

WHAT'S IN A NAME? Isaiah 9:6

Good morning! It's really getting cold and you know that Christmas is just around the corner. For the whole of December, we're starting a new series called "Welcome the Savior". In this series, we're going to look at the many benefits that come to our lives when we welcome Jesus into our hearts. For example, we can have hope, then, joy, and peace as well. And there's a lot more.

Now, Christmas is *supposed* to be the most wonderful time of the year. Yet we know that people struggle more with discouragement and depression during the holidays than at any other time of the year. One survey reported that forty five percent of people in America dread the Christmas season because it's just another reminder of an absent loved one, a lost job, a painful divorce, or unrealized dreams as just one more year passes us by. So, what can we do to get through these holiday blues?

That's what I want to talk to you about this morning. I think you can sum the answer up in one word. It's the word *hope*. Hope is the essential ingredient for an abundant life. The kind of life that Jesus wants for us. It's essential. The Bible says in Proverbs 13:12 that "*Hope deferred makes the heart sick . . .*" We need hope.

Dr. Viktor Frankl, a Jewish-Austrian psychologist was in the Auschwitz prison camp during World War II. After the war, he became interested in what it was that enabled some people to survive the rigors and cruelty of the camp while others did not.

He wrote down his findings in a book called Man's Search for Meaning. Listen to what he says about the power of hope: "The prisoner who had lost faith in the future, his future was doomed. With his loss of belief in the future he also lost his

spiritual hold. He let himself decline and became subject to mental and physical decay.”

You see, hope is a powerful force in the human heart. But it can dissipate so quickly especially during the Christmas season. But, there is hope, no pun intended.

I’m not talking about a feeling of optimism where you’re kind of trying to pump yourself up about the future. I believe that true and lasting hope is available to everyone and is the result of a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

Because Jesus was so much more than a baby born two thousand years ago to a poor family on the outskirts of nowhere. There’s something very different about the Christ child. For starters, as we know, his name is above all names. And his name embodies certain qualities that we need to give us hope. I’ve entitled this message, “What’s in a Name?” In this message I’m going to share with you this morning, I’ll talk about the significance of his name in our lives.

Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, a prophet declared the qualities of a coming Savior. Look at what he said in 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.”*

These four qualities describe the coming Savior who we know to be none other than Jesus Christ. Jesus was the child who was born about 2,000 years ago. Jesus was the Son that was given. And when you put your faith in him, believing these qualities, you’ll have enduring hope. So let’s take a look at them. The 4 qualities of the Savior.

The first quality that Isaiah used to describe the coming Savior is wonderful counselor. Jesus as my counselor reveals God’s love for me. I want you to take note of it.

QUALITY 1: Jesus as my counselor reveals God’s love for me.

He reveals God's love for me and for me and for you.

Jesus has no need for counselors or advisors. Being God, he's omniscient. In fact, the Bible says in him is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. So we know that whatever Jesus says is true.

That phrase "wonderful counselor" could literally be translated "wonder of a counselor." The Hebrew there for "wonder" often refers to the impact that is created by a supernatural act of God. There may be no greater supernatural act of God than when he sent his Son two thousand years ago to be born as a human being to live the perfect life as only he could live and then to go pay the price for sin by dying on the cross. It's the greatest act of love ever demonstrated.

The Bible says in Romans 5:8, *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

Jesus came as the embodiment of God's unconditional love. And he died on the cross to pay the price for your sin and mine and everyone who puts their faith in him.

John 3:16 from the Amplified Bible, Classic Edition says, *"For God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world that He [even] gave up His only begotten ([a]unique) Son, so that whoever believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on) Him shall not perish (come to destruction, be lost) but have eternal (everlasting) life. For God did not send the Son into the world in order to judge (to reject, to condemn, to pass sentence on) the world, but that the world might find salvation and be made safe and sound through Him."*

But Jesus didn't just die so that you and I could get to heaven. Jesus died so we could get to God. Do you realize that the God of the universe wants to be with you?

You know, I was trying to think of a way that I could visualize the enormity of God's love. This is kind of what I came up with.

You see, God's love for you is so enormous and more amazing than the largest stars or planets in our universe. Track with me for a second...okay? This is a **picture of the planets in our solar system**. Just as a comparison look at the size of the earth compared to, say, Jupiter. It's a pretty significant difference. But it's not really to scale because this is how **they look like side by side**.

The next picture, now look at the size of **Jupiter in comparison to our sun**. Pretty dramatic. Then look at the earth. The earth just looks like a little dot. Comparatively you can take a hundred planets the size of the earth and string them across the sun. That's how massive the sun is. It's almost incomprehensible isn't it?

Or you can look at it this way. You can fit 1.3 million earths into our sun. It's almost incomprehensible. But it gets more awesome. Now look at the size of the **sun compared to the size of the star Arcturus**. Look at our sun in comparison to Arcturus. Unbelievable.

Now, look at this. Are you ready? **Look at Arcturus compared to Antares**. It's mind blowing. And there are other stars bigger than Antares.

My point is, God's love is bigger than the biggest star in the universe. It is overwhelming. His love for you is more vast than the more than two trillion galaxies in the universe. His love is so vast it's incomprehensible, it's so awesome.

I just realized something. Usually, we say "I love you to the moon and back." That's so miniscule. It should be like "I love you to the edge of the universe and beyond". That's how real love is, right. It knows no bounds. And that's how God loves you.

So when you believe in the enormity of God's love for you and the intensity of his wanting to be with you, to be your friend, that gives you enduring hope.

The second quality Isaiah uses to describe the coming Savior is Mighty God.

QUALITY 2: Jesus as the mighty God is in control of all things.

Jesus as the mighty God is in control. One of the attributes of God that is most comforting to me is his sovereignty. Just knowing that nothing happens in my life is outside of his knowing or outside of his control is so reassuring. That he's working behind the scenes, even the good, the bad, and the ugly things that happened in my life, he's aware of, that's comforting.

But don't misunderstand me. Jesus doesn't cause the bad and ugly things in life. But he allows them in order to grow our faith and mature our character more and more into the image of Christ. Remember there can be no transformation without tribulation.

The Bible says in James 1:2-4 in the Message translation, *"Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way"*

Peter alludes to the same idea in 1 Peter 1:6-7. *"In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."* You've got to understand who Peter's talking to here. He's talking to Christians that were under the persecution of Nero – some of the most sadistic, intense, cruel persecution that Christians have ever experienced. Peter almost has the audacity to say that there's hope that's

coming. It's not here right now but it's coming. So live your life with one eye on eternity – that's what he's saying.

Friends, don't forget that God accomplishes his purposes through our problems. He has a reason and he is always in control. So, no matter what is happening in your life you can be confident that Jesus as the mighty God is in complete control. He has all authority and all power and is quite literally holding your life together.

The Bible tells us in Colossians 1:17, *"...He (referring to Jesus) is before all things, and in him all things hold together."* Those words there "hold together" means to cohere to be constituted with. In other words, according to the Bible Jesus is literally holding everything together.

John MacArthur in his commentary on Colossians says this: *"Not only did Jesus create the universe; he also sustains it. He maintains the delicate balance necessary to life's existence. He quite literally holds all things together. He is the power behind every consistency in the universe."*

Dr. Douglas Moo in his commentary on Colossians says *"What holds the universe together is not an idea or a virtue, but a person: the resurrected Christ. Without him, electrons would not continue to circle nuclei, gravity would cease to work, the planets would not stay in their orbits."*

Do you really think that if Jesus can hold the entire universe together on a sub-atomic level that your problems are too difficult for him? There is nothing that can happen in your life that is outside the power of Jesus. Surely, God can take care of you.

That's why the Bible tells us in 1 Peter 5:7 to cast some of your anxiety on him. Is that what it says? *"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."*

So many times when the bottom falls out of life or when reality kicks down the door we think that God is mad at us. We think that God is punishing us. We're just confused and we want to know why.

You could be given a dissertation on the why but it doesn't change how you're feeling. But God is there. He's there in the moment. He's there in the feelings. And he's taking care of you.

Will you let him? Or will you resist him?

When you believe that Jesus' love for you is greater than the largest stars and planets of the universe and as the mighty God he has everything under control. That he's working behind the scenes doing things you have no idea that he's doing. Then that gives you enduring hope.

The third quality Isaiah used to describe the coming Savior is Everlasting Father.

Jesus as the everlasting Father keeps his promises. I want you to note that – he keeps his promises.

QUALITY 3: Jesus as the everlasting Father keeps His promises.

When my children were little, they had an endless list of wants. "Daddy, can I have this? Daddy, I want that." You take them in the store and go up to the checkout stand and it's grab, grab, grab. "Daddy, I want this!" Most of the time I'd have to say no.

But on the rare occasion when I would say yes they'd always ask me the same question. If you're a parent you know what the question is... "Do you promise? Do you promise, Daddy? Did you mean it, Daddy? Can I really have it, Daddy?"

I tried to be very careful about the promises that I made to my children because I never wanted to break a promise. I wanted my children to grow up knowing that I'm dependable. That they can trust their daddy. That when I make a promise it's

as good as done as far as it's in my ability to do. Usually with my wife's approval first.

There were some times of course when I wouldn't make a promise and I'd say something like, we'll see, or maybe. But those are okay. Those aren't statements that are binding. But a promise is a promise. And broken promises break little hearts. And no father wants to do that to his children.

Jesus, as God the Son has all the divine attributes of our heavenly Father. Hebrews 1:3 from the Amplified Bible says, "*...He [referring to Jesus] is the perfect imprint and very image of [God's] nature*". Therefore, Jesus has the same heart for us as the Father, and as the Living Word he always keeps his promises.

So when the Bible says in Psalm 46:1 "*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble*", you can believe it.

When the Bible says that "*For the Lord God is a sun and shield ;the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless*", (Psalm 84:11) you can believe it.

When God says (Isaiah 41:10), "*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*", you can believe it too.

When you believe that Jesus' love for you is greater than the largest stars or planets in our universe, that he as the mighty God has everything in your life under control and as the everlasting Father he always keeps his promises, it gives you enduring hope.

The fourth quality that Isaiah used to describe the coming Savior is the Prince of Peace.

Jesus as the Prince of Peace has made peace between God and me.

QUALITY 4: Jesus as the Prince of Peace has made peace between God and me.

He has made peace between us. When Isaiah refers to the Savior as the Prince of Peace he's referring specifically to the fact that Jesus has made peace between you and God. Before a person trusts Christ with his or her life, that person is a sinner and is separated from a holy and righteous God. So there's a barrier between us.

And there is a price that needed to be paid for that sin to be forgiven. Because God is righteous. God doesn't say, "I know you didn't mean it. Boys will be boys and girls will be girls. So if you promise not to do it again it'll be okay." He can't do that. Because he would be violating his nature as a holy and righteous God. So God has to punish sin. That's the bad news.

The good news is that Jesus took that punishment on himself on the cross.

Before Christ, all we can expect to receive from the Father is his wrath. But Jesus took upon himself all the wrath of God for your sin and for mine. The Father poured out the entire cup of his wrath upon his Son.

And you know what that means? That means there's no wrath left for those who put their faith in Christ. You never have to worry about the wrath of God because Jesus took all of his wrath upon himself. He shed his blood to pay the penalty that we deserve. He took our place under the wrath of God. So once you put your faith in Jesus as your Savior trusting in his sacrifice as payment for your sin you're reconciled with God. So God's no longer angry with you because of your sin. Jesus has literally made peace between you and the Father.

Look at what the Bible says in Colossians 1:19-20. *"For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [referring to Jesus], and through him to reconcile to himself all things [all things!] whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."*

There is a book called *"Peace Child"*. It is the story of Don Richardson who was a missionary to a tribe called the Sawi in Irian Jaya in Indonesia. The Sawi

were a ruthless people, constantly at war with the neighboring villages. Being that they valued treachery and deceit and murder, Richardson thought there was no hope to win these people to Christ and get to a place where they were at peace with other people.

However, there was a custom that was legendary with the Sawi called the peace child. This child was the baby in one village that was given to another village. As long as that child was alive there would be peace between those two villages.

So Don Richardson used this custom as an analogy for the reconciling work of Christ. He told them that Jesus Christ was God's peace child to all men. And because Christ lives eternally through him there would always be peace between God and those who put their faith in his Son. As a result many of the Sawi came to know Christ as their Savior and a large evangelical church flourished.

Jesus as the Prince of Peace has made peace between you and the Father. When you believe that you'll have enduring hope in your heart.

So where are you at today? Which of these four qualities did you need to hear or be reminded of? Did you need to be reminded of God's immense love for you that is greater than the largest stars or planets in the universe?

Or that Jesus as the mighty God has all your problems under control? That there's never a time where something happens and God goes "Oh! Sorry! I missed that! I fell asleep." That's never going to happen.

Maybe you resonated with the fact that Jesus as the everlasting Father always keeps the promises that he makes to you through his Word.

Or maybe there's some of you here that have finally connected the dots and you realize that as a sinner you're separated from a holy and righteous God. But he wants to fix that. You understand now that Jesus wants to be the peace child for you.

If that's true of you, I just want to give you the opportunity just to put your trust and your faith in Jesus for your salvation and for a new life because you become a new creation in Christ Jesus. When you give your life to him, the Bible says there's no condemnation for anyone who is in Christ Jesus.