



His Name Shall Be Called Mighty God

Advent 2015

Isaiah 9:6

David Sunday

December 6, 2015

Let's worship God as we hear His living Word. Isaiah 9:6 will be the focus of our thoughts throughout this Advent season, and today we will focus on "*His name shall be called...Mighty God.*" Reading the verse in context, we will begin with Isaiah 9:2. Worship the God Whose Word abides forever.

- ² *The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shined.*
- ³ *You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.*
- ⁴ *For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.*
- ⁵ *For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.*
- ⁶ *For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*
- ⁷ *Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,*

*to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, God without beginning or end—one God with Your Son and the Holy Spirit—You reign forever and ever. We pray that today Your Kingdom would hold sway over our minds and hearts as we gaze upon the glories of Your Son, apart from Whom we are nothing, without Whom we would never be able to know You.

We pray, Father, as Your Spirit illuminates our darkened minds to the brilliant light of Your holy Word, lead us to worship Him Who is full of meekness and majesty, manhood and deity in perfect harmony, the Man Who is God. Come, Lord, so that we may come before Your throne of grace and adore Him. We pray in His holy name, the name of Jesus. Amen.

1. We are nothing without Christ

Back in the middle of the last century, Donald Grey Barnhouse, the pastor at Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, delivered a weekly sermon on CBS radio. In one of these sermons he asked the question, “What would happen if Satan took control of the city of Philadelphia?” His answer was:

If Satan took control of this city, all the bars would be closed, pornography would be banished, and pristine streets would be filled with tidy pedestrians who smiled at each other. There would be no swearing. The children would say, “Yes, Sir,” and “No, Ma’am.” And the churches would be filled every Sunday. Only Christ would not be preached.

That's Satan's objective, to banish Christ from our minds and hearts. Keep Christ from being exalted. Keep Christ from being worshiped. Keep Christ from being preached. The name of Jesus is more well-known than any other name on planet earth. For 2,000 years, billions of people around our world have claimed to be followers of Jesus. It is estimated that eight billion have followed Jesus since He came. Many billions more have heard His name in 6,000 different languages, a number that is increasing every year. They know the name:

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ear—

'Tis life, and health, and peace.

[O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing by Charles Wesley, 1739]

The name of Jesus is not only light but also food; it is also oil, without which all food of the soul is dry; it is salt, without whose seasoning whatever is set before us is insipid; finally, it is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, rejoicing in the heart, and at the same time medicine. Every discourse in which His name is not spoken is without savor.

[Bernard of Clairvaux, founding abbot of Clairvaux Abbey in Burgundy, France; 1090-1153]

We are nothing without Christ. He is more precious to us than the food we eat, the water we drink, the rest we sleep, the air we breathe. Without Him we cannot live and without Him we all would have perished long ago. Jesus is our all in all. He is everything to us.

Yet, don't we all find this subtle danger of moving Jesus to the margins of our minds and hearts? We go through the activities and duties of church membership and the rituals of church attendance and worship, all the while forgetting Whose church this is. We forget that He is the head of it all, that He's the reason we're here, that He's the One Whom we worship and adore and will for all eternity as the worthy Lamb Who was slain for our sins.

Aren't there times when we all lose sight of the centrality of Jesus Christ and our utter dependence on Him? Don't we all grow weary of Christless religions, when we find it starting to become rote and He is not the passion of our hearts? Isn't there a need for all of us to be reminded continually to fix our gaze upon Jesus?

Robert Murray M'Cheyne (Church of Scotland, 1835-43) said:

When you gaze upon the sun—it makes everything else dark.
When you taste the sweetness of honey—it makes everything else tasteless. Likewise, when your soul feeds on Jesus—it takes away the sweetness of all earthly things. It takes away the sweetness of man's empty praise, of pleasure, of fleshly lusts. They all lose their sweetness when we keep a continual gaze on Christ.

So my aim today is very simple. I'm here to direct your gaze to Him. I'm here to call you by His Spirit to worship and adore Him. I'm here to call you to worship Him specifically for what the Holy Spirit reveals of Him in Isaiah 9:6, "*His name shall be called...Mighty God.*"

2. El Gibbor – Mighty God

Mighty God, *El Gibbor* in Hebrew. *El* means God. *Gibbor* means warrior, hero, mighty one. “*His name shall be called...Mighty God.*” Not just a God-like hero. God Himself—the Mighty God—is our Savior Jesus, lying in a manger. He is Man and He is God.

The Old Testament scholar E.J. Young remarks that every time *El Gibbor* occurs in the Bible, there’s no doubt the term refers to God Himself. Let me give you some examples:

- Isaiah 10:20-21 – “*In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God*” [*El Gibbor*]. Is there any doubt in that passage that this is referring to God Himself?
- Deuteronomy 10:17 – “*For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God* [*El Gibbor*], *who is not partial and takes no bribe.*” Christ is Mighty God.
- Jeremiah 32:17-19 – “*Ah, Lord God! It is you who has made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you...O great and mighty God* [*El Gibbor*], *whose name is the Lord of hosts.*” And listen to this phrase, “*Great in counsel and mighty in deed.*” Last week we heard He is wonderful in counsel. This week He is Mighty God. We see the same thing in Jeremiah.

So it’s very clear that the prophet Isaiah intends for us to understand that a Child is going to be born. Speaking of His humanity, He is a real child born of the virgin Mary. But He’s also the Son Who is given, speaking of His deity. He is God the Son from all eternity without beginning or end, and He is given by the Father to be the Savior of the world.

It’s very clear that Isaiah the prophet, some 700 years before Jesus’ birth, intends for us to understand that this Child is none other than God Himself. He is the Mighty God. He is the God Who comes into the darkness and gloom of this world and shines His brilliant light (Isaiah 9:2), because He Himself is the Light of the World. He is the God Who brings life in increase to the nation (verse three) that is diminished by oppression and causes a great harvest of souls who are born into life to be gathered into the nation, into the Kingdom of God. He is the light and the life of men. He is the God (verse four) Who is able to lift the yoke of burdens that are on men’s backs so that we carry no more burdens and suffer no more beatings and find ourselves under the thumb of no more tyrants.

He gives us victory “*as on the day of Midian*” (verse four). That should remind us of the book of Judges, when God told Gideon to decrease the size of his army because, “The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into your hand. I don’t want you to think you won

this victory because you had such a great army. I want you to understand that the battle belongs to Me, the Mighty God, and it is I Who give you the victory.” So with just trumpets, empty jars and torches, the vast power of Midian was broken. Isaiah was looking forward to a similar victory here—an act of God that was going to exclude all human boasting.

In verse five, Isaiah looks forward to the day when the Mighty God will end all wars, and in verse six, he traces all of this to its ultimate root—a Child Who will bring all of this to pass. Now, ponder and marvel at this. How does God bring an end to all the tyranny, all the terrorism, all the turmoil of this fallen world? God brings an end to this tyranny—not by coming into the world as an even bigger bully, but by coming as a Child. God does not send a global jihad to end the terror. God sends His Son, a Child born in a manger.

This past week our nation faced what CNN called “the biggest U.S. terror attack since 9/11,” as 14 people were massacred and 21 more injured in San Bernardino, California. The New York Daily News ran a front-page headline that said, “God Isn’t Fixing This.” It’s gotten a lot of attention. The article argues that thoughts and prayers are meaningless platitudes. Instead, we need to do something about this. We need to do what God isn’t doing, the article said.



I have no desire to comment on gun control or anything like that from the pulpit, but my point in bringing this up is say, “To the contrary—God is fixing this.” Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Denny Burk wrote a response in which he said, “Christmas is the one time of year that is supposed to remind that us that God is fixing this.” God is not indifferent to a world “in sin and error pining.” He has sent His Son into this world to rule and reign forever, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace, and He is coming again to deliver this world from all the tyranny and corruption of sin.

But God is patient and longsuffering—sometimes terrifyingly so. We wonder why He doesn’t stop all this evil right now. The reason God is so longsuffering is because there are more of His people that He’s waiting to gather from the east and west and north and south into His glorious Kingdom of peace and righteousness.

We’re in this in-between time, living in a world that is groaning over the evil. We’re waiting and crying out, “Come, Lord Jesus. Return, Lord Jesus.” That’s one of the reasons we take four Sundays in Advent to look forward to Christ’s return—the return of the King Who at His

second Advent is going to banish all evil. He's going to end all violence and make every sad thing "come untrue." That's the only hope in this world.

I love the juxtaposition of that headline with this quote from Ray Ortlund's commentary on Isaiah written perhaps ten years ago:

God's answer to everything that terrorizes us is a Child. The power of God is so far superior to Assyrians and all the big shots of this world that He can defeat them by coming as a mere Child. His answer to the bullies swaggering through history is not to become an even bigger bully. His answer is Jesus.

Jesus could crush every single enemy in a second. He's the Mighty God. He's powerful enough to do that. But He's also humble enough and vulnerable enough and tender enough and sweet enough to turn His enemies into friends, and to bring them into His gracious Kingdom. He reconciles His enemies and makes them His friends.

Jesus knows how to deal with ISIS. He knows how to deal with everything that terrorizes us. And one thing I suspect our Lord Jesus will do is He'll even gather some ISIS members into His glorious Kingdom. That's the kind of God He is. He overturns terror by coming to save. Mighty God. God IS fixing this. That's what Christmas is all about.

Last week we saw Wonderful Counselor. Oh, that was sweet. How sweet! As our Wonderful Counselor, He has the wisest ideas, the most brilliant strategies. We can follow His leadership because He knows what is best. But as Mighty God, He's able to bring that wise counsel, those wonderful plans, those great strategies to victory—to completion. He's the divine Warrior Who conquers through humility and sacrifice.

So as our Wonderful Counselor, Jesus is able to guide us in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. As our Mighty God, He's able to transform us, and He's able to do within us what He counsels us to do. He's got the power and the strength we need to follow His wisdom. He doesn't just give us counsel and send us out, hoping we're going to put it into practice. He transforms us by His mighty power and He conforms us to His perfect will. That's Who our Wonderful Counselor is. He's unlike any other.

We have good and wise counselors in this church, and we want to create a culture where we're sharing the Word with one another and caring for and counseling one another. But none of us can change one another. None of us is mighty. We're all weak in ourselves. We can't even change ourselves, let alone someone else. Our Wonderful Counselor is also Mighty God. He can bring about the changes we need. He can radically revolutionize our lives.

There's nothing you need God to do for you that Jesus cannot do. Whatever you need in your life to follow God, Jesus is able to do for you. Do you have addictions in your life right now that are starting to take over and you don't know how you're going to get free? Your Wonderful Counselor is the Mighty God. He can set you free. Do you have a relationship right now where your heart is just full of hardness, bitterness and hate? Your Mighty God can put sweetness and love into your heart.

Your Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, can give you a love for someone you never thought you could love. He can change that marriage from being distant, cold and indifferent. Where there are divisions and schisms, He's able to bring about unity and peace. Or you might think, "There's no way I'm ever going to change." Whatever we need Him to do in order to follow the will of God in our lives, He's able to do for us.

That is good news for us because our enemies are the devil, sin and death itself—and they're too mighty for us. They would vanquish us if we did not have a Savior Who was strong to defend us and to work on our behalf—and Jesus is such a Savior. He's Mighty God.

Now, you can't be a Christian if you don't believe this. This is a doctrine on which our faith rises or falls. You can be a Christian and have a different idea about baptism, the Lord's Supper, church government, election or predestination, or whether we should have organs or drums in worship—or any number of other things. But you cannot be a Christian if you don't agree with this: Jesus Christ is God eternal, Mighty God, Who was in the beginning with God, without Whom nothing was made that was made, and Who will be worshiped with the Father and with the Holy Spirit as one God, world without end, forever and ever.

Do you say amen to that? Do you believe that? Is that your confession? This is the clear testimony of Scripture. Let me just read for you a few New Testament passages that explicitly declare Jesus is Mighty God.

- John 1:1 – *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was **God**.”*
- John 1:18 – *“No one has ever seen God; the only **God**, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.”*
- John 20:28 – After His resurrection, *“Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my **God!**’”* And Jesus didn't say to him, “Thomas, you shouldn't say that.” Jesus received that confession.
- Romans 9:5 – The Apostle Paul, speaking of the Israelites, said, *“To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is **God** over all, blessed forever. Amen.”*
- Titus 2:13 – We are *“waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great **God** and Savior Jesus Christ.”*

- Hebrews 1:8 – *“But of the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O **God**, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.’”*
- 2 Peter 1:1 – *“To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our **God** and Savior Jesus Christ.”*

So it’s explicitly stated in the New Testament that Jesus is God. But it’s more than just a few verses that give us that truth. A few years back, Justin Taylor put together an excellent article on his Gospel Coalition blog drawing from the work of various scholars demonstrating this fact. Even if the early church had never applied the title “God” to Jesus—and they did—it would still be clear that Jesus is God from the following facts:

1. Humans and angels worship Him.
2. The Bible continually points us to Him as the One in Whom we are to put faith for salvation.
3. He is the One Who is said to have created all things by the word of His power.
4. Jesus forgives sins.
5. Final judgment will be carried out by Him.
6. He is the One we address in our prayers.
7. He is said to possess all the attributes of God.
8. He bears numerous titles that are applied to Yahweh, the LORD in the Old Testament.
9. He gives divine blessings along with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

So throughout the Bible there are these indications that Jesus is God Himself. One more thing we can use is the acronym H.A.N.D.S. If you want to talk to a Muslim or a friend who says to you, “How can you believe Jesus is God?” this is a helpful acronym:

H – Jesus deserves the **H**onors due only to God.

A – Jesus shares the **A**tttributes that only God possesses.

N – Jesus is given **N**ames that can only be given to God.

D – Jesus performs **D**eeds that only God can perform.

S – Jesus possesses a **S**eat on the throne of God.

That’s helpful, isn’t it? Honors, attributes, names, deeds and seat—all pointing to the fact that Jesus is Mighty God. No wonder the early church worshiped Him as such. No wonder we have sermons like this one from Gregory of Nazianzus, written in the fourth century. Listen to how he worships the God-Man in this sermon. So many of these sermons are full of worship and adoration to Jesus because that’s what preaching is. It’s expository exaltation, taking what’s in the Word and worshiping God with it, lifting our hearts in adoration.

Gregory said:

Jesus was baptized as Man, but He remitted sins as God. He was tempted as Man, but He conquered as God. He hungered, but He fed thousands. He thirsted, but He cried, *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink."* He was wearied, but He is the rest to them that are weary and heavy laden. He was heavy with sleep, but He walked lightly over the sea. He prays, but He hears prayer. He weeps, but He causes tears to cease. He asks where Lazarus was laid, for He was Man, but He raises Lazarus, for He was God.

He is sold for a cheap 30 pieces of silver, but He redeems the world at the great price of His own blood. As a Sheep, He is led to the slaughter, but He is the Shepherd of Israel and now of the whole world. As a Lamb He is silent, yet He is the Word. He is bruised and wounded, but He heals every disease and every infirmity. He is lifted up and nailed to the tree, but by that Tree of Life He restores us. He dies, but He gives life, and by His death He destroys death. He is buried, but He rises again.

Therefore, let us worship Him. Let us delight that our salvation rests on the One Who is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him. Let us take heart in our sufferings, knowing that Jesus said, *"In this world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world."* Let us keep our gaze fixed on Him continually. Let fleshly lusts and worldly desires diminish as we look and feast more and more on Jesus.

[On the Son by Gregory of Nazianzus, 329-89]

Remember this old song?

Who is He in yonder stall
At Whose feet the shepherds fall?
Who is He in deep distress,
Fasting in the wilderness?

Who is He the people bless
For His words of gentleness?
Who is He to Whom they bring
All the sick and sorrowing?

Who is He that stands and weeps
At the grave where Lazarus sleeps?
Who is He the gathering throng
Greet with loud triumphant song?

Lo! At midnight Who is He
Prays in dark Gethsemane?

Who is He on yonder tree
Dies in grief and agony?

Who is He Who from the grave
Comes to succor, help and save?
Who is He Who from His throne
Rules through all the worlds alone?

Who is He?

'Tis the Lord! O wondrous story!
'Tis the Lord! The King of glory!
At His feet we humbly fall,
Crown Him! Crown Him Lord of all!

[Who is He in Yonder Stall by Benjamin R. Hanby, 1866]

Give Him the glory due His name. Worship Christ, our Mighty God.

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