

NAMES OF JESUS
Wonderful Counselor
Advent Worship Series – Week 1
November 30, 2008

WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES
 Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

“...and His Name shall be called...Wonderful Counselor”

Introduction to Advent Series:

We come to understand people by their names and titles. King David, the man after God’s own heart, is better understood by a study of his various names or titles. Knowing David is described as a shepherd, warrior, king, poet and musician helps us understand his character and gives us insight into David the man. (*My Father’s Names*, pages 13-14)

Why does God have so many names? Just as white light is made up of seven different rays or colors, so God is made up of different attributes that are illuminated by different names. We’ll take these names one at a time during this Advent season. The first of them is.... “...and His Name shall be called...Wonderful Counselor.”

(A Guiding Name: “Wonderful Counselor” from “Our Daily Bread,” Christmas Edition, 2007)

HC#121 – Joyful, Joyful	HC-121	HCD11-T11
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#114 – Light of the world	TB-653 – Here I am to Worship	
HC#146 – Here I am to Worship	HC-146	HCD13-T16
SB#133 – Wonderful counselor	TB-859 – The Light Has Come	HCD1-T10
HC#10 – The Light Has Come	HC-10	

Announcements and Offering

Call to Worship:

No Old Testament prophet had more to say about the promised Messiah of Israel than the prophet Isaiah. In a period spanning at least 64 years, Isaiah (whose name means “the Salvation of Jehovah”) was God’s spokesman to Israel. Isaiah predicted a coming

messianic age marked by world peace. He foresaw a world government in the last days that would turn the eyes of the international community on Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:1-4). He also described the coming of a Servant-Ruler who would bring a mysterious blend of power and suffering (Isaiah 53; 61:1-3). But the character of this coming Servant is most clearly stated in Isaiah 9:6, where the prophet declared:

“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.”

Advent Candle Lighting:

Leader: A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

Solo 1: The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord—

Leader: And he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears;

Solo 2: But with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.

Leader: He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

Solo 1: Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. (Isaiah 11:1-5)

All: He comes, the broken heart to bind,
The wounded soul to cure,
And with the treasures of his grace,
To enrich the humble poor.
(SASB#81, v. 3)

Leader: God has provided us with a Wonderful Counselor and we celebrate his coming with the lighting of our first Advent candle.

[Light 1st Advent candle]

SB#104 – Come, thou long-expected Jesus	TB-371 Hyfrydol (2 written verses combine to make 1 verse with this tune, no chorus)	none
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Additional Optional Songs		
SB#108 – Hark! The herald angels sing	TB-270 – Hark! The Herald Angels Sing	HTD4-T5 (3 vs.)
HC#141 – All Hail the Power	HC-141	HCD13-T11

Hallowed Be Thy Name

Responsive Reading:

Leader: While it is clear that Isaiah was predicting a coming world leader and the inevitability of a messianic age, Isaiah was actually predicting the arrival of the Son of God. Prophetically, Isaiah saw the day when a son of Israel would bear upon His shoulder the weight of the world leadership. In chapter 2, Isaiah predicted that in the last days the house of the Lord would be established in Jerusalem.

All: *“The Lord Himself will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for anymore.”* (Isaiah 2:4)

Reader 1: Those who have bowed their knee to this coming Messiah and Lord can find present encouragement in that future day. While we regard as mythology the image of Atlas bearing on his shoulder the globe of the world, we can see in God’s Messiah a real Lord who can carry the combined weight of all human problems. Inexpressible comfort can be found as we discover that the “shoulders”—which will someday carry the governments of the world—are large enough to bear any personal weight or burden that we bring to Him now.

Leader: Hebrew names are significant. The prophet used a marvelously descriptive set of names to unfold the very essence of the person of the Messiah. The name “Wonderful Counselor” literally translates, “a wonder of a counselor.” But what does it mean?

Reader 1: The first is the word *Wonderful*. The Hebrew word *pala* indicates “something uncommon or out of the ordinary.” The same Hebrew word is used in Psalm 139:6 in just this way:

All: *“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.”*

Reader 1: It is something miraculous! The problem is that we have a low view of the miraculous, and therefore a limited sense of wonder.

Leader: A real wonder is something beyond human explanation. And the prophet Isaiah declared that the coming Child and Son would be a wonder. This not only describes what He does, it describes who He is.

Reader 1: The second part of this compound description of the coming Messiah is *Counselor*. Long before the Child was ever born, long before the Son was given, Isaiah foretold that God was planning to send a Counselor for the broken-hearted people of the world.

All: *“He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths. The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”* (Isaiah 2:3)

Leader: And long after Jesus’ entrance into the world we can see that He personified the kind of counsel that will go out from Jerusalem in the last days.

All: *“All this also comes from the Lord Almighty, wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom.”* (Isaiah 28:29)

Leader: When you take all that we know about Christ, it adds up to a marvelous truth—He is the God who is, and who is called a “Wonder of a Counselor.”

(A Guiding Name: “Wonderful Counselor” from “Our Daily Bread,” Christmas Edition, 2007)

Drama: Wonderful Counselor

HC#82 – Jesus, Name Above All Names	HC-82	HCD7-T12
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#117 – Draw Me Close	HC-117	HCD10-T17
HC#159 – Spirit of the Living God	HC-159	HCD14-T19
HC#62 – When God Comes Near	HC-62	HCD5-T12
HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty	HC-219	HCD20-T19
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20
HC#226 – I Worship You	HC-226	HCD21-T16

Prayer:

Who is this child? Who is this Wonderful Counselor? He is a man who has walked in our shoes, felt our pains and struggled with our temptations. Moreover, he walks with us now, every step of the way. How could we not love him? O Light of the World, prophesied deliverer of Israel, you have truly come. You are my deliverer and the light of my world as well. With joy I acknowledge your right to every righteous and holy title and to every place of authority. Come, Lord Jesus, Messiah, and rule over us with justice and peace. Do it even now in me. I welcome you gratefully to the throne of my life. Amen.

(The NIV Worship Bible, page 909)

Message – Our Wonderful Counselor

Week # 1

HC#89 – Knowing You	HC-89	HCD7-T19
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#65 – God Will Make a Way	HC-65	HCD5-T15
SB#153 – Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown	TB-94 – Margaret	HTD10-T6 (4 vs.)
HC#156 – Enter In	HC-156	HCD14-T16
HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty	HC-219	HCD20-T19
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20
HC#226 – I Worship You	HC-226	HCD21-T16

Benediction:

Lord Jesus, we come with praise and thanksgiving for the marvel and miracle of your birth we celebrate this season. Come once again to us this hour that we may rejoice because you have been born in our hearts. We pray that in all our labors, in all our relationships, in all of our life, you will live and love through us, in all our seasons of life, as our Savior and Lord. In your name, we pray. Amen.

(Colonel Henry Gariepy)

HC#180 – Starry Night	HC-180	HCD16-T20
Vocal Benediction Options		
HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful	HC-140	HCD12-T20
HC#260 – Go Tell it on the Mountain	HC-15	HCD24-T20

DRAMA Wonderful Counselor By Martyn Scott Thomas © 1998 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission.	
Topic:	Prayer
Scripture:	Isaiah 9:6
Synopsis:	A patient seeks emergency counsel.
Characters:	Michael – the patient Counselor (optional, non-speaking)
Props/Costumes:	Casual dress for Michael, a business suit for the Counselor.
Setting:	One or two chairs. Although a monologue, this can be performed with a non-speaking Counselor. The Counselor should be seated in a chair with his back to the congregation. His “lines” are heard only by the Patient, who responds accordingly, pausing between paragraphs.
Running Time:	3 minutes.

[Michael knocks and enters, speaking to the Counselor.]

Michael: Hi. Thanks for seeing me on such short notice. I guess that’s my chair over there [*sits*]. I know it seems like I’ve been in here quite a bit lately, it’s just that . . .

Yes, I know my plan includes unlimited visits, I just don’t want to overdo it. But, as I was saying, things have been pretty rough lately and I just needed to talk to someone. You seemed like the logical choice.

Where do you want me to begin? Work, family, church?

Okay, work. It’s been busy. Actually, it’s always busy, but lately it’s been very busy. It just keeps piling up no matter how hard I work. The more I do, the more there is to do. It can get pretty overwhelming.

Well, usually I keep plugging away, but sometimes, I do nothing. I mean, I look for excuses to get out of the office; errands to run, lunch meetings, home emergencies.

No, it doesn’t help. The work keeps piling up and I feel more and more helpless. Some days, I wonder why I even leave the house.

It’s a great job. I love the company, my boss is super, my co-workers very dedicated; I just get lost sometimes. Can you help me find my way?

My family? They're fine. Carrie's working part-time now. She still gets home before the kids and it gets her out of the house three days a week. The extra money doesn't hurt either.

No. Financially, we're fine. My salary is more than enough. She just likes to have her own money for things. Money is not a problem.

Budget? Kind of. I mean, I know what I'm spending. There's always something left each month for extras.

Mostly stuff for the kids. Mostly clothes for the kids. They're growing so fast. I can't believe Joe's in junior high. Where does the time go?

Well, sure I do. Most Saturdays, we have a chance to do something.

Well, he's usually off with his friends, but we do watch football together on Sundays.

Becky? No, she doesn't like football. I don't know where I failed.

Fourth grade.

Mostly A's. She's a good student; reminds me of her mom.

Well, I try to help her with her homework, when I get home in time.

Most days. But when work is busy; like it is now, it's hard to get home early. I'll make it up to her someday. And to Joe. And to Carrie.

[a little agitated] When I'm not so busy.

I'm sorry. Can you help me find my way?

Church? Yes, I still go. Didn't you see me there last week?

Well, a little late, but I did hear the message.

Okay, I heard most of the message, but it was an early game and that's my time with Joe

Well, I suppose I could tape part of the game, but I don't know how to program my VCR.

Ask Becky? Very funny, but I get your point.

It's funny. You haven't said a lot today. But, you've helped me quite a bit. You know me so well. Almost like you know what I'm doing to day, even before I do.

I always feel so much better after these visits.

Are you sure? Any time? I don't want to overdo it, you know.

I can't overdo it? That's good to know. That's very good to know.
[Michael stands and turns to exit]

Tomorrow? Sure, I can make it tomorrow. But, what if I need to see you sooner?

Always open. That's good to know. That's very good to know.

[Blackout]

NAMES OF JESUS
Advent Sermon – Week 1
November 30, 2008

Our Wonderful Counselor
by Tom Shepard

Text: Isaiah 9:6

*"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" (Isaiah 9:6, NIV).*

This prophecy of the coming Christ that was given hundreds of years before his birth tells us that the child that was to be born would have some very amazing names. Of course the one that Isaiah is speaking of is Jesus. According to Isaiah he would be called:

Wonderful Counselor
The Mighty God
The Everlasting Father
The Prince of Peace

Over the next four weeks we will look at each of these four names in detail. Today we will look at Christ as our Wonderful Counselor.

Let me say right up front that in some translations this title is separated with a comma – Wonderful *and* Counselor. The translators believe that each title should be looked at separately. Some translations put both words together to come up with one title – Wonderful Counselor. It is important to know that in the original Hebrew there were no punctuation marks. I do believe that Jesus is wonderful. He is Lord of lords and King of kings. He is the creator of the universe. His name is above every name – and at his name every knee will bow and every tongue will confess – that Jesus Christ is Lord. I know that he is wonderful, but for today I want to examine Jesus as our Wonderful Counselor.

Later in the book of Isaiah we find that the author speaks of Jesus again when he says:

"The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:2, NIV).

The Bible places a high premium on wise counsel. Wisdom and counsel are important. Let's quickly look at two verses that talk about wise counsel.

"A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel" (Proverbs 1:5, NKJV).

“The counsel of the Lord stands forever; the plans of His heart from generation to generation” (Psalms 33:11, HCSB).

Counseling today is at an all time high in our society. From Dr. Phil, to David Ramsey, to Oprah Winfrey, people are seeking advice. There’s certainly nothing wrong with seeking advice and counseling when you have a particular need in your life. In fact, the Bible encourages it. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that we, as believers, have access to most wonderful counselor imaginable – Jesus Christ.

What makes him a Wonderful Counselor? I could list characteristics all morning, but let me give you three.

I. He UNDERSTANDS Your Struggles

In Hebrews chapter four we find:

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15, NIV).

Jesus gets it. He understands it. He can relate to you. Sometimes when we are going through a difficult situation and someone says, “I understand what you are going through...” it seems empty because unless they have been through the same situation, how can they possibly understand our problems? But Jesus does understand. He knows exactly what you are going through. When you come to him in need of counsel, he knows your situation. He knows your heart and he knows your mind. Because of this fact, verse sixteen of Hebrews chapter four tells us that we should: *“approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time”* (Hebrews 4:16, HCSB).

Have you ever been betrayed? He has. Have you ever been wrongly accused? He has. Have people ever gossiped about you? Have you ever suffered physical pain? Have you ever been in physical need? Have you ever felt lonely? Have you ever suffered loss? Have you ever been afraid? Have you ever felt that you have reached the bottom and there is no way up? He understands.

The Bible tells us that: *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us”* (John 1:14, NIV). Jesus was fully human like you and me. He knows how mean people can be. He knows how rough life can get. He understands your struggles.

Another characteristic that makes Jesus a Wonderful Counselor is...

II. He CARES For You

1 Peter 5:7 (CEV) says, *“God cares for you, so turn all your worries over to him.”*

Some counselors only care as long as you can pay the bill. Not Jesus! He cares about you as a person. He cares about your character. He cares about your spiritual growth and emotional welfare. He cares about the pain you suffer. He considers you of value and of worth. Look at what it says in Matthew 6:26. Jesus is speaking and he says:

“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?” (Matthew 6:26, HCSB).

Aren't you worth more than the birds that fly around? God thinks so! He thinks you have value. He thinks that you have worth—he thinks that you are worth a lot. He thinks so much of you that he sent his son to die for you – to rescue you from your pain and suffering – to give you new hope, new life and salvation. God cares for YOU!

He cares so much that he will help you with your problems. He will help you deal with them. That's why he is called Wonderful Counselor. He's not going to leave us to fend for ourselves. You have probably heard it said, "God helps those who help themselves." The truth of the matter is when you have reached the bottom, "God helps those who can't help themselves." When you see no way out, God steps in—if you call on him. Here is another of his promises:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28, NIV).

Folks that is a promise! He will not turn his back on us. He will not abandon us. God cares for us. Another characteristic of Jesus our Wonderful Counselor is:

III. He COMMITS Himself to You

Jesus wants to have a personal relationship with each of us. Look at what the Bible says in John 10:27:

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27, NIV).

This verse tells me that Jesus speaks to us. If we have a personal relationship with Jesus, he is committed to us and he talks to us.

How does Jesus speak to us today?

A. Through the BIBLE

Look at what it says in Psalm 119:105: *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path”* (Psalms 119:105, NIV).

God speaks to us through his written word.

B. Through the HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus says in John, “*But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth*” (John 16:13, NIV).

You say, "Well I have never heard the Holy Spirit talk to me." Let me ask you, have you ever done something wrong and felt guilty about it? Good! That's the Holy Spirit speaking to you. Part of his job is to keep us on track. He does that sometimes with conviction.

Have you ever had a verse of scripture come to you out of the blue? That may be the Holy Spirit trying to teach you something.

Have you ever thought about a friend or family member and wondered how they were doing? That may just be the Holy Spirit prompting you to send a card, make a call or write a letter. You see, the Holy Spirit still speaks today.

The third way God speaks today is:

C. Through the CHURCH

The church is the world's largest support group. Every single person in this room this morning has problems. Turn to the person on your left and say, “You've got problems!”

Turn to the person on your right and say, “You've got problems!”

Now turn to God and say, "I've got problems!"

There—don't you feel better? We are all just fellow struggles trying to make it through and give God glory in the process.

I've thought about buying a sign to hang over the front entrance that says, “No perfect people allowed.” The church is to be a community where people can be open and honest about their struggles, where we can work together to overcome our problems.

Did you know that Moses had a big problem? Back when he was leading the nation of Israel through the wilderness, he was wearing himself out. He was busy, busy, busy. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came to him with some advice. He said Moses, “Here is what you need to do: select some good men and delegate some of your authority to them. Put some in charge of a thousand. Put some in charge of a hundred. Put some in charge of fifty and put some in charge of ten. If you do this, God will honor you” (Exodus 18:19-21).

Do you know what Moses did? He listened! He took Jethro's advice!

Proverbs has this to say about advice:

“Refuse good advice and watch your plans fail; take good counsel and watch them succeed” (Proverbs 15:22, MSG).

When someone gives you good advice, take it! Seek out good sound advice. Find a fellow Christian who is wise; who is living a life to honor God. Ask them what they think. Ask two or three strong Christians. Seek out wise counsel. The church is here to help you be successful. God can use other believers to speak to you—so listen!

I want to return to the thought that God is committed to you. We started reading from John chapter ten a minute ago. Let’s continue on:

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand” (John 10:27-28, NIV).

Did you know that when you commit yourself to God, he commits himself to you? When you give yourself to him, he promises to hold on to you. Look at John 10:28 again, and circle the words: *“No one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”* When God says “no one,” he means “NO ONE!” God will not allow anyone to keep you away from his love.

Paul understood this fact when he wrote in the book of Romans:

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39, NIV).

Folks, nothing can separate us from the love of God, because if you have committed yourself to him, he has committed himself to you.

Let me give you a challenge this week: make an appointment this week with the Wonderful Counselor. Sit down with him. Open your heart up to him. Tell him what is going on in your life. Believe me—there is no heartache that he can’t mend. There is no problem he can’t solve. Why? Because he is our Wonderful Counselor.

NAMES OF JESUS
Mighty God
Advent Worship Series – Week 2
December 7, 2008

WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES
 Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

Announcements and Offering

“...and His Name shall be called...Mighty God”

Call to Worship:

What if God were good but weak? Beautiful but powerless? He might want to bless us but be unable to. Wouldn't this God of good intentions be a bit pathetic? Would any of us fall on our faces before him like Abraham did when God revealed himself as *El Shaddai*? Would we even bother to pray to such a God?

God revealed himself as *El Shaddai*, God Almighty, to Abram and told him of the everlasting covenant he was establishing with him and his descendants. Until the time of Moses, when another divine name was revealed, the patriarchs considered *El Shaddai* the covenant name of God, the one for whom nothing is impossible.

(Praying the Names of God, page 49)

HC#141 – All Hail the Power	HC-141	HCD13-T11
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory	TB-398 – Come and Worship (Regent Sq.)	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
SB#113 – Joy to the world!	TB-87 – Joy to the World!	HTD4-T9 (3 vs.)
SB#114 – Light of the world	TB-653 – Here I am to Worship	
HC#146 – Here I am to Worship	HC-146	HCD13-T16

Advent Candle Lighting:

Solo 1: Eight days after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary presented the boy for the covenant of circumcision, a rite that identified Him as a genuine son of the covenant between God and Abraham. And, as custom dictated, they made his name official: *Yeshua*. “Yahweh saves.” (*Jesus*, page 45)

Solo 2: Just as Yahweh is God’s personal name revealed in the Old Testament, Jesus is the personal name of the One we call Redeemer, Lord, and Christ. His name is intimately linked to the God of the Hebrew Scriptures because the name *Yeshua* means “Yahweh is salvation.”

Solo 1: Indeed, Jesus is Yahweh come to earth. If you have ever pictured God as a distant, wrathful Being, you will have to reconsider that portrait in light of Jesus Christ, who is God bending toward us, God becoming one of us, God reaching out in mercy, God humbling himself, God nailed to a cross, God raising from the grave to show us the way home. (*Praying the Names of God*, page 38)

Solo 2: Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

[Light 2nd Advent candle]

HC#136 – We All Bow Down	HC-136	HCD12-T16
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#45 – While We are Waiting, Come	HC-45	HCD3-T15
HC#186 – When I look into your holiness	HC-186	HCD17-T16
HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah	HC-187	HCD17-T17
HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty	HC-219	HCD20-T19
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20
HC#226 – I Worship You	HC-226	HCD21-T16

Hallowed Be Thy Name

Responsive Scripture:

Leader: The name “Mighty God” is an Old Testament title applied to the coming Messiah. It is the compound Hebrew term *El Gibbor*, and both parts of the name need to be understood. The first part of the title is *El*. Isaiah 9:6 was predicting One who would be far more than a man. He is the One of whom John wrote:

All: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all*

things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”
(John 1:1-3)

Leader: The other part of the name is *Gibbor*, which means “strength, power, hero.” The focus of Isaiah’s prophecy is *El Gibbor*, the Mighty God who is our true Hero. What this prophet in the seventh century BC anticipated, the New Testament confirms. Because the Messiah would be God, He would have God’s power. But to Isaiah, the amazing thing was that the Messiah would not only have the power of God, He would be the God of God, He would be the God of power! In other parts of his prophecy, Isaiah gave more details of what this mighty power would look like. For instance, in a messianic section of his prophecy, Isaiah declared:

All: *“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.”*
(Isaiah 61:1-3)

Leader: Jesus used Isaiah 61:1-3 to make His claim as the Messiah. But because He only partially fulfilled this prophecy in His first coming, He was only partially recognized. By His resurrection, perfect life, sacrificial death, and many mighty signs He showed we could trust Him to return one day to rule the world. Most of His own people rejected Him. John wrote:

All: *“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.”*
(John 1:11)

Leader: These and thousands of other first-century Jews believed—and for good reason. Jesus Christ proved Himself to be *El Gibbor* as He displayed His life-changing might and power. For those who see their need of a Savior, the evidence of Christ’s mighty power is overwhelming. For those who sense their own weakness and inability to live up to God’s standard, the apostle John wrote,

All: *“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”* (John 1:12)

Leader: What the New Testament provides is an opportunity to see the fullness of the “Mighty God” Isaiah was predicting. The clear statement of the Word

of God is that Christ displayed His might in the creation of the world before He physically entered the world. John 1:3 says:

All: *“Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”*

Leader: Colossians 1:16 agrees:

All: *“For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.”*

Leader: In the midst of evidence that shows Christ to be the Mighty God, it is important to remember that this is more than just theological data. It is divinely inspired evidence that urges us to see and respond to Christ as He is—our “Mighty God.” In view of the predictive evidence of Isaiah and the historic record of the Gospels, how can we see our Lord Jesus Christ as anything less than the Mighty God, *El Gibbor*?

(A Powerful Name: “Mighty God” from “Our Daily Bread,” Christmas Edition, 2007)

Drama: Mighty God

HC#148 – Agnus Dei	HC-148	HCD13-T18
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Prayer:

Almighty God, you possess all power, all authority, and all knowledge. Nothing is impossible for you; and yet you choose to work through your people. Help me to know you as my All-Powerful God, the one who is able to sustain and bless me, to fulfill every promise you make. Increase my awe of you and of your power so that I may follow you faithfully, always believing you are enough for me. What greater honor could there be in life than to be used by you for your good pleasure? Lord, set me apart for your noble purposes. Help me to live in a way that is pleasing to you. I want my life and not merely my lips to offer the worship of which you alone are worthy. Amen.

(The NIV Worship Bible, page 1608, Praying the Names of God, page 41)

Message – Our Mighty God

HC#123 – Shine on Us	HC-123	HCD11-T13
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#120 – In the Manger	HC-120	HCD10-T20
SB#153 – Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown	TB-94 – Margaret	HTD10-T6 (4 vs.)
HC#186 – When I look into your holiness	HC-186	HCD17-T16
HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah	HC-187	HCD17-T17
HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty	HC-219	HCD20-T19

HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20
HC#226 – I Worship You	HC-226	HCD21-T16

Benediction:

Lord Jesus, we come with praise and thanksgiving for the marvel and miracle of your birth we celebrate this season. Come once again to us this hour that we may rejoice because you have been born in our hearts. We pray that in all our labors, in all our relationships, in all of our life, you will live and love through us, in all our seasons of life, as our Savior and Lord. In your name, we pray. Amen.

(Colonel Henry Gariepy)

HC#180 – Starry Night	HC-180	HCD16-T20
Vocal Benediction Options		
HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful	HC-140	HCD12-T20
HC#260 – Go Tell it on the Mountain	HC-15	HCD24-T20

Week # 2	
DRAMA	
Mighty God	
By Martyn Scott Thomas	
© 1998 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission.	
Topic:	God, Creation
Scripture:	John 1:1-3, 14; Revelation 5:12.
Synopsis:	Readers discuss the role of Christ in Creation.
Characters:	Reader 1 Reader 2
Props/Costumes:	None.
Setting:	Bare stage.
Running Time:	3 minutes.

[Readers face the congregation and recite as one reader.]

Reader 1: In the beginning was the Word,

Reader 2: And the Word was with God,

Reader 1: And the Word was God.

Reader 2: He was with God in the beginning.

Reader 1: Through him all things were made;

Reader 2: Without him nothing was made that has been made.

Reader 1: *[stopping to think – to Reader 2]* Nothing?

Reader 2: *[to Reader 1]* Nothing.

Reader 1: Fish?

Reader 2: Fish.

Reader 1: Birds?

Reader 2: Birds.

Reader 1: Worms?

Reader 2: Worms.

Reader 1: What about the stars?

Reader 2: He made them.

Reader 1: And the sun?

Reader 2: He made that, too.

Reader 1: The moon?

Reader 2: The moon.

Reader 1: [*thinking*] What about man?

Reader 2: He made man, too.

Reader 1: But I thought he was a man.

Reader 2: He was a man. But he was also God.

Reader 1: The God?

Reader 2: The One and Only.

Reader 1: And he created everything?

Reader 2: Without him nothing was made that has been made.

Reader 1: What about roses?

Reader 2: He made the roses.

Reader 1: And the thorns?

Reader 2: Even the thorns he would later wear.

Reader 1: What about trees?

Reader 2: He made the trees. Even the one on which he would later be hung.

Reader 1: What about stones?

Reader 2: Even the one used to seal His tomb.

Reader 1: So, He made everything.

Reader 2: Everything.

[*Readers turn back to congregation.*]

Reader 1: In the beginning was the Word,
Reader 2: And the Word was with God,
Reader 1: And the Word was God.
Reader 2: He was with God in the beginning.
Reader 1: The Word became flesh
Reader 2: And made his dwelling among us.
Reader 1: We have seen his glory,
Reader 2: The glory of the One and Only,
Reader 1: Who came from the Father,
Reader 2: Full of grace and truth.
Reader 1: Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
Reader 2: To receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
Both: And honor and glory and praise!

[*Blackout*]

NAMES OF JESUS
Advent Sermon – Week 2
December 7, 2008

Our Mighty God
by Tom Shepard

Text: Isaiah 9:6

Have you ever found yourself at the mercy of someone else? Has your car ever broken down while you were quite a distance from home? Have you ever had a flat tire and gone to get the spare, only to find that the spare was flat, too (or you didn't have one)? Have you ever been traveling and lost your way? Did you get turned around and lost and have to stop and ask for directions? It's not a fun feeling, is it?

Two years ago, James Kim, his wife Kati, and their two infant daughters left San Francisco on November 18th for a combined vacation and work trip. They spent Thanksgiving in Seattle, Washington, with family, and then went to Portland, Oregon, to visit with a friend. After the visit in Portland, the family intended to take state Highway 42 over to the coast, but missed the turnoff. So they decided to drive the 55 miles down Interstate 5 to Grants Pass. There they turned onto Bear Camp Road, which is lightly traveled—even in the summer—and is often closed in the winter.

It was stormy, and James mistakenly turned off onto a logging road later that evening. They were soon winding up into the mountains, and when they reached higher elevations it began to snow. The family became hopelessly lost and finally became stranded in snow. The Kim family ran the engine of their station wagon to power its heater until the gas was gone. They ate what little food they had. After nearly a week of being stranded, James decided to venture out on foot to seek help.

James Kim put himself through a desperate ordeal, climbing down a ravine, over boulders and logs, through nearly impenetrable brush, and in and out of an icy creek, in what one rescue leader called a "superhuman" effort to save his family.

Kati and the girls were spotted two days after James had left to look for help. James' body was found two days after his family had been rescued.

(This article appeared on page A-1 of the San Francisco Chronicle December 7, 2006)

The Kim family had become lost. They had become absolutely dependent on others for their rescue. Over 100 rescue works had searched for them. Even a satellite had been turned to the area in hopes of finding James.

We need to remember that it is still easy to get stranded or lost. Not just physically, but also spiritually. We need someone who can rescue us. We need someone to save us.

Last week, we discovered that Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor. Today, we're going to discover that he is our Mighty God. Let us read from our text this morning:

*"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" (Isaiah 9:6, NIV).*

The prophecy of the coming Christ was given hundreds of years before his birth. The prophecy of this child's birth tells us that this child would not be ordinary, but extraordinary. Of course, the one that Isaiah is speaking of is Jesus. According to Isaiah, he would be called:

Wonderful Counselor
Mighty God
Everlasting Father
The Prince of Peace

Today we will look at Christ as our Mighty God. He is a Mighty God who is able to rescue you. He is a Mighty God who is able to save you. Luke's writings echo this thought:

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10, NIV).

Jesus is our Mighty God because:

I. He Knows Where You ARE

He knows what roads you have traveled. He knows what turns you have made. He knows what dead-end streets you have been down.

Jesus knows you better than you know yourself.

Do you remember the story of the women at the well? It's found in John 4. Do you remember how the conversation went? Jesus comes to the well and finds a Samaritan woman there. He speaks to her and asks her for a drink of water. She is taken aback because it was not proper for a Samaritan and a Jew to hold a conversation. But the conversation keeps going and they continue to talk about water. Jesus tells her that he can give her living water, and that she will never thirst again. She becomes interested and says, "Give me some."

Do you remember what happens next? Jesus tells her, *"Go, call your husband and come back."* The woman is put on the spot. Her lifestyle is exposed. She says, *"I have no husband."* Jesus doesn't leave it at that. He exposes her lifestyle even more, for he says to her, *"You are right when you say that you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true"* (John 4:17-19, NIV).

Jesus knows her life. Jesus knows her heart. Her lifestyle is completely exposed to him. He knows what she has done and with whom. Here is the scary part: He knows the same things about you and me.

He knows what roads you have traveled. He knows what turns you have made. He knows what dead-end streets you have been down, and He still loves you.

Jesus knows right where we are. He doesn't need a search party. He doesn't need a satellite. He knows the spiritual shape we are in, because he is a Mighty God.

Let me ask you a question. Do you know where you are?

Do you remember the story of Adam and Eve? Do you remember what happened after they ate the forbidden fruit? God comes to the garden and calls out, "Adam, where are you?"

Do you think that God did not know the answer to that question? Of course he did! God knew right where Adam was. But part of reaching safety is knowing where you are. Part of reaching safety is knowing that you are lost—that you have made some bad decisions.

When the rescuers found the body of James Kim, they back-tracked his trail. Do you know what they found? James had come within less than a mile of a lodge that had been closed for the winter. Inside there would have been safety. Inside there would have been food and warmth. James had made a decision to turn off the road and travel across country to seek safety. If he had continued down the road he would have reached the lodge, but he made a decision to leave the road. That decision cost him his life.

Where are you?

Jesus is our Mighty God because:

II. He Knows What SHAPE You Are In

Do you remember the story of the prodigal son? The son goes off and takes his inheritance and spends it all. He ends up broke, dirty and down. He ends up out in the pigpen feeding the swine. He becomes so hungry that even the pig food starts looking good. But then he starts thinking, "If I return to my father, maybe he will give me a job as a servant. I know that my father's servants are doing better than I am here." So he gets up and heads for home.

The Bible tells us that while the son was a "long way off" the father saw him coming. He ran out to greet him. He grabbed him, hugged him, and welcomed him back home. The son tried to apologize, but the father shouted out, "*Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he*

was lost and is found” (Luke 15:22-24, NIV).

Have you ever thought about the shape that the prodigal son was in when he returned home? I’m sure he was thinner. I sure he was dirtier. I’m sure he had a smell about him. Yet the Father loved him just the same.

What shape are you in? God knows. He not only knows where we have been but he knows what shape we are in. He knows that we are thinner; he knows that we are dirty and the smell of sin is still on us. For the Bible says,

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23, NIV).

Each and every one of us is in bad shape. Jesus knows that, and he loves us just the same.

Someone has said, “God loves us just as we are, but he loves us too much to leave us that way.” God knows what shape we are in, and he is willing to bring us in and build us up. What a Mighty God we have!

Jesus is our Mighty God because:

III. He Knows How Much TIME You Have Left

Here is a simple fact: I don’t know how much time you have left on this earth—only God knows. I don’t know how much time I have left to live—only God knows. I do know that the average American right now lives to around 78 years old. If I live to the average age, that’s great! But I may not live that long, or I could live longer.

“It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27, NKJV).

This verse from Hebrews does not talk about the number of days a person will live, but it does talk about what happens after we die—judgment. It seems to me that we should be more concerned about the judgment than we are about how long we live. God knows how long we will walk this earth. Our concern needs to be about how well we will do on the final exam. That day will determine whether we will walk the streets of gold. That day will determine whether we will live forever in heaven or hell. Our Mighty God knows how much time we have left, so let’s make the best use of it.

Jesus is our Mighty God because:

IV. He Knows Only He Can SAVE You

Let me ask you, how many of you have tried to be good? How many of you have tried to do the right thing? Yeah, me too. But you know what happens? Sometimes I fall flat on my face.

James Kim tried to do the right thing. He not only wanted to save himself, but he also wanted to save his wife and two little girls. But his efforts failed. His wife and daughters were saved not by his efforts but by the efforts of the rescuers. His efforts fell short even though he gave it his all. One rescue leader called his efforts "superhuman," but it still did not save his family. When it comes to being "saved" we are at the mercy of someone else. Look at what the Message paraphrase says about the idea that we can save ourselves:

"Saving is all his (God's) idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing!" (Ephesians 2:8-9, MSG).

Folks, God knows our efforts. He knows how hard we have tried. But only he can save. Only he can rescue us. It doesn't matter how good you have been—you still need a Savior. He is our Mighty God who can save and:

V. He Knows That You NEED Him

The Bible says:

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, NIV).

But here is the important part: Your rescuer will not come unless you call on him.

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13, NIV).

I like the way the Message Bible says it:

"Everyone who calls, 'Help, God!' gets help" (Romans 10:13, MSG).

Here is the sad fact: Not everyone who is lost gets found. James Kim died. He made a valiant effort to save his family and himself. He is to be commended for that. He gave it his best shot. He gave it his best effort and he died in the process. Physically, his life ended. That is a sad fact and it cannot be changed.

But here is the good part. I also know that if James called on the name of Jesus, he was saved spiritually. For, "Everyone who calls, 'Help, God!' gets help."

How about you? Have you ever called out, "Help, God!"?

You see, Jesus is our Mighty God. He has the power to seek and to save those who are lost. Where are you? Are you lost? Have you taken a wrong turn? Call to him and he WILL come and find you.

NAMES OF JESUS
Everlasting Father
Advent Worship Series – Week 3
December 14, 2008

WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES
 Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

Announcements and Offering

“...and His Name shall be called...Everlasting Father”

Call to Worship:

El Olam is the Hebrew name for the God who has no beginning and no end, the God for whom a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day. His plans stand firm forever, plans to give you a future full of hope.

Is it any wonder that the Eternal God wants a people he can love eternally? Is it so hard to fathom that God’s love is stronger than death? Is it impossible to believe what can happen to souls created to be wide and deep enough for God to dwell in? No wonder Scripture tells us that the Lord has set eternity in our hearts.

(Praying the Names of God, pages 51, 54, 56, 59)

SB#116 – O come, all ye faithful	TB-496 – Adeste Fideles	HTD3 –T1 (3 vs.)
HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful	HC-140	HCD12-T20
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#47 – O God, our help in ages past	TB-113 – St. Ann	HTD5-T18 (4 vs.)
HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus	HC-151	HCD14-T11
HC#121 – Joyful, Joyful	HC-121	HCD11-T11
HC#141 – All Hail the Power	HC-141	HCD13 –T11
HC#149 – In Christ Alone	HC-149	HCD13-T19
HC#157 – How Great is Our God	HC-157	HCD14-T17
HC#241 – Crown him with many crowns	HC-241	HCD23-T11

Advent Candle Lighting:

Solo 1: For a thousand years in your sight

Are like a day that has just gone by,
Or like a watch in the night...
The length of our days is seventy years—
Or eighty, if we have the strength;
Yet their span is but trouble and sorrow,
For they quickly pass, and we fly away...

Solo 2: Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.
(Psalm 90:4, 10, 12)

Solo 1: Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
The Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary,
And his understanding no one can fathom.
He gives strength to the weary
And increases the power of the weak. (Isaiah 40:28-29)

Solo 2: The truth of the eternity of the Messiah is something that has come under continuous attack for centuries. But the inescapable fact is that all groups who reject the eternity of Christ also reject His deity. The two are inseparable! If Jesus is not eternal, He is not God—and vice versa. Yet Isaiah said that when Messiah came, He would be the physical embodiment of the Everlasting Father.

[Light 3rd Advent candle.]

HC#15 – Father, We Love You	HC-15	HCD1A-T15
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Drama: Everlasting Father

Hallowed Be Thy Name

Responsive Scripture:

Leader: The symbolic use of the word *father* was an ancient Hebraism for “possessor of.” In Isaiah 9:6 the Messiah is described as both a Son and a Father. He became a child in time through the incarnation, but He is the Father and possessor of eternity. He inhabits and possesses eternity.

All: *“For this is what the high and lofty One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: ‘I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.’”* (Isaiah 57:15)

Leader: **His name is eternal.**

All: *“May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed.”*
(Psalm 72:17)

Leader: **He is the eternal provider.**

All: *“He said to me, ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.’”* (Revelation 21:6)

Leader: He is eternal in all that He is and all that He does! This implies several crucial truths claimed for God’s Messiah in both Old and New Testaments. **He is preexistent.**

All: *“Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”* (Psalm 90:2)

Leader: **He is self-existent.**

All: In Exodus 3 we find the name “I AM.” This name describes and defines the God who is. He is totally independent of His creation, and totally independent of time.

Leader: The ability of Christ to be a timeless source of fatherly protection and provision is claimed in a number of ways in the New Testament. His character is described as eternally consistent and unchanging. Hebrews 13:8 says:

All: *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”*

Leader: John the Baptist, whose birth preceded Jesus, still recognized the eternity of Christ when he said:

All: *“This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me surpassed me because he was before me.’”* (John 1:30) He is the eternal One!

Leader: The self-existence of God’s Messiah means that He will not leave us, as all earthly fathers eventually do. The Eternal God took upon Himself the limitations of a human body so that He could bring us into an everlasting relationship with Himself.

(A Timeless Name: “Everlasting Father” from “Our Daily Bread,” Christmas Edition, 2007)

HC#170 – There is None Like You	HC-170	HCD15-T20
Additional Optional Songs		

HC#125 – I Draw Near to You	HC-125	HCD11-T15
HC#173 – In this quiet moment	HC-173	HCD 16- T13
HC#205 – Closer Still	HC-205	HCD19 – T15
HC#213 – In the presence of Jehovah	HC-213	HCD20 – T13
HC#219 – King of kings, majesty	HC-219	HCD20 – T19
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20 – T20

Prayer:

Lord, your love and faithfulness endure forever. Help me to live my daily life with the strength that comes from knowing that I am going to live with you forever. Thank you for loving me even when I was “still a long way off.” You showed your gracious, fatherly love even when I bore little resemblance to you. Strengthen my identity as your child and help me to glorify your name by reflecting your character. Amen.

(Praying the Names of God, page 319)

Message – Our Everlasting Father

SB#101 – Thou didst leave thy throne	TB-112 - Margaret	HTD10-T6 (4 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#120 – In the Manger	HC-120	HCD10-T20
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20

Benediction:

Lord Jesus, we come with praise and thanksgiving for the marvel and miracle of your birth we celebrate this season. Come once again to us this hour that we may rejoice because you have been born in our hearts. We pray that in all our labors, in all our relationships, in all of our life, you will live and love through us, in all our seasons of life, as our Savior and Lord. In your name, we pray. Amen.

(Colonel Henry Gariepy)

HC#180 – Starry Night	HC-180	HCD16-T20
Vocal Benediction Options		
SB#116 – O come, all ye faithful	TB-496 – Adeste Fideles	HTD3 –T1 (3 vs.)
HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful	HC-140	HCD12-T20

Week # 3	
DRAMA	
Everlasting Father	
By Martyn Scott Thomas	
© 1998 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission.	
Topic:	Love
Scripture:	Psalm 72:17, 90:2; Isaiah 57:15
Synopsis:	A son questions his father about love.
Characters:	Eric – an eighteen year old boy. Gerald – his father.
Props/Costumes:	Casual dress. A chair and a newspaper for Gerald.
Setting:	The living room of Gerald's house.
Running Time:	3 minutes.

[Gerald is seated in his chair, reading the newspaper. Eric enters, stands behind the chair and questions Gerald, who continues to read his paper.]

- Eric:** Dad, do you love me?
- Gerald:** Eric, you know I love you.
- Eric:** I mean, do you really love me?
- Gerald:** Yes, I really love you.
- Eric:** Even when I mess things up?
- Gerald:** Yes, I really love you, even when you mess things up.
- Eric:** What about when I was three and wouldn't eat my peas?
- Gerald:** I loved you then. And you still don't eat your peas.
- Eric:** What about when I was six and ran away from home?
- Gerald:** You went next door for fifteen minutes. But yes, I still loved you.
- Eric:** What about when I was eight and told you I hated you and locked myself in my room?
- Gerald:** Even though it hurt to hear those words, I loved you then.
- Eric:** How about when I was twelve and took \$20.00 from your dresser?
- Gerald:** If you would have asked, I would have given it to you. But yes, I still loved you then.

Eric: Did you love me last year when I drove the car over the mailbox?

Gerald: I don't think the mailman was pleased with you, but I loved you even then.

Eric: Will you love me when I'm older and it's time to move out of the house?

Gerald: More than you can know.

Eric: Hey!

Gerald: [*putting paper down*] Why all these questions? Are you in some kind of trouble?

Eric: No, no trouble. But, it's nice to know that even when I don't do the right thing, my dad still loves me.

Gerald: [*stands*] Eric, before you were born, I loved you. I have always been and will always be your Father. And, no matter what happens, good or bad, I will always love you.

Eric: Thanks, Dad. I'll always love you, too. [*They hug*]

[*Blackout*]

NAMES OF JESUS
Advent Sermon – Week 3
December 14, 2008

Our Everlasting Father
by Tom Shepard

Text: Isaiah 9:6

Three weeks ago we started a series of sermons based on Isaiah 9:6. Let's go ahead and read our focal passage at this time.

*"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" (Isaiah 9:6, NIV).*

This prophecy of the coming Christ was given hundreds of years before his birth. This prophecy of this child's birth tells us that this child would be special—that the child would be unique. Of course, the one that Isaiah is speaking of is Jesus. According to Isaiah chapter nine, he would be called:

Wonderful Counselor
Mighty God
Everlasting Father
The Prince of Peace

Today we will look at Christ as our Everlasting Father.

To tell you the truth, I have some trouble when it comes to using this term for Jesus. I have no problem believing that Jesus is eternal, but I do have some trouble calling him "Father." Here's the reason: There are three persons in the trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Three in one; three persons, yet one God. Now I'm not going to discuss the trinity in depth in this sermon, but if I call Jesus our Eternal Father, it creates a dilemma in my mind because we already have God the Father. There is but one Father in the Godhead. There is but one Father in the trinity. The Holy Spirit is not the Father, Jesus is not the Father—the Father is the Father! This troubles my mind. So why does Isaiah call Jesus, "Eternal Father?"

I did some study, and this is what I have come up with. Here is an option.

What title do we as Americans give to George Washington? We call him the "Father of Our Nation." In fact, we call those people who were here as our nation was being formed, "Our Founding Fathers." We have no problem calling them "fathers" of our nation because they were involved in its conception. They were there as our nation was being formed.

Interesting! Could that be what the title—Eternal Father—is referring to?

I dug a little deeper and here is what I found. Some of the every early translations of the Bible rendered the title Eternal Father as: “Father of the future age” (Vulgate). It could also be translated, “The Father of eternity” (Gill).

When I understand Christ’s title in this sense, it is much less puzzling to me and much less uncomfortable to call Jesus my Eternal Father. I know that Christ has and will live forever. I know that it is Christ who will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords in eternity. I know it is Christ who has given us the ability to have eternal life. In this sense he is truly the Father of Eternity. It is through his sacrifice that I will be able to live forever. He is the Father of Eternity.

I find in the scripture that Christ has always existed. Forever! Look with me at John chapter one:

“In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1-4, 14, NIV).

What the Bible teaches is that Jesus is eternal. He was in the beginning. He was involved in the creation of all things. In fact, nothing exists that he did not create. He was with God. He is God, yet he became man. He is the Father of Creation. He is truly our Eternal Father.

Today as we look at Jesus being our Eternal Father, we are going to look at three qualities of what Eternal Father means for us. The first is:

I. Christ’s CHARACTER does not change

The contemporary Christian composer and artist Chris Tomlin’s song “Forever” is right on target in praising God as our Eternal Father for his goodness, faithfulness, love, and mercy. The words found in that song are:

Give thanks to the Lord
Our God and King
His love endures forever.
For He is good, He is above all things
His love endures forever.

From the rising to the setting sun
His love endures forever.
By the grace of God

We will carry on
His love endures forever.

Sing praise, sing praise.
Sing praise, sing praise.
Yeah!
Forever God is faithful
Forever God is strong
Forever God is with us
Forever
Forever.

Here is a fact. Since Jesus is part of the trinity—Jesus being God—the character of Jesus does not change. His mercy, his love, his grace, his forgiveness does not change. From the dawning of the day to the setting of the sun, his character is unchanging. From the beginning of time into eternity, Jesus' character never alters. Look at what the Bible says in Hebrews 13:8:

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8, NIV).

One of the stories that I turn to – time and time again is the story of the prodigal son. Although it is a simple story, it has so many aspects that it is amazing.

You know the story. The son goes off into a far country and squanders all his money. And when he runs out of money he runs out of friends and ends up in a hog pen, eating from the slop that is fed to the pigs. This is the most humiliating place a Jewish boy could possibly be.

As he sits there he starts thinking, “How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare? And here I am, starving to death. I will set out and go back to my father.” How could He think such thoughts? Why does he think he will be welcomed back home? How could he come to that conclusion? Here is what I think.

It is because the son knew the character of the Father. He knew what kind of father he had. He knew that the character of the father did not change. The relationship might never be the same – but he knew the character of the father was consistent. He knew that the father was full of forgiveness. He knew that the father was full of mercy. He knew that the father was full of love. He had hope that the door home would be open to him. He knew that his relationship with the father had changed - but he also knew that his father showed mercy, love and kindness.

How did he know that? I can just imagine that all through the time the son was growing up, the father had shown love to his son - because that was the character of the father. He might have communicated his love to the son also. He may even have said, “No matter how far you go, you can always come back home.”

So the prodigal said, "I will say to my father, 'I have sinned against heaven and against you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired men.'" I think this was a speech he practiced every step of his way back home. He had it down pat.

But before he could blurt it out his father had run to him, thrown his arms around him and kissed him. He had no fear of expressing love, did he?

You know, the beautiful part is that our Eternal Father always leaves the door open for us to come home again. No matter how far we roam Jesus is waiting to throw his arms around you - to assure you of his abiding love.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." Hebrews 13:8 (HCSB)

The second point I want to make is:

2. Christ's COMPASSION does not change.

Throughout the gospels we find that Jesus was full of compassion.

"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with COMPASSION for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd." Matthew 9:36 (NKJV)

"Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." Then Jesus, moved with COMPASSION, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." Mark 1:40-41 (NKJV)

Just a few minutes ago I related the story of the prodigal son. One of the things I had never noticed before is found in Luke chapter fifteen and verse twenty:

"But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with COMPASSION. He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him." Luke 15:20 (HCSB)

Did you catch that – the father became filled with compassion! It became his motivation for his movement. He got up and ran to his son!

I went and looked up the word "compassion". It means:

Suffering with another; painful sympathy; a sensation of sorrow excited by the distress or misfortunes of another. Compassion is a mixture of passion, compounded with love and sorrow.

When Jesus sees us in our distress He has compassion on us. When He sees the mess we have made of our lives He is moved with compassion. When life has been hard - when

we have been dealt a bad hand - when disaster after disaster follows us around like a puppy – when the whole world seems to be falling in around us - God is moved with compassion. The compassion of Jesus moves Him to rescue us. The compassion of Jesus moves Him to save us. The compassion of Jesus does not change.

We live in a world where we can get broken up, scratched up, dinged up. We get dents and burses – sometimes physically and sometimes emotionally. We live in a world where we can get hurt. We can have broken bones, broken relationships, and broken hearts. That’s the world in which we live. I am glad that there is One who will have compassion for me. I am glad there is One who is moved because of my suffering. I am glad there is One who is moved with compassion because He loves me. That one is Jesus – our Eternal Father.

Scott Wesley Brown affirms the compassion of our Eternal Father in his song “He Will Carry You”:

There is no problem too big He cannot solve it:
There is no mountain too tall He cannot move it.
There is no storm too dark God cannot calm it:
There is no sorrow too deep He cannot soothe it.

If He carried the weight of the world upon His shoulders,
I know, my brother, that He will carry you.
If He carried the weight of the world upon His shoulders,
I know, my sister, that He will carry you.
He said, “Come unto Me all who are weary, and I will give you rest.”

Not only does Christ’s character and compassion NOT change, but:

3. Christ’s COMMITMENT does not change.

Folks in the home I grew up in – my father was always there. He never abandoned us. He never walked out on us. I know this is not the case in some families – but it is the case in my family history - my father was always there - and it is the case in your heavenly family too.

I remember a few years back - I was teaching through the book – "Purpose Driven Life". We had just studied the chapter that talks about – “I Am Not An Accident”. One of the members of our church came up to me and said that that chapter had helped her deal with her self image. She went on to tell me that when she was born her mother had given her up for adoption. Even though she had grown up in a loving home - in a real sense she felt that she had been abandoned by her birth mother. Because of this event she had always questioned her worth – her value. As she read the chapter – “I Am Not An Accident” it helped her realize that she was loved and that she did have value and worth. Her Heavenly Father – her Eternal Father never considered her to be an accident. She realized that He would never abandon her.

Folks, eternal means “everlasting” – it means “forever.” When this term is applied to Jesus, it is always a declaration of His faithfulness, His trustworthiness, His goodness, His love and His mercy. Isaiah calls the coming Christ our Eternal Father. The Prophet Jeremiah also testifies to our Lord’s eternal faithfulness, trustworthiness, goodness, love and mercy in Lamentations 3:22-26.

Jerusalem had fallen into the hands of the Babylonians, the Temple had been looted and destroyed, and the people are grieving in captivity, but their Eternal Father had neither forgotten nor deserted them.

Jeremiah praises the Everlasting Father for His faithfulness when he says:

“Because of the Lord’s faithful love we do not perish, for His mercies never end. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness! I say: The Lord is my portion, therefore I will put my hope in Him. The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him. It is good to wait quietly for deliverance from the Lord.”
Lamentations 3:22-26 (HCSB)

God has promised to commit Himself to us and that commitment never changes – it is eternal. Look at what God says to you in Jeremiah chapter twenty nine:

“I know what I’m doing. I have it all planned out —plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.” Jeremiah 29:11 (MSG)

Jesus is our Eternal Father. He is always there for you – He will not abandon you. His character does not change. His compassion does not change. His commitment to you does not change. Turn to Him. Worship Him. Commit yourself to Him - today.

NAMES OF JESUS
Prince of Peace
Advent Worship Series – Week 4
December 21, 2008

WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES

Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

Announcements and Offering

“...and His Name shall be called...Prince of Peace”

Call to Worship:

Who hasn't longed for peace, living in a world that is so often full of strife? The Hebrew word for peace, however, means much more than the absence of conflict or the end of turmoil. *Shalom* conveys not only a sense of tranquility but also of wholeness and completion. To enjoy *shalom* is to enjoy health, satisfaction, success, safety, well-being, and prosperity. Though the New Testament does not directly call Jesus the Prince of Peace, this title from Isaiah has traditionally been associated with him as the One who brings peace to the world. Furthermore, Paul assured the Ephesian Christians saying of Jesus, “He himself is our peace” (Ephesians 2:14).

(Praying the Names of Jesus, page 106)

Advent Candle Lighting:

Solo 1: 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.

Solo 2: 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**.

Solo 1: 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.

Solo 2: The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:2-7, NIV)

[Light 4th Advent candle.]

SB#108 – Hark! The herald angels sing	TB-270 – Hark! The Herald Angels Sing	HTD4-T5 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory	TB-398 – Come and Worship (Regent Sq.)	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
SB#114 – Light of the world	TB-653 – Here I am to Worship	
HC#146 – Here I am to Worship	HC-146	HCD13-T16
HC#141 – All Hail the Power	HC-141	HCD13 –T11

Hallowed Be Thy Name

Responsive Scripture:

Leader: The name “Prince of Peace” is the Hebrew *Shar Shalom*, which means “the one who removes all peace-disturbing factors and secures the peace.” It helps to explain why Jesus disappointed His countrymen when He came! They did not want a peaceful prince. They wanted the Roman rulers taken away and all their oppressors with them. But Jesus didn’t lift a finger against Rome. He didn’t make one international peace treaty. How can He then be considered the Prince of Peace? Notice two very different statements from the New Testament. Luke 2:14 states,

All: *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”*

Leader: But in Matthew 10:34, Jesus said,

All: *“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”*

Leader: How can these two statements be reconciled? Can we blame Jesus’ countrymen for rejecting the Prince of Peace if our own world is still engulfed in conflict as we move into the third millennium? The first phase of Messiah’s coming produced a peace unknown to man since the fall of Adam into sin. It is rooted in the saving mission carried out by Christ on our behalf. Paul wrote:

All: *“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”* (2 Corinthians 5:19)

Leader: This means that the peace Jesus brought is more than a negotiated ceasefire between ourselves and God. It is a peace that changes us from enemies into the children of God. So significant was the **power** of the Son of God that He was able to bring calm to the natural storms on the turbulent Sea of Galilee.

All: *“He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.”* (Mark 4:39)

Leader: So effective is His work on the **cross** that it is able to make peace between God and man.

All: *“For God was pleased...through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you.”* (Colossians 1:19-22a)

Leader: The **good news** of salvation in Christ is acknowledged as the root of peace in the hearts of the redeemed.

All: *“The message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.”* (Acts 10:36)

Drama: Prince of Peace

Responsive Scripture continued:

Leader: Though Judaism separated Jews and Gentiles, Christ has not only reconciled God and man, He has reconciled Jew and Gentile so that we are now **one body** in Christ.

All: *“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.”* (Ephesians 2:14)

Leader: What is the importance of the name “Prince of Peace” to the believer today? Those who trust Christ as their Mediator and Savior are given by God an assurance that flows out of a right relationship with Him. Once we are in Christ, the Prince of Peace shows us that He can bring peace wherever He rules. He can bring **peace in life’s trials**.

All: *“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)

Leader: **Peace in life’s maturing process.**

All: *“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

Leader: **Peace in life’s victories.**

All: *“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”* (Romans 16:20)

Leader: **Peace in life’s relationships.**

All: *“Keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”* (Ephesians 4:3)

Leader: What a treasure is ours in Isaiah’s predicted Messiah. He is our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. May we give Him worship, as we ponder the great God that He is!
(A Comforting Name: “Prince of Peace” from *“Our Daily Bread,” Christmas Edition, 2007*)

SB#111 – It came upon the midnight clear	TB-133 – same	HTD9-T7
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#118 – O little town of Bethlehem	TB-136 – same	HTD3-T5 (3 vs.) Bethlehem
SB#124 – Silent night! Holy night!	TB-842 – Stille Nacht	HTD4-T15 (3 vs.)
SB#132 – While shepherds watched their flocks by night	TB-125 – Winchester Old TB-123 – same	HTD11- 15 (4 vs.)
HC#169 – Hallelujah	HC-169	HCD15-T19
HC#176 – Holy is the Lord	HC-176	HCD16-T16
HC#186 – When I look into your holiness	HC-186	HCD17-T16
HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah	HC-187	HCD17-T17
HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty	HC-219	HCD20-T19
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20
HC#226 – I Worship You	HC-226	HCD21-T16

HC#176 – Holy is the Lord	HC-176	HCD16-T16
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Prayer:

Jesus, my life was in chaos until you entered it. Thank you for the forgiveness that brought me peace. Deepen my sense of your presence by keeping me close to you. Teach me to become a peacemaker—loving justice, doing right, and leading others along the path of peace.

(Praying the Names of Jesus, page 108)

Message – Our Prince of Peace

HC#120 – In the Manger	HC-120	HCD10-T20
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#169 - Hallelujah	HC-169	HCD15-T19
SB#86 – O little town of Bethlehem	TB-156 – same	HTD3-T5 (3 vs.)

Benediction:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

(Philippians 4:4-7)

HC#180 – Starry Night	HC-180	HCD16-T20
Vocal Benediction Options		
HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful	HC-140	HCD12-T20
SB#106 – Go, tell it on the mountain,	TB-631 – same	HTD11-T4 (2 vs., start with chorus)
HC260 – Go, tell it on the mountain	HC-260	HCD24-T20

Week # 4	
DRAMA	
Prince of Peace	
By Martyn Scott Thomas	
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Topic:	God, Peace
Scripture:	Mark 4:35-41
Synopsis:	A disciple recounts his version of Jesus calming the storm at sea.
Characters:	Peter – one of Jesus’ disciples.
Props/Costumes:	Modern or Biblical dress. A life jacket.
Setting:	Bare stage. Actor may want to wet his hair and clothes to portray someone who has been soaked.
Running Time:	3 minutes.

Peter: You’re probably wondering about this life jacket. You see, there was a time when I thought I needed it. In fact I would’ve sold my mother to get one. But, when you think your boat is going to sink, you have all sorts of desperate thoughts.

Now, I’ve been around the sea most of my life. At times, I’ve even made my living along the seashore and on the water. I definitely have sea legs. And I’ve been through plenty of storms before. The worst ones are the ones that sneak up without warning. One moment you’re sailing on a calm sea with a nice gentle breeze. Then the breeze picks up, the waves grow larger and the sky turns black. And once the rain starts, it’s too late to do anything except tie yourself down and hope you can ride it out.

Well, we hit one of those storms. Better yet, one of those storms hit us – out of the blue. We were totally unprepared and helpless. The waves were higher than any I’d ever seen. The winds were so fierce, they ripped right through us. Water poured over the sides of our little boat faster than we could bail it out. And wouldn’t you know it, not one life jacket on board. So, we tied ourselves down and hoped that somehow we’d survive.

Funny, it all came on us so fast that we’d forgotten about Jesus. He was still pretty new at this sailing stuff. He must be scared out of his mind. In a panic, we looked around and saw no sign of him. Surely, he had already been thrown overboard. But then we heard snoring. I’m not sure how we heard it over the wind, but it definitely was snoring. There in the stern of the boat, in the middle of the wind and rain and waves, Jesus was sleeping; soundly.

We fixed that right away. “Teacher, don’t you care that we’re drowning?” Okay, so maybe the question wasn’t asked so calmly. But, we did get his attention. And then he got ours.

“Peace, be still.” Was he talking to the wind and the waves or was he talking to us? “Peace, be still.”

Not even a shout or an urgent prayer to his Father. “Peace, be still.” And the wind and the waves and the rain stopped. Immediately.

Who is this man, we thought? Even the wind and the rain listen to his voice. We had a lot to learn. And he had a lot to teach. That day, Jesus brought peace to a troubled sea. Ever since then he has been bringing peace to troubled lives.

This life jacket? I don’t think I’ll need it anymore. Not as long as I keep my eyes on Jesus. I mean, it’s not like he’s going to ask me to walk on the water anytime soon, right?

[Blackout]

NAMES OF JESUS
Advent Sermon – Week 4
December 21, 2008

Our Prince of Peace
by Tom Shepard

Text: Isaiah 9:6

A few weeks ago we started a series of sermons based on Isaiah chapter nine, verse six. Let's go ahead and read our focal passage at this time.

*"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**" (Isaiah 9:6, NIV).*

This prophecy tells us that a child will be born. The child will be unique—the child will be special. The child will be the one we know as Jesus. According to Isaiah chapter nine, he will be called:

Wonderful Counselor
Mighty God
Everlasting Father
The Prince of Peace

Today we will look at Jesus as being our "Prince of Peace."

We live in a world where there seems to be very little peace, don't we? I remember growing up hearing stories and watching movies about World War II. My father and uncles would tell tall tales about serving in the military. Even then, the "Cold War" was raging and we talked about our communist enemies and the threat of nuclear warfare. One of my teachers was a Korean War veteran. In my teen years, Vietnam took the center stage. The draft came to an end in my senior year of high school. After Vietnam, other smaller conflicts came and went. In 1991 we sent our troops to the Middle East to conduct an operation known as "Desert Storm." I deployed as a chaplain for that operation. Other countries of the world would call it the Persian Gulf War. On September 11, 2001, our country was attacked by terrorists. Today we are involved in a conflict known as, "The War on Terrorism." We currently have our military stationed throughout the world but most notably in Iraq and Afghanistan. War and conflict seem to be the natural course of this world. Even Jesus said:

"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matthew 24:6-7, NKJV).

Can you imagine what it would be like to live in a world without war, fighting,

arguments, or disputes of any kind? None of us can really fathom what a world like that would be. Why? Because we have never experienced it or even anything close to it! People throughout the centuries have talked about peace, but few—if any—have ever had an actual plan to bring peace to the world. But God has a plan. God has sent us a Prince of Peace.

Here in America the term peace has been clearly connected with the absence of war. If there is no war, there is peace. However, the word that is used in the Old Testament for peace is “shalom,” and it means so much more than the absence of conflict. Shalom is used to describe the end of hostilities, but the word itself also pictures health and wholeness. It denotes harmony and completeness. To have shalom is to have not only a quiet life, but also to have a fulfilled life in every way.

When you have shalom there is no feeling of harm or hurt. When you have shalom you are in a state of ease and safety. There is no fear whatsoever. There is no worry. There is a sense of harmony and oneness. You know your purpose and you have a sense of wholeness and completeness. Everything is exactly the way it should be. Nothing is out of order. Your inner world as well as the outer world is in harmony. This is shalom; this is the peace that Jesus brings, for He is our Prince of Peace.

Today let’s look at two basic areas that Jesus brings peace into our lives. The first is:

I. Jesus brings peace between me and GOD.

Someone has said, “It is not possible to have the Peace *of* God without Peace *with* God.”

It all starts right here. Each of us, because of the sin in our lives, has a problem with God. Our sin has separated us from God. When we sin, we do things he does not like. He wants us to follow his rules. He wants us to do the things he has asked us to do, and when we disobey, we create a barrier between us and him.

The Bible says that we deserve punishment for our sin. In the Bible we are told that “[God] does not leave the guilty unpunished” (Exodus 34:7). In fact, the Bible often refers to us in our lost and sinful condition as the “enemies of God” (Romans 5:10). Our sin separates us from God. Before we can have peace with God, something must be done about the sin in our lives.

Guess what – something has been done!

God sent a Prince of Peace to deal with the situation. He sent a Prince of Peace to fix the problem. He sent a Prince of Peace to give us peace with God. How did he do that? Look at Romans chapter six with me:

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23, NIV).

Go ahead and circle the word “wages” in your Bible. The word “wages” means that which you have earned. When you work on a job you earn wages. It’s your pay. It’s what you deserve. The same is true about sin. When you sin, you deserve death. That is what you have earned. That is what you deserve.

Now go ahead and circle the word “but.” “But” is the biggest word in the English language. “*But* the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” We deserved death. We earned punishment. “But” God did something about it. “But” God fixed the situation. He sent our Prince of Peace to take our punishment. Somebody had to do something about it, and God did.

Here is a fact: God does not IGNORE sin. He never has and he never will.

“The wages of sin is death.” Sin must be paid for. Sin must be punished. That’s what the cross of Christ is all about. Jesus went to the cross to take our punishment. Jesus went to the cross to take our place. He paid for our sin. He received the wages that we were due. He took the punishment that we deserved.

In the Old Testament, men made sacrifice after sacrifice, hoping to pay for their sin. They hoped to somehow fix the broken relationship that they had with God. You see, sin had to be paid for. God does not ignore sin. Sin must be punished. But God had a solution. He sent a Prince of Peace to die for our sins because the wages of sin is death. Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice for our sin. Look at what it says in Hebrews, chapter nine:

“He sacrificed himself once and for all, summing up all the other sacrifices in this sacrifice of himself, the final solution of sin” (Hebrews 9:26, MSG).

He sacrificed himself for our sin problem. We can now have peace with God because of what Jesus has done for us. Jesus is God’s gift to us. We were at war with God because of our sin. But Jesus—our Prince of Peace—gives us peace with God. He fixed the problem. He took the wages of sin to the cross so that we can have peace with God. But that’s not all.

II. Jesus brings peace within MYSELF.

Look at this verse from Matthew chapter six with me:

“Look at the birds of the sky: they don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they?” (Matthew 6:26, HCSB).

How much are you worth? What is your value? Jesus tells us that we are worth *more* than the birds of the air. Later in Matthew, Jesus says:

“But even the hairs of your head have all been counted. Don’t be afraid therefore; you are worth more than many sparrows” (Matthew 10:30-31, HCSB).

Folks, the point is that God sees you as valuable. Here is a fact that many of us have heard: God don’t make no junk!

Now I know you English students in the congregation are cringing in your seats because this is improper English, but the statement is true. God doesn’t make any junk. That which God touches is holy and pure. He takes that which is bent and straightens it out. He takes that which is dirty and cleans it up. He takes that which is broken and fixes it. If you are a believer in Christ—if you have accepted Christ as your personal Savior—God looks on you as if you are holy and pure. Look at what it says in 1 Peter, chapter two:

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:9-10, NIV).

If you need to change your self image, or if you need to build up your self esteem, read this passage daily. In Christ you are a chosen race, you are a holy nation, you are a royal priesthood, and you are a people for his possession. That is how valuable God sees you.

Our Prince of Peace has come so that we can have peace within ourselves, so your self-image can be changed, and so you can see that you have value in God’s kingdom.

Robert Reed understands this. He has said, “I have everything I need for joy! Amazing!”

Most of you have probably never heard of Robert Reed. He’s not some movie star or some great athlete. He graduated from Abilene Christian University in Texas with a degree in Latin. He taught at a junior college in St. Louis and even ventured overseas on five mission trips before moving to Lisbon, Portugal, as a missionary in 1972. He rented a hotel room and began studying Portuguese. He found a restaurant owner who would feed him—because he could not feed himself.

You see, Robert’s hands are twisted and his feet are useless. He can’t bathe himself. He can’t brush his own teeth. He can’t put on his own underwear. His shirts are held together by strips of Velcro. His speech drags like a worn out audio cassette. He can’t drive a car. He can’t ride a bike. He can’t even go for walk. Robert has cerebral palsy. But that did not keep him from becoming a missionary to Portugal.

Robert would go daily to the park. He would station himself there, and with his twisted hands he would pass out brochures about Jesus. Within six years he helped 70 people find the Lord—one of which who became his wife, Rosa.

Robert could have been bitter because of his disease, but he wasn't. Robert could have asked for pity, but he didn't. Robert could have a really bad self-image, but he doesn't. Robert has just the opposite. He holds his bent and twisted hands in the air and yells, "I have everything I need for joy! Amazing!" Robert can do that because he knows that he has value in God's kingdom. Robert can do that because he has met the Prince of Peace—Jesus Christ.*

"But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted" (1 Peter 2:9, MSG).

We have a Prince of Peace, and his name is Jesus Christ. He has come to give us peace with God and he comes to give us peace within ourselves. How about you? Have you ever asked him to come into your heart—into your life—so that he can give you peace?

*"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**" (Isaiah 9:6, NIV).*

*Story of Robert Reed adopted from Brain Harrell

NAMES OF JESUS
Immanuel
Advent Worship Series – Week 5
December 28, 2008

WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES

Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

Announcements and Offering

“...and His Name shall be called...Immanuel”

Call to Worship:

The babe of Bethlehem. Immanuel. Remember the promise of the angel? “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’” (Matthew 1:23)

For thousands of years, God gave us his voice. Prior to Bethlehem, he gave his messengers, his teachers, his words. But in the manger, God gave us himself. In God’s great gospel, he not only sends, he becomes; he not only looks down, he lives among; he not only talks to us, he lives with us as one of us.

He swims in Mary’s womb.
Wiggles in the itchy manger straw.
Totters as he learns to walk.
Bounces on the back of a donkey.

God with us.

He knows hurt. His siblings called him crazy.
He knows hunger. He made a meal out of wheat-field grains.
He knows exhaustion. So sleepy, he dozed in a storm-tossed boat.
He knows betrayal. He gave Judas three years of love. Judas, in turn, gave Jesus a betrayer’s kiss.
Most of all, he knows sin. Not his own, but he knows yours.
Every lie you’ve told.
Person you’ve hurt.
Dollar you’ve taken.
Promise you’ve broken.
Virtue you’ve abandoned.

Opportunity you've squandered.

Every deed you've committed against God—for all sin is against God—Jesus knows. He knows them better than you do. He knows their price. Because he paid it.

(*Cure for the Common Life*, pages 65-69)

HC#161 – My Great Redeemer's Praise	HC-161	HCD15-T11
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#141 – All Hail the Power	HC-141	HCD13-T11
HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus	HC-151	HCD14-T11
HC#121 – Joyful, Joyful	HC-121	HCD11-T11
HC#141 – All Hail the Power	HC-141	HCD13-T11
HC#241 – Crown him with many crowns	HC-241	HCD23-T11

HC#82 – Jesus, Name Above All Names	HC-82	HCD7-T12
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Prayer

Immanuel, you are with me. You became a person and took on flesh. You became a Savior and took on my sin. I accept your gift. I receive you as my Lord, Savior, and friend. Because of you, I'll never be alone again. Amen.

Hallowed Be Thy Name

Responsive Scripture *or* Promises in Scripture:

Leader: Immanuel. God *with* us. Prophets weren't enough. Apostles wouldn't do. Angels won't suffice. God sent more than miracles and messages. He sent himself; he sent his Son. "I am with you always," Jesus said before he ascended to heaven, "to the very end of the age." Search for restrictions on the promise; you'll find none. You won't find "I'll be with you if you behave...or when you believe. I'll just be with you on Sundays in worship..." No, none of that. There's no withholding tax on God's promise. He is *with* us.

All: "*The Word became flesh* and dwelt among us." (John 1:14)

Leader: What does it mean to say that God is with us? Surely it doesn't mean our lives will be easy. It doesn't mean we will be insulated from failure or doubt or that God will take our side in every argument. But it does mean we will never face even a single struggle alone. Here are some promises in scripture:

All: “But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’ And God said, ***‘I will be with you.’***” (Exodus 3:11-12)

Leader: ***“I will never leave you nor forsake you...Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”*** (Joshua 1:5, 9)

All: “When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
And when you pass through the rivers,
They will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
You will not be burned;
The flames will not set you ablaze.
For I am the Lord, your God,
The Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” (Isaiah 43:2-3)

Leader: ***“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*** (Matthew 28:20)

HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus	HC-151	HCD14-T11
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#149 – In Christ Alone	HC-149	HCD13-T19
HC#61 – Crown Him King of Kings	HC-61	HCD5-T11
HC#241 – Crown him with many crowns	HC-241	HCD23-T11

Testimonies – “God is with me....”

Drama: For Your Convenience

Message – Immanuel

HC#139 – There is a Message	HC-139	HCD12-T19
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#123 – Shine on Us	HC-123	HCD11-T13
HC#110 – He is Here	HC-110	HCD9-T20
HC#179 – Come to Jesus	HC-179	HCD16-T19
HC#186 – When I look into your holiness	HC-186	HCD17-T16
HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty	HC-219	HCD20-T19
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20
HC#226 – I Worship You	HC-226	HCD21-T16

Benediction:

Lord Jesus, we come with praise and thanksgiving for the marvel and miracle of your birth we celebrate this season. Come once again to us this hour that we may rejoice because you have been born in our hearts. We pray that in all our labors, in all our relationships, in all of our life, you will live and love through us, in all our seasons of life, as our Savior and Lord. In your name, we pray. Amen.

(Colonel Henry Gariepy)

HC#180 – Starry Night	HC-180	HCD16-T20
Vocal Benediction Options		
HC#149 – In Christ Alone	HC-149	HCD13-T19
HC#128 – My Tribute	HC-128	HCD11-T18

Week # 5	
DRAMA	
For Your Convenience	
By Martyn Scott Thomas	
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Topic:	God, Humanity
Scripture:	Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-23
Synopsis:	A convenience store manager gets a surprise visitor.
Characters:	Kevin – the night manager of a convenience store. Josh – the boss’s son.
Props/Costumes:	A polo shirt and khaki pants for Kevin with an optional name tag. Casual dress for Josh. A broom and dust pan for Kevin. A table with a cash register or laptop computer can be used to simulate the check out area of a convenience store. A stack of paper cups could be used at the “back of the store” to represent a Slushee machine.
Setting:	The front register of a convenience store.
Running Time:	3 minutes.

[Kevin is tidying up his store late at night when Josh enters.]

Kevin: Welcome to J. C.’s Mini-mart, we’re always open.

Josh: Good thing for me. Where else could I get a Slushee at 3:00 a.m.?

Kevin: We’re the only place in this neighborhood.

Josh: [walks to “back of store” to get a Slushee] It must get pretty lonely working the overnight shift.

Kevin: It’s not too bad. I kind of enjoy the peace and quiet. And you get to meet some pretty interesting people.

Josh: [walks to register with Slushee] I hope I fit into that category.

Kevin: I can’t tell yet, but last night I got this guy in here wearing a chicken costume. He even tried to pay with eggs.

Josh: I take that back. I definitely don’t want to be in his category.

Kevin: Then, I hope you have cash to pay for that Slushee.

Josh: [pulls some money out of his wallet and hands to Kevin] There you go. [pointing to back of bill] “In God We Trust.”

Kevin: *[takes money from Josh and examines it]* Looks good to me. By the way, I'm Kevin. *[offers hand]*

Josh: *[shaking Kevin's hand]* Josh. It's nice to meet you. *[occasionally sips from his drink]* So how do you fill your nights around here?

Kevin: There's usually not a lot to do, but there's enough to keep me occupied – mostly cleaning up the place. It's a lot easier to do it now rather than during the day when it's busy.

Josh: *[looking around the store]* Well, the store looks pretty clean to me.

Kevin: Thanks. I've worked especially hard tonight.

Josh: *[joking]* Got a surprise inspection coming?

Kevin: Actually, yeah. One of the guys on days tipped me off that the Boss's son was stopping by tonight. I hear he likes to check out each of his stores and see how they're really doing.

Josh: Well, I'm sure he'll be impressed with this one.

Kevin: I hope so. Do you really think everything looks good? It's always nice to have an unbiased opinion.

Josh: *[pointing to the back of the store]* Other than that huge pile of dust in the back of the store . . .

Kevin: *[grabbing his broom and dust pan]* Oh my gosh, I forgot all about that. I was back there before and then you came in and I forgot all about it.

Josh: Don't worry about it. It's really no big deal.

Kevin: To you, maybe, but to the Boss's son – who knows? He's probably a Daddy's boy who's never worked an honest day in his life.

Josh: *[with authority]* Trust me. I speak for my Father. It's no big deal.

Kevin: I'm sure your dad's a real nice guy, but it's not like he owns this store. I mean, that would make you . . . *[realizing what he's saying and who's standing in front of him]* Josh – short for Joshua, Joshua Carpenter, Jack Carpenter's son, owner of J. C.'s Mini-mart. I am so fired.

Josh: Relax, Kevin. I'm here to help.

Kevin: [*defensive*] What? You're from the government, too?

Josh: I know this is hard for you to believe, but my Father sent me here to help you.

Kevin: Why would he do that? You're just here to spy on us and catch employees goofing off.

Josh: My Father wants to make sure that every J. C.'s Mini-mart is an accurate reflection of him and his values. So he sent me to work directly with the employees.

Kevin: [*disbelieving*] And catch them goofing off.

Josh: My job isn't to fire bad employees, it's to make bad employees good.

Kevin: I've never heard of anyone running a business like this before.

Josh: My Father isn't like anyone else.

Kevin: I'm beginning to sense that. But why the secrecy of your visits?

Josh: It's really not a secret. He sent an e-mail out last month outlining the plan.

Kevin: [*remembering*] Oh yeah, Project 3-16, or something like that. I do remember reading that, but I thought it was just some corporate-only thing.

Josh: My Dad's plan is for everyone, so he sent me to make sure everyone knows. And I'll need your help, Kevin.

Kevin: [*unsure*] What can I do? I'm working midnights.

Josh: Keep doing what you're doing – keep the store clean, be friendly and let all your customers know about my Father.

Kevin: Customers? I thought his plan was for his employees?

Josh: I told you, my Father's plan is for everyone.

Kevin: [*confused*] But, how . . .

Josh:

Let me tell you. [*picks up the broom and heads to the back of the store*] But first, grab the dust pan and let's get this place cleaned up.

[*Blackout*]

NAMES OF JESUS
Advent Sermon – Week 5
December 28, 2008

Immanuel
by Jim Black

Text: Matthew 1:18-23

There are many names given to Jesus in the Bible. Each one gives us a fuller and clearer picture of who he is and what he means for us. As we have been unpacking the various names of Jesus throughout Advent, we've been asking ourselves, "Who *is* this man that we have put our hope in?"

The very name Jesus means "God saves!" He is God's promise to deliver us! He is Messiah, the Christ, "the anointed one," our King, and we are his subjects! We have looked at Jesus as our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace, as written by Isaiah so many years ago. This morning, I want us to look at another name of Jesus found in the text read a moment ago: Immanuel.

Any time is a great time to look at the person of Jesus, but it seems especially appropriate this time of year as millions the world over pause to think about the Christ. And yet I wonder, amidst all the "pomp and circumstance" of the season, how many truly understand the importance of the story? We put on those old records of Bing Crosby singing "O Holy Night," or Perry Como's "Away in a Manger," and our mind's eye is filled with the image of the baby Jesus nestled in the manger in that stable in Bethlehem. The shepherds are there adoring the newborn king, and "no crying he makes." But do we really grasp the significance of that event?

In the text, we have Matthew's beautiful account of how the angel of the Lord prepared Joseph and Mary for what was about to take place. Even though we've read this text year after year, I selected it this morning because of the significance Matthew sees in the story.

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel'—which means, 'God with us.'" (Matthew 1:22-23)

Do we understand the significance of that? Jesus is "God with us." He is God-in-the-flesh!

A couple of years ago there was a popular song out by Joan Osborne that caused a good deal of stir. The lyrics posed the question: "What if God were one of us?" Okay, while I don't make a habit of listening to Joan Osborne, her question isn't a bad one, and the good news is: It has been answered!

God became one of us! In the person of Jesus Christ, God Almighty left the throne of heaven, wrapped himself up in human flesh and became a man! And he did it in the most unflattering of circumstances. He was born as an infant—a completely dependent child—to a young woman who was pledged to be married to a common carpenter (certainly no royalty); and on that first night, he was placed in an animal’s feeding trough because there was no room for them in the inn. How much more humble of circumstances could God have entered into our world? But that’s what he did, and that’s what is implicit in the name Immanuel.

To understand what Matthew intended by using the name, we’ve got to go back to the Old Testament book of Isaiah to see the original prophecy in its context. The word Matthew interpreted to mean “God with us” appears three times in two Old Testament passages, both in Isaiah. Both are set in the context of God’s promised deliverance of the Kingdom of Judah at a time of great national peril. The Northern Kingdom (Israel) was in league with Syria to capture Judah (Southern Kingdom). Judah’s king at the time was Ahaz, and he was frightened about his prospects against the mighty Northern Kingdom. He was a wicked king, and he knew that he was in no position to claim God’s presence or power for deliverance. Nevertheless, Isaiah was sent by God and gave assurance that God would deliver the people, not for Ahaz’s sake, but for the sake of the Lord’s own faithfulness to his people. So, when Isaiah was sent to Ahaz, God offered the king a “sign” that the message was authentic, in Isaiah 7:13-14:

Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

In the very next chapter, the name Immanuel occurs twice more. Although the Southern Kingdom would be spared at the hands of the Syria-Israel coalition, it was foretold that Immanuel’s land, Judah, would nevertheless one day be conquered by Assyria (Isaiah 8:8). Then, only two verses later, the name is repeated as an assurance that even so mighty a power as Assyria would not thwart God’s sovereign purposes for Judah. So, the enemies of God were told,

"Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us [Immanuel]." (Isaiah 8:10)

So why does Matthew use this Old Testament prophecy to describe Jesus? It’s because he wants us to know that **Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promise to always be with his people!** Matthew is saying that this child, who is to be named Jesus, is the ultimate fulfillment of that prophecy. Mary is the virgin who will be with child, and the child himself is “God with us.” That was the promise given in Isaiah’s words to King Ahaz, and it has been his promise to his people throughout the Scriptures.

A. Do you remember God’s promise to Moses (Exodus 3:12)? In many ways, Moses

was an unlikely candidate as “Deliverer of God’s people.” Even though he grew up in the household of Pharaoh, he was banished from the kingdom after murdering an Egyptian slave master. After that, he worked as a shepherd for his father-in-law. Not until the age of 80 did God call Moses to: “Go back to Egypt and free my people!” But at first, Moses didn’t want to go! In fact, he offered up excuses why he couldn’t go. Listen to Moses trying to get out of it:

“Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’ And God said, ‘I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.’” (Exodus 3:11-12)

Moses was afraid, and God answered his fears saying, “I will be with you!” And God was. When Moses faced Pharaoh, he could do so with confidence. God enabled him to perform a number of miracles. And when Pharaoh refused Moses, God brought upon a series of plagues. When Pharaoh finally relented and the people found themselves free, but had to wander around the desert, God was still with them. He led them with a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. He even sustained them with manna from Heaven! In fact, God never left them. He is true to his promises!

B. Do you remember God’s promise to Joshua (Joshua 1:5)? When Joshua replaced Moses as Israel’s leader, he had his work cut out for him. Moses was a great and charismatic leader. The people saw miraculous wonders under Moses’ leadership. They were freed from 400 years of bondage; they miraculously escaped Pharaoh’s army; they saw the law delivered unto them. The Promised Land lay before them, but it wasn’t going to be handed to them on a silver platter. There was much work to be done in its conquest. Would the Lord do through Joshua the same mighty things he did through Moses? This is what God said to Joshua:

“No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.” (Joshua 1:5-6)

His word to Joshua was “Be strong and courageous because I will always be with you!” How reassuring that must have been for a young Joshua!

C. Do you remember Jesus’ promise to his disciples (Matthew 28:16-20)? What a roller-coaster ride they had been through! They saw their Lord crucified. They saw his body placed on the slab in the tomb. They wept for him. Some had scattered and some denied him. One who turned on him subsequently took his own life. But then they witnessed the most remarkable thing any of them would *ever* see—Jesus risen! First the tomb was found empty, then they realized why as the risen Jesus appeared to them. Not just once or twice, but on a number of occasions over a period of several days. There was no doubt! Then, on that last occasion just before Jesus was taken up into heaven, he gave them a set of last instructions:

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” And one last promise: “And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

The disciples became the Apostles. They faced continued persecution as the teachings about Christ were indeed spread all over the world. Each of them ultimately faced death just like their Teacher had, but with the reassuring promise that each of them carried to their graves, “I will be with you always!”

And that’s the promise of Immanuel to us even today! He is with us! True, he is no longer with us in the flesh as he was ‘with’ his disciples. But, he is ‘with us’ in an even more special way today—through his Spirit! His promise to us in John 14:16-18:

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”

God/ Jesus/Immanuel continues to be ‘with us’ through the precious Holy Spirit; the counselor, advocate, and comforter. He has come and now lives with us and in us! And God’s promise remains: He will be with us forever! He will never leave us nor forsake us!

And so, Immanuel is God’s promise to always be with you—in the tough times and trials of life. I know that these are tough times for many of us, from job losses and financial difficulties to family turmoil and marital problems. We live in a harsh world and the reality is that trouble and tough times hit us all.

David knew what it was like to face tough times, and he knew what it was like to seek solace in the comforting arms of God. Some of his psalms reflect his awareness of the presence of God in his life:

“The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.” (Psalms 9:9-10)

“For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter.” (Psalms 27:5)

Immanuel is God’s promise that you are safe in his dwelling/abiding place. He is with you, when everyone around us seems to have gone.

The holidays have been tough for many, possibly celebrating them for the first time without a loved one. You know the pain of separation, be it from death or distance. Is

there someone in your life you miss very much? A child? A parent? Grandparent? A spouse? Maybe you're dealing with the pain of a separation or divorce, and the holidays have been difficult days for you? God is with you in these moments. Immanuel is God's promise that you don't have to be alone in the "ordinary" moments of life. The fact that we feel his presence more at certain times doesn't mean that he isn't with us at other times.

No, he is with us always! When you're driving to work in the mornings, he is there. When you're dropping the kids off at school, he is there. When you're 'vegging out' in front of the TV, he is there. When you and your spouse are in the middle of an argument, he is there. God is with us in the ordinary moments of life because he is *with* us and *within* us! We don't have to face anything in life without him.

Each of us has failed to be 'with him.' None of us are perfect. We all know that we have failed him and the Bible confirms it, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." But that's why he came in the flesh in the first place! If we had been able to be perfect and get to heaven on our own, there would have been no reason for God to become Immanuel! We aren't perfect, but He is. We can take confidence in the fact that God is with us!

The story of Joseph, Mary, Bethlehem and the baby Jesus is the story of God choosing to come and live with us. Eugene Peterson, in his paraphrase of John 1:14, put it this way: "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood." While that might be quite an understatement, that's what God did. He chose to move in next door, into our run-down, beat-up, world-weary neighborhood.

The gospel is the story of God, loving us so much that he became one of us. He came to live among us so that we might one day live with him!

Do you know that hope this morning? Does God live within you? As we look forward to a new year, we can know the hope and assurance that Immanuel offers!

Do you need to make a commitment to Christ this morning? Do you need him to live within you?

Do you need help in putting your trust more fully in Immanuel, God with us?

(Resource: Shelly, Rubel "The Names of Jesus" West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing, 1999.)