because Jesus Christ is a mighty savior. And,

### **B. We are saved by trusting in the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

The mighty God is the powerful God, and that gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

Rom. 1:16 "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."

The gospel is the message of the cross, that Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, died as a man upon the cross and endured the wrath of God in our place. IN OUR PLACE.

What do we do? We trust in him, we receive him into our heart as our lord and savior.

Rom. 10:9 "That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

That is the message of the gospel. You are not saved by going to church, being raised in the church, doing good works, or giving to charity. We are not saved by our own power, or our own ability to do good works. Impossible task. You cannot save yourself. Salvation comes only through the power of the gospel.

1 Cor. 1:18 "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the

power of God."

The message is foolishness to the so-called "good people" of this world. The gospel is foolishness if you think you are OK spiritually just because you have lived a decent life and haven't broken any big laws.

1Cor. 1:23-24 "But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

Jesus Christ is a mighty savior, not simply a little baby boy born in a manger. May he be your mighty savior, as you trust him for your salvation. For the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believe. Furthermore,

### **III. JESUS CHRIST IS A MIGHTY KING.**

v.6 "And the government will be upon His shoulder."

He is the ruler, our ruler and our Lord. This mighty God seeks to rule and govern every area of our lives. And as a king,

#### **A. He calls for your genuine repentance.**

I don't just mean the prayer for salvation, initial act of becoming a Christian. But he calls us to a life of continual repentance, continual self-examination, and continual expressions of godly sorrow. Whenever there is sin in our life, our mighty king calls us to repentance. This is the real difference between a true Christian and just so-called good people. Being a good person won't get you to heaven. In fact, that spiritual pride will be a barrier to the gospel, as it often is in the heart of the Bible belt in which we live.

Listen to what God says.

Deut. 10:12-13,16-17 "And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?...Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes."

What does it mean to circumcise your heart? Essentially, it means to make a commitment of your heart. Commitment of love, which is a commitment of obedience and repentance. What matters to God is what is in our hearts, and what is in our hearts will be demonstrated by the way that we live our lives.

Deut. 30:6 "The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live."

Jer. 4:4 "Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, circumcise your hearts, you men of Judah and people of Jerusalem, or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done."

If Jesus Christ truly is your mighty God, then listen to his call. He calls you to repentance. He addressed your heart. I want to speak to your heart, not just external things. Sin is born in our hearts. So don't make excuses for your sin. Don't explain away your sin with psychological or medical or cultural excuses. Don't allow the gospel of grace to become a license to go on living in your sin. Don't be spiritually lazy, and don't get so wrapped up in the affairs of daily life that there is no time or energy left for the things of God. Turn to God, and love him with all your heart.

Our mighty God calls for our genuine repentance. And,

**B. He calls for your humble trust.**

The point is this. Jesus Christ is our mighty God. He has all the power of the universe in his hand. All the nations are but dust before him, a drop in the bucket. And yet we instinctively want to trust in our own power and our own ability. Our problem is pride. Trusting in someone else is humbling.

Jer. 17:5-8 "This is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

That is the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian. So let me ask you a question, in whom do you trust? God, or yourself?

Let me ask that question another way. How much do you pray? How often do you pray? How intensely do you pray? How much do you literally depend on your prayers to get you through the day? And how much do you worry?

How much do you read the Bible? How often do you specifically apply it to your life? Are you still growing in your spiritual life?

In whom do you trust?

And how important is the fellowship of believers when we assemble together? How important is your relationship with other believers in this church? If non-Christians look at your life, will they see that you are devoted to the body of Christ, the church? What do they see?

How much spiritual fruit is growing on your bush? How often do you get so run down by the daily affairs of life that you just try to hold on?

Is your spiritual life like a bush in the desert wastelands, living but always thirsty for water and nourishment? Or is your spiritual life like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream, which never fails to bear fruit? Those are all very probing questions, aren't they?

In whom do you trust? Do you really believe that Jesus is the mighty God? Don't settle for a god who is too small. Trust the one who is called a mighty God.

Let me end by reading carefully from Ps.33, which describes our mighty God..

Ps. 33:6 "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. 7 He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the Lord; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. 9 For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."

Ps. 33: 10 The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. 11 The counsel of the Lord stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations. 12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance. 13 The Lord looks

from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. 14 From the place of His dwelling He looks On all the inhabitants of the earth; 15 He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works.”

Ps. 33:16 “No king is saved by the multitude of an army; A mighty man is not delivered by great strength. 17 A horse is a vain hope for safety; Neither shall it deliver any by its great strength. 18 Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, On those who hope in His mercy, 19 To deliver their soul from death, And to keep them alive in famine.”

The response, which I read at the beginning of the service this afternoon:

Ps. 33:20-22 "We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD, even as we put our hope in you."

That’s my desire and my prayer for this church, for all of you.

Perhaps your god is too small, and perhaps his influence on your daily life is too small. As you worship today, realize that Jesus Christ is a mighty God. He is a mighty warrior, a mighty savior, and a mighty King. Therefore, put your all your trust in him, for everything.