

# 1. The Encounter

December – Series

Ps. Unia Kiima 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2017

Sermon Notes



We have heard the Christmas story many times over. We can easily believe that it is familiar, and there is nothing new to consider, beyond the manger, the shepherds, the wise men, stars, the inn keeper . . . In a series that we have dubbed “The Encounter”, we will take a look at some of the common phrases associated with the story, and interrogate the meaning or impact they should have whenever we mention or remember them through this season.

When we were young, it must have been easy for our parents to name us. It’s like there were so few “English” names. No wonder most of my generation are called Peter, John, Michael, Andrew etc. The naming system - like for those who come from central *Father* – Mukasa Musoke –and *son* Musoke Mukasa; or those who name according to what time of day Kipkoech (morning); or prevailing weather – O/Akoth; was, a no brainer. Parents nowadays are very creative. This past Sunday, We have parents with children named sky, Rainbow, Precious, Sunshine and Weather.

**QOD: If you were to give yourself a name, what would it be? If you ever gave yourself one in time past, share that with your neighbor.... Sample a few.**

This name thing started with God! So God chooses to create a man in His own image and likeness. He makes him out of the dust of the earth and calls him, Adam. *Made from the earth*. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve walked with God. They sinned and as a result, they hid from him. But, the Lord (the pre-incarnate Christ) sought them out.

He sought them out and prophecies were told about a savior and the one we are going to look at today is from Isaiah.

Turn with me to Isaiah 9: 6-7...

As you get there let me share some background...When Isaiah wrote this prophecy his people were at war. Judah’s wicked King Ahaz was on the throne. Samaria and Syria joined together to invade Judah. The king and his people were afraid. But God told Isaiah that they would not come. Then Isaiah spoke of the coming Messiah. He said the Messiah would lead the nation into joy and prosperity.

Today, Isaiah’s message comes to us when our country is struggling economically, many parents struggle to get school fees for their children, many businesses are failing and corruption is still the evil that has its claws in our society. Even at Christmas time some nations and peoples are arming themselves for fierce conflict. All over the world there is pain and anguish – the result of man’s sin. Yet across the centuries comes the voice of the prophet Isaiah. He points fallen mankind to “Israel’s only hope.” And that hope, the only hope, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

**“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6-7).**

As I look at this scripture, I marvel that a little earlier, Isaiah had said the Messiah would come as a child: “The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel”. (Isaiah 7:14). Now here, he makes a declaration: the child is born and a son is given.

The first thing that strikes me is the statement **“For unto us a child is born”**. What do you think of when you see a newborn baby? Do you think of power, strength, and majesty? Or do you think of a cute, new life that is vulnerable, and needs warmth, protection, and food. The preciousness of life is best seen in the frailty of the newborn and we love and value the little ones.

How much more should we value the precious life of Christ who, when he became a Child, and was delivered from his mother's womb, entered our world the same way we did. God chose to come to us in the same way we all come to the world, through a woman as a child. **He came in human flesh as all humans get to the world, through birth.**

This is incredible. This is unfathomable. It is a demonstration of infinite love and incredible humility. We can approach Him and make ourselves get in relationship with Him without being threatened! We are thus encouraged to hold firmly to what we believe. This Jesus understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same tastings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most. (Hebrews 4: 14b-16 NLT).

The second striking phrase for me is that **"a son is given"**. The idea of a son in the mind of the ancients had a significant meaning and relevance. It is like Isaiah has a clear distinction of a child and a son. It is like he is suggesting that not all males are sons! The idea of son was connected to membership in a group, as well as family. Central in the mind of the ancient was that a son was a gift from God. He exemplified continuity and acceptance.

Three things we learn from this text: *"unto us a son is given"*.

**1. Priority** – the son had priority in the family relationship. Particularly if the son was the first born. Priority was a position well established in the mind of the ancient and they understood what Isaiah meant when he stated, "Unto a son is given". Jesus is firstborn among many brothers and sisters! He is the first fruit.

**2. Authority** – was a significant element. Because the power, rank, and position of the father was inherent in the son. A son had the authority to wear his father's ring and insignia. We see this when This Jesus says "all I have is Yours, and all You have is Mine; and in them I have been glorified" (John 17:10). The word of the son had the power to bind contracts and agreements, just like his father. So when it is written that "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16) – John understands that what the son does is accepted by the Father. Further still, a son played an important role in developing ally relationships by marrying the daughters of heads of key foreign kingdoms. They used marriage as a tool to bring people into their kingdom and under their command. And that is what Jesus does with us too when He declares: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations..."

**3. Liberty** – the most important element when the ancients heard that a son would be given was their experience with sons growing up to become deliverers and unifiers. They knew about Moses. As a child found in the river by Pharaoh's daughter and raised in Pharaoh's house. He became the deliver after meeting the Lord on the back side of the mountain. They knew that God had raised Moses from a child and a son to be the great deliverer. They knew about David. As the youngest son of Jesse he was a Shepard boy. But God raised him up to be the King of Israel. His power to unify the people was such that Jerusalem became known as the City of David. They knew about David as a unifier.

God's son, Jesus, became one of us to die for us. He became like us to free us. He walked among us to guide us. He stayed with us, to teach us the ways of the Father. He died on the cross to set us free from the treachery and consequence of sin, not only in this world, but in the one to come. But he didn't stay dead. He rose from the grave to prove that his sin sacrifice was acceptable to God the Father, and to demonstrate that what he said about God, sin, and redemption was true. Then He declares that ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. That's liberty.

### **How should we respond this Christmas?**

So how should we respond to these words this Christmas? I suggest to us, our response lies in the names given of the son....

#### **1. Wonderful Counsellor**

##### **A. Wonderful** (hbrw – pele)

What do you think of when you hear this word "wonderful"? For all you soccer fans, the root word in Hebrew is pele. "Pele" is used in Ps 78:12 which says that "God did wonders in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt". This means that God is a doer of miracles, of marvellous, wonderful things that are almost beyond understanding and are certainly beyond mere human ability. It also does mean "incomprehensible" or "beyond understanding" (Judges 13:18).

What difficult situation has engulfed you and all hope seems lost? What are you struggling with that needs a miracle? A work of wonder? An impossible deed by men. God is God over all flesh and there is nothing too difficult for Him.

## **b) Counsellor**

What do you think of with the word “counsellor”? Counsel speaks of that perfect wisdom that enables the king to make right decisions in leading the people. It refers to perfect understanding of the will of God, knowing exactly what is right and what God’s purposes are. Kings have around them a team of counsellors, advising them about the different aspects of their kingdom. But, the Wonderful Counsellor of Isaiah’s prophecy has no need of a team of advisers. He is able in Himself to know what is right and to make right decisions without resorting to a second opinion. Later on in his book, Isaiah explicitly says that these are characteristics of God Himself: “All this comes from the Lord Almighty, wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom.” (Isa 28:29 ). Jesus gives us access to this very counselor when He says, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.” John 14:26

What situation are you in that requires wisdom, understanding and clarity. God invites us to ask Him for wisdom and counsel and He promises us that He will give it to us freely without finding fault with us.

## **2. Mighty God: allow me to break these words into two**

**A. Mighty:** What comes to mind when you hear someone described as “mighty”? Literally, the root word used here is “gibbor”, which means “hero”, a doer of great things, of mighty acts done for someone else that they couldn’t do for themselves. Heroes are men and women who have given their lives in service to others, doing for others what they could not do for themselves. Deeds worthy of commemoration and worthy of being honored as special, as heroes.

In the Bible, think of Moses leading the people out of Egypt; or Joshua leading them against Jericho into the promised land; or young David, when he took on Goliath who had dominated over the armies of King Saul for so long. Slaying that giant was a mighty act, a heroic act of salvation for the people at that time. The promised child, says Isaiah, will be mighty. He will do for others what they cannot do for themselves to bring deliverance.

### **B. GOD**

The simplest Hebrew word for God is “El”. It is the word that is used to refer to the one true God, the Creator, the Supreme Being. It is used in conjunction with other words to give God a variety of more specific names such as “El Shaddei” or “God Almighty”. It is never used of a man – in fact it is often used as the opposite to the word “man”, eg “God is not a man that he should lie”.(Num 23:19)

Here, it is combined with the word “gibbor”, hero. In giving the child this name, Isaiah is describing him as a hero who is far more than Moses or Joshua or David; he is calling him a divine hero, a God who does heroic acts. This is the God of salvation. Think of Christ, healing the blind, the lame, the sick; think of Christ calling Lazarus from the tomb; think of Christ, rising triumphantly from the grave, victorious over sin and death! Is there a greater hero than the Lord Jesus Christ? He is El Gibbor, the Mighty God.

What are the things that feel like you do not have the power to overcome by yourself? Are you bogged down with guilt, shame and reproach that comes because of sin? Are you feeling helpless in your walk of faith because of falling into many a temptation? Do you feel like you need deliverance of sorts from something that seems to limit your expression and accomplishment? Jesus is mighty enough to do for you what you cannot do for yourself to bring deliverance!

## **3 Everlasting Father**

### **A. Everlasting**

This word speaks about forever. It means in perpetuity, with no ending, but also no beginning. It is said of God that He “lives forever” – (Isaiah 57:15). Literally it means that He lives in the forever, He “inhabits eternity”. He is not caught up in or restricted by time as we are. Therefore, He does not change; He does not get older or slower or frail; nor does He need to mature, or grow or learn. He is the way He is, forever. Without beginning or end.

Isaiah says that the promised child is everlasting. Think about how astounding that statement really is. A child, born into the world, is yet called “everlasting”. This child will not come into existence when he is born, for he is everlasting -no ending, no beginning. Could Isaiah say any more plainly that this child is God incarnate, God become a child?

## **B. Father**

The best things about a good father include: compassion, loving care, protection, guidance, support, encouragement. Throughout the Bible God is called "Father". "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him" (Ps 103:13). Isa 63:16 – "You, O Lord, are our Father; Our Redeemer from Everlasting is Your name"

Are you in pain? Do you need comfort, love and protection? This Jesus is able to meet you at your point of need.

## **4. Prince of Peace**

What a magnificent and emphatic exclamation mark this name is in Isaiah's prophecy! Remember that it was spoken to a people who were at war and whose king did was not handling the situation well. The people of God were under threat, both from enemy nations and also from the ungodliness of their own leader, Ahaz. That is why, at the end of Isaiah 8, God's people at the time are said to "see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom." To them is the promise that they will see a great light, that their warfare will end because "unto us a child is born" and his name will be PRINCE of PEACE!

He is Prince of peace – because his kingdom will be one of peace. It won't be established by fighting a war, but by bringing peace; it won't be maintained by keeping an army to prevent enemies attacking, but will be a kingdom that He upholds in peace. He is Prince of peace – because the cause of war, human sinfulness and rebellion against God, will be dealt with. Later in Isaiah we read about one who will suffer for the sins of God's people, who will be crushed because our wrong doing is laid upon him, who will be punished in our place. The end result of all this – we will have peace. When we are made right with God through putting our faith in Jesus, we have peace – a peace that passes all understanding. "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." (John 14:27)

How dark is your world Mavuno? Fear not! Do worry and do not be anxious about anything. We need to go to God and He promises that the peace of God that is beyond human understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus!

## **Conclusion:**

For the world, Christmas has become a commercialized frenzy of crazed shoppers who trample each other underfoot while trying to get a good deal on shoes, games, and clothing. We are tottering towards forgetting what Christmas is about... God made Himself man so that He might redeem us from the consequences of our own sin.

For the Christian, Christmas is a time of celebration of the birth of the Lord God in our world so that He might save us. Isaiah 9:6 is a prophecy that is fulfilled in Jesus who was born so that He might die. It was Jesus who was born in a manger so that He might hang on a cross. In the birth of Christ is our redemption, our blessing, our cleansing, and all our hope.

My friends, the people who originally heard this message were encouraged to rejoice before God like people about to reap a great harvest. The announcement, 2700 odd years ago, that Christmas would one day arrive and with it the "Child" was a great cause for celebration. We, too, can celebrate with them. We too can say that "unto US a child is born, unto US a Son is given .." and we too can know him by the fourfold Name: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.

Be in no doubt this Christmas, that the child we remember is nothing less than God Himself, come to earth as human baby, in order to fulfil these and other great promises.

Have you received God's Christmas gift?

Have you received His Son?

If not, why not receive him today?

## **Prayer**

1. Using the names of Jesus above, pray for the needs pointed out
2. Salvation or rededication to Christ Jesus