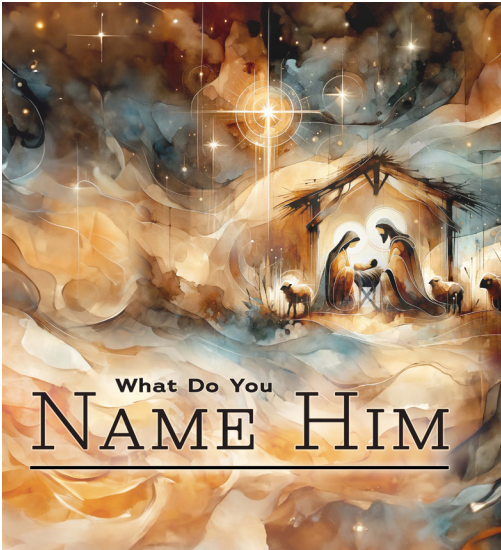


What Do You
NAME HIM

Sermon Growth Guide

December 8, 2024

Mighty God



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What Do You Name Him - Might God

Isaiah 9: 1-7

Key Verse: Isaiah 9:6

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Big Idea: Jesus himself is the mighty God and only he can save us. Only he can show us who the Father is.

Foundations

It is hard to read our key verse without singing it, or at least hearing it sung in the soaring music of Handel’s Messiah. But our text for today is more than glorious music, it is, and it was salve for a sin-sick people.

The context of Isaiah’s words is one of impending doom because of the failure of a king, Ahaz, to trust God for the security of Jerusalem. Israel, the northern kingdom had already been dragged off into exile. Now Judah was being threatened by the Assyrians. King Ahaz had negotiated a settlement with this enemy, against the word of Isaiah who had warned him to trust God rather than human rulers.

Assyria drained Judah. It was given the holy objects of gold and silver from the Temple and was now an oppressor instead of a political ally. The king’s failure to trust in God rather than humans led to disaster. Darkness and gloom were on the horizon.

This was the darkness of God’s judgment. But God’s judgment was a sign of God’s love. In holding his people to account for their sin, rebellion and idolatry, God was revealing the truth about their lives to them. They needed to know what was true before they could receive the remedy – salvation in God alone. Salvation from Immanuel, the God who is with us.

Understanding God’s Word

Read together Isaiah 8:21-22. Here Isaiah describes the condition of those who do not turn towards God...those who seek solutions only from the natural world. It is a description of blinding and inescapable darkness. Then we read the very first word of our text for today: Nevertheless...in the New Revised Standard Version it reads: But...Reflect on this: What does the word “nevertheless” tell you about the character and will of God?

Applying God’s Word

Scott Peck in *The Road Less Travelled* said that most people want to know the source of their problems but are unwilling to face the truth of what needs to be done to make them well. How does the darkness of our lives help us think about a savior and how salvation is found? How can knowing Jesus as Mighty God help you in dark and distressing times?

Witnessing God’s Word

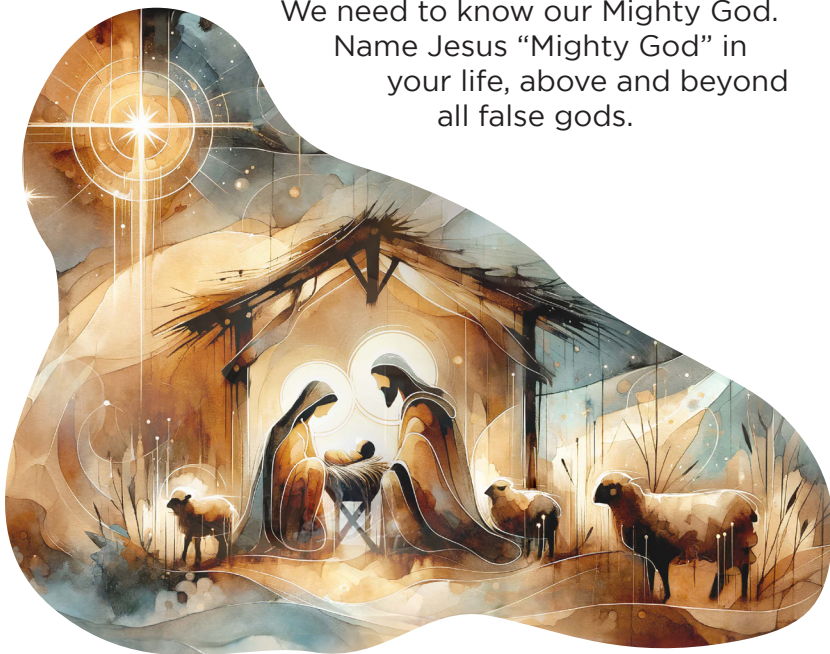
When Jesus saves us, that is not the end of his work in our lives. It is the beginning. Now we are called to reflect the light of Jesus into the darkness that haunts the world so that others may see the glory of the Lord and seek to walk in his light.

I am not sure we have ever made it through December without reading this passage, but this year we are really camping out on it. What Do You Name Him is about naming Jesus. There are so many different things to call Him. Isaiah lists four here: "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) Last week Pastor Greg taught about Jesus our Wonderful Counselor. He sees our blind spots (and bald spots); He empathizes with our weakness and He jumps in with us to lead us out of our holes and pits. Today we look at the second one: Mighty God. Jesus is Mighty God. Jesus is the Lord God Almighty. Does that stretch your mind a little? The infant is named "Jesus." It means "God saves." But only God can save. To name Jesus "Mighty God" is to recognize that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, who is Himself God Almighty, worthy of praise. This is the mystery of the incarnation. God Himself has come down. God Himself is the Shepherd who comes to gather the sheep. God Himself, the Creator, enters His creation to save and redeem. If you want to know God, look at the face of this infant in the manger. Mary and Joseph were tasked with naming Jesus. Don't you wonder if there was a just a moment when they debated it? "Joseph is a family name. I've always like the name Ted or Marty. Those weird dreams were months ago...I'm sure they don't still apply. This is our kid; we get to name it!" They named the child Jesus, in a step of obedience and faith. What do you name Jesus?

Today, with Isaiah, we name Jesus "Mighty God." We need a Mighty God today.

We need to know our Mighty God.

Name Jesus "Mighty God" in your life, above and beyond all false gods.



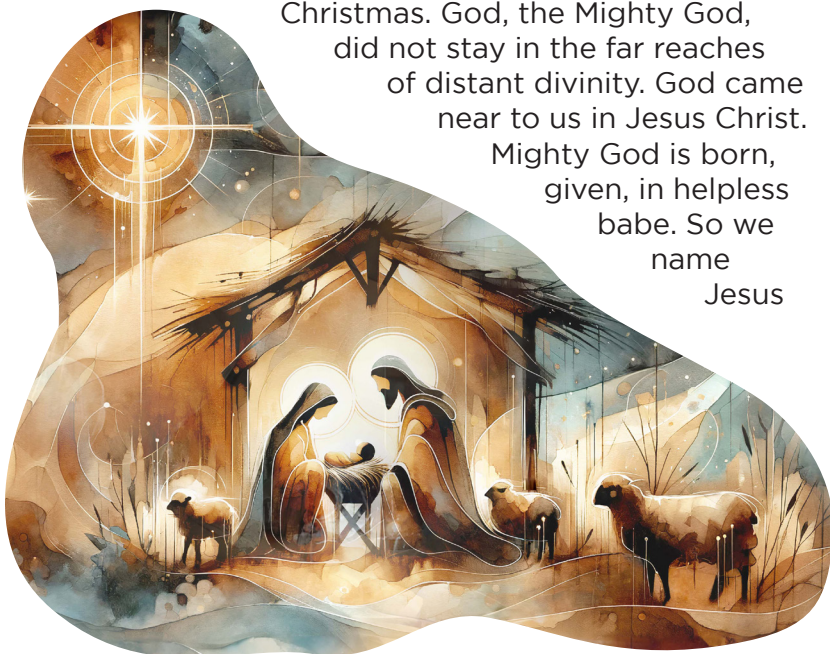
This famous passage starts with the word "nevertheless." "Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress." (Isaiah 9:1) And Galilee will find honor. Did you catch that? "Nevertheless" sends you back into the last chapter. What was happening? Basically, Isaiah described how bad it goes when people don't follow God but reject God's Word and turn away from God's light. They fear everything in the world, but don't fear God. "Do not call conspiracy everything this people calls a conspiracy; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread." (Isaiah 8:12-13) Remember, fear God and dread naught. Disobedience leads to fear, leads to running around in spiritual darkness, leads to grasping at straws, and lies and whispers and rumors and spiritualists. "Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness." (Isaiah 8:21-22) I want you to remember that image later, please. That describes some people you know. Distressed and hungry they roam.

That leads to our passage today. Nevertheless, no more gloom! Why "nevertheless"? Because what we deserve is more darkness, more gloom, more frustration and pain. But God says, "nevertheless." "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder." (Isaiah 9:2-3) Why is that? Because something has entered

the world in its need. “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) This is good news. Something is in this world that is not of this world. Something is breaking in as sharply as light breaking into darkness; like a new cure, life-saving medicine we had no idea was coming; like a welcome phone call right on time when you didn’t expect it; like a hug from behind by a friend you didn’t know was there. God has a different plan than darkness and gloom. God intervenes. Light has come. This doesn’t happen in a vacuum. The Savior comes because we need a Savior. Wonderful Counselor comes because we need help and counsel; Mighty God comes because we need false gods toppled; Everlasting Father comes because we need to be born again; Prince of Peace comes because this world is a mess of violence. Into the darkness comes the light of life.

But “Mighty God” as a name for Jesus? Right away we see the tension. How can you talk about a child given, a son born, and at the same time call Him “Mighty God”? How can God be “given as a child”? It makes no sense. A Persian church father wrote 1600 years ago: “Therefore tell me, O wise teacher of Israel, who is he that was born and whose name was called Child and Son and also Wonderful and Counselor, the Mighty God of the Ages, and Prince of Peace, to the increase of whose government and to whose peace it is said there will be no

end?” (Aphrahat) Who could you say all those things about? We begin to approach the monumental mystery of this gift we call Christmas. God, the Mighty God, did not stay in the far reaches of distant divinity. God came near to us in Jesus Christ. Mighty God is born, given, in helpless babe. So we name Jesus



“Mighty God” because that’s what He is. Jesus is not a man who knew a lot about God. Jesus is God—the incarnation of God the Father by the power of God the Spirit. Jesus the Son of God is the one true God extended from where He is in eternity and immortality to where we are in time and mortality. God becomes flesh. Even as an infant, helpless, even as an unborn child Jesus is Mighty God.

Part of what it means to name Jesus Mighty God is rooting out any competing gods. We are subject to idolatry, more than we know. Not that we carve idols out of wood and set them up in our homes and kneel down before them regularly, although I do wonder what in the world I’m doing dragging a pine tree into my living room every year! But our minds, as John Calvin said, are factories for idols. An idol is anything we adore higher than Jesus; anything that we put up on the shelf higher than the Lord who is Mighty God. We pick up what Becky Pippert calls “God substitutes.” She writes: “We have been created to love and worship God. We have worshiping natures. Where we run into trouble is when we try to worship something other than God; when we put something else in God’s place. It can be good things or bad things, but God-substitutes will always fail us, because they aren’t big enough to ultimately build our lives upon.” (Becky Pippert, Stay Salt) God-substitutes fail you, always. They also make you blind. They fill up your field of vision. An idol does two things, it obscures your view of God and it obscures your view of your neighbor. As a result you are unable to love either. Name Jesus Mighty God, anything else that competes can be kicked out the door.

Jesus is Mighty God. We have a lot of Generals in this church, did you know that? I just learned of a friend who I

thought was a Colonel at retirement, but he was actually a General. Generals are the ones with the stars. They don't just hand those out for hanging around long enough. I've been reflecting on my time in the military lately and I remember what it was like to be around a General. Generals were scary. They could mess with you. They had the power to really wreck your life, or open doors. I was at the State of the City this year and there was a table of honor at the front with all the commanders of the local military installations in uniform. I leaned over to a buddy who is also a veteran and said, "Man, that's a lot of stars at one table." "Yeah," he said, "too many!" They put a flag out in front of a building with a star on it just to warn you, there is a General in the house! Watch out! And there are two types of reactions. Some people want to be in the room. Where'd the General go? I want to be there, salute, snap too and see what happens. Others hide in the closet! Is the General gone? It is a big deal in the military to gain an audience with a General.

Jesus is Mighty God. Jesus holds the world in His hands. Jesus holds your very life in His care. Here's the thing: church is an audience with Jesus the Mighty God. He is right here, right now. You have an audience with the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Lord God Almighty is our Jesus. How will you respond? And, also, who do you wish was here? This audience is not only for you. We have a mission, to be Light and Life for the City, proclaiming the light of the Gospel and sharing the life of Jesus with

the people of our town. It can start with an invitation to sit with you in the presence of Jesus. Who needs to be here to have an audience with Jesus this year?

Who do you know, who were you thinking about when Isaiah described it, who in your life is in the dark? Distressed and hungry they roam looking for

light, searching for relief. There is a General in the house who can change lives. There is a Mighty God who can push all false gods out. There is a Savior, and you are His ambassador. "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20) It is invite time. Every year I hear another story. "It was Christmas Eve. I heard it again, but something was different. My eyes opened. My heart changed. I knew the Lord." Who will tell that story years from now about Christmas Eve 2024? Who needs to be here with you? Who needs an audience with Jesus the Mighty God?

Name Jesus Mighty God. Until you name Jesus Mighty God, you will not know the wonder and majesty of the gift of Christmas. Until you name Jesus Mighty God you will not push the idols out of your life and honor Him alone; you will be stuck in the chains of false worship. Until you name Jesus Mighty God you will feel no compulsion to change your ways, and bend your knee before Him. But when you do name Jesus Mighty God, you will finally feel the peace of His reign filling your spirit. Lift up His name, Holy One, Mighty God, Jesus, and worship Him.

