

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, December 24th, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant

The Fourfold Name of Jesus Christ
Christmas Eve
Isaiah 9:6-7

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Jesus, Son of the living God, splendor of the Father, eternal light.

Lord, we praise you!

Jesus, King of glory, sun of justice, son of the virgin Mary.

Lord, we praise you!

Jesus, Wonderful Counselor, everlasting Lord, Prince of Peace.

Lord, we praise you!

Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, our help, and our refuge.

Lord, we praise you!

Jesus, God of peace, friend of all, source of life and of holiness.

Lord, we praise you!

Jesus, brother of the poor, goodness without measure, unending wisdom.

Lord, we praise you!

Jesus, good shepherd, true light, our way, and our life.

Lord, we praise you! Amen

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

O God, our Father, creator of the universe,
whose Son, Jesus Christ, came to our world,
pour your Holy Spirit upon your church,
that all people of our world,
being led through the knowledge of your truth to worship you,
may offer the gold of intellect,

the frankincense of devotion,
 and the myrrh of discipline
 to him who, with you and the Holy Spirit,
 lives and reigns for ever, one God, world without end. **Amen.**

Advent Candle Lighting

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world;
 the one who follows me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life."
We light this candle as a sign of the coming light of Christ.

[Candle Lighter]

Arise, shine; for your light has come,
 and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
 For the darkness shall cover the earth,
 and thick darkness the peoples;
 but the LORD will arise upon you,
 and his glory will appear over you.
 Nations shall come to your light,
 and kings to the brightness of your dawn.
 —Isaiah 60:1-3, NRSV

Come, Lord Jesus, our light, and our salvation.
Let us walk in the light of the Lord

Opening Hymn #153: "Joy to the World" (V 1,2,3)

Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
 let earth receive its King;
 let every heart prepare him room
 and heaven and nature sing,
 and heaven and nature sing,
 and heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! the Saviour reigns:
 let us our songs employ,
 while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
 repeat the sounding joy,
 repeat the sounding joy,
 repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
 nor thorns infest the ground;
 he comes to make his blessings flow
 far as the curse is found,

far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

Holy God, you sent a star
to guide the Magi to the child Jesus.
We confess that we have not followed the light of your Word.
We have not searched for signs of your love in the world
or trusted your good news to be good.
We have failed to praise your Son's birth
and refused his peace on earth.
We have expected little
and hoped for less.
Forgive our doubt
and renew in us all fine desires,
that we may watch and wait
and once more hear the glad story of our Savior,
Jesus Christ, the Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance,
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
In Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen.

Music Ministry: "Wise Men Saw the Light"

Responsive Reading

Psalm 96

Oh sing to the LORD a new song;

sing to the LORD, all the earth!

**² Sing to the LORD, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.**

**³ Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples!**

⁴ For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be feared above all gods.

**⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.**

⁶ Splendor and majesty are before him;
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

**⁷ Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!**

⁸ Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come into his courts!

**⁹ Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth!**

¹⁰ Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved;
he will judge the peoples with equity."

**¹¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;**

¹² let the field exult, and everything in it!
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy

**¹³ before the LORD, for he comes,
for he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness,
and the peoples in his faithfulness.**

Hymn: "We Three Kings" Edgar de Paz, Daniel Gallant & John McEwen

Hymn: "In the Bleak Midwinter" Trish Warren

**Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)**

Scripture

Isaiah 9:6-7

**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.**

Sermon

What is in a name?

Many people do not fully understand the importance of a name until they become parents. Parents will spend 9 months or more thinking of names, discussing names, even negotiating over names for their children. Why is that?

Because a name is much more than just something that a person goes by in this life. A name has a meaning, one that was often chosen very specifically by their parents. In the North American culture, it is not uncommon to see names carried down through the generations, grandfather, father, and son all bearing the same name. You also see people looking for names that have a specific cultural context or religious context.

In the Old Testament a person's name was a representation of their reputation, their fame, and their glory. Parents would often give their children names that described their future hopes and expectations of their children.

In fact, did you know that the word 'name' translated as 'a mark or a brand'. A name identified who someone was. Many of the family names we see around the world today derived from their occupations, the Smiths, Millers, or from their parents, Stephenson, Thomson.

Biblical names are no different, when you study the meanings of names in the Bible you can discover some interesting links between the person and their name. David means 'beloved'. Abraham means 'Father of a multitude.' Jacob means 'Deceiver.' Moses means 'Drawn out'. And Jesus means 'Jehovah Saves'. Almost every person in the Old Testament lives up to the meaning of their name perfectly.

In the book of Isaiah, the prophet gives a fourfold name to Jesus, 700 years before he was born.

The book of Isaiah shines light on the kind of person that the Saviour was going to be. The primary purpose of the book of Isaiah was to remind all those who read his words of the special relationship that exists between God and his covenant people.

When he was prophesying the Israelites had just passed through a time of prosperity into a time where the Assyrian army was on their doorstep ready to bring destruction to their lands.

Chapter 9 of the book of Isaiah starts.

Isaiah 9:1

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The lands of tribes of the Naphtali and Zebulun were the region of Galilee and for many years the people in that region had been suffering anxiety and grief because of the endless onslaught of their enemies. Remember that God was allowing the nation of Israel to be attacked because of their sins. And it was the tribes of the Zebulun and Naphtali who took the brunt of this judgement because of their location furthest north. Yet here in the beginning of Chapter 9 of Isaiah, the prophet is telling them that there is a time coming when the anxiety and grief that they are feeling will be replaced with joy.

This is something that we need to remember at Christmas. The prophecy of Christ's coming and his coming itself was in times of anxiety and grief. When the angels appeared to proclaim 'peace of earth, Herod was decreeing that all the infants in the region were to be killed. While Mary was giving birth to Jesus, mothers throughout the region were weeping for their children. Christmas is best understood when we remember that in those times of anxiety, pain and suffering, the greatest joy that we can ever know came to the world.

The prophet foretells in Isaiah 9:2

Isaiah 9:2

**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 shone.**

It is these first 2 lines of Isaiah 9 that are quoted in the book of Matthew chapter 4 that speaks of the beginning of Jesus's ministry here on earth.

Matthew 4:12-17

¹² Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³ And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴ so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

**¹⁵ “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—
¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death,
on them a light has dawned.”**

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

The Messiah had come, the one that is described perfectly in Isaiah 9:6-7.

Isaiah 9:6

**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.**

Verse 6 describes the humanity and divinity of Christ's birth.

'For unto us a child is born', describes the humanity of Christ he was born just like any one of us.

"to us a son is given', however, describes his divine nature. Jesus is God's son and was given by God as a gift for mankind's salvation.

The babe that was born in Bethlehem was fully human and fully Divine, one commentator described the birth of Christ this way, 'The Son wasn't born, the Son eternally existed; the child was born, the Son was given.'

The prophecy tells us that 'the government shall be on his shoulders', meaning that all of the expectations of the throne of King David would be fulfilled in Jesus's coming. That small child bundled in the straw is the one thing that binds the entire universe together. The babe in the manger already carried the entire world upon his shoulders, he is the redeemer and ruler of all, the Lord of lords and the King of kings.

Then we reach the naming of the Messiah, this babe in the manger. Do you notice anything interesting in the Scripture?

There are four names given, '**Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**' However, it does not say names, it says name. Jesus is not one of these at a time, he is all four, always. He is always our, '**Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**'

Let's start by trying to understand what it means that he is our Wonderful Counselor. This quite simply means that he is 'a Wonder of a Counselor'. The problem is that we toss the word wonder and wonderful around too liberally in our culture.

It is like the word awesome, which means to be in awe of something. We use the word awesome to describe all kinds of things, cars, games, books, even food. However, the only thing which should really fill us with awe is God.

Wonderful means, 'full of wonder, glorious, exceptional, astonishing and extraordinary', This is a word that it often used in Scripture to describe God and his works, because they are things beyond our ability and understanding.

When you take Wonderful and combine it with Counselor, we get an Advisor who is beyond our ability and understanding. Life is filled with times of trial, tribulation, decisions, details, and disasters. Life is filled with tough times and curveballs and we often seek out the counseling of family and friends, and even sometimes professionals when we are in trying times.

We go to these counselors because when we are in need, we turn to the people that are available to us, people who will listen to our issues, people who will provide comfort and keep what is happening in our lives confidential. We turn to people who we know will tell us the truth about ourselves, even if we do not want to hear it, giving us the advice and support we need to make any necessary changes in our lives. In short, a counselor is someone who has empathy, expertise, and experience, they are a good listener, practical and practice the love of God.

Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor; he is the only one who can fulfill all of these requirements in our lives at all times. Yes, you can get good, even great counseling here in this world, but to get all of the attributes that make a wonderful counselor in a single person is an impossibility, this is why good counselors often suggest support groups and encourage family and friend relationships. They know they are good; they might believe they are great, but they are not wonderful, that title is Jesus Christ's alone.

Next, he is given the name, 'Mighty God.' The word mighty describes strength or a powerful, valiant warrior, a hero. Here in Isaiah chapter 9, we are being told that Jesus is God's hero. He is not only the Son of God, HE IS God the son. The babe that was born in a manger is not just powerful, he is the King of Glory, the architect of the universe. Later in life Jesus will tell his disciples that he and the father are one.

Jesus can face anything in this world because he is mighty. Jesus heals the lame, the blind and the sick. He calms winds and storms. He resurrects Lazarus from the grave. He casts out legions of demons. He does all of this because he is the Mighty God. Jesus is the only one who can do the impossible in this world. He can do things that no doctor, no financial advisor, no therapist, or counselor can do, because he alone wields the power of the universe in his fingertips.

When Mary questioned the angel about how she could become pregnant with a child the angel responded.

Luke 1:34-38

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”

³⁵ And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸ And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

God can do the impossible. This is why when we have problems in this world we can turn to God, not only is he the Wonderful Counselor who can give us a perfect plan, he also is the Mighty God, the only one who can make those plans come to fruition.

He is also the ‘Everlasting Father’. It is easy for us to envision God as a wonderful counsellor or a Might God. We know he is all-knowing and all-powerful; however, we often forget that he is also a personal God. The problem is that many churches have taught people to see God as big and mighty and angry at them for their sin. However, in Jesus Christ, God is personal, and he is seeking that personal relationship with his people.

He is the father that is angry at the wrong you have done but loves you and wants to help you through those things which have done so much damage in your life and the lives of those around you.

He is the ‘Everlasting Father’ meaning he is forever. Jesus is before, above and beyond time. He lives in the forever, and he loves every one of us like a father. Jesus Christ is Holy and Human, dwelling in heaven at the same time that he is born in a manger and lying in the hay.

Jesus is a child of Mary, a son of Joesph, and at the same time he is eternally the Father to all of us. That babe in the manger is filled with caring and compassion for everyone who will come to him in their lives, everyone who will repent and turn away from their sin, take up their cross and follow him. He is the lamb of God and the Shepherd of God’s people.

This is why we can place our hope, faith, and trust in the Lord. He is our Wonderful Counselor, our mighty God and our Everlasting Father.

Which brings us to the final name that he is given here in Isaiah, the ‘Prince of Peace’, the is literally translated as, ‘the prince who’s coming brings peace.’

In biblical times it was often the princes, the sons of kings, lords and empires that were the generals of the armies. The term described their authority and leadership. Throughout all of human history the title prince has been one that exudes authority and leadership, and it is still as powerful today, in a world that does not live under the rulership of kings.

If you were here this morning you learned that ‘Shalom’ was the expression that was used to greet and to part. It described the wish to be free of outward turmoil and trouble as well as inner peace. To God’s people who were constantly feeling anxiety and fear of the nations surrounding them, the blessing of peace was one of the most powerful blessings they could receive.

In the book of Numbers God gave Moses these words to use as a blessing over God’s people.

Numbers 6:22-27

²² The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²³ “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them,

²⁴ The LORD bless you and keep you;

²⁵ the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

²⁶ the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

²⁷ “So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.”

The birth of the Messiah, the babe in the manger, was the greatest blessing that mankind could ever receive. The birth of the Messiah, and our acceptance of him as Lord and Saviour, sets all of us free from the sinful habits that we are unable or unwilling to break in our lives. When we are reborn, when we receive the Holy Spirit, the blessings of God fall upon us, and the process of our sanctification begins.

When Jesus was born, mankind was finally able to let go of the selfish, self-focused nature we are driven by in this world and begin to live the selfless, giving life that Christ taught us to live. We learned that we no longer needed to cling to the things of this world, instead we could cling to the promises of God.

The world itself is a scary place. It is a world in which what the world calls truth is constantly shifting. However, Christians do not need to live in fear, because we can cling to Christ, the cornerstone. As we talked about this morning Christians can live knowing that they have, peace from God, the peace of God, and the Peace with God and peace with others because of God’s promises to his people.

Jesus is our peace. When we become disciples of the Prince of Peace, he brings his peace to us. He takes away our heavy yoke and places it upon himself, allowing us to walk in this world with a lighter burden, caring for others and taking the yoke off of them the same way that he did for each of us.

Jesus was given these four names 700 years before he was born. **‘Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.’** The good news is that everyone alive can experience all of this in their lives right now. The better news is that there is still more to come for those who are Christ's faithful disciples. When he returns all of these titles will be fully realized as he will come to destroy the evils of this world and bring salvation to his people.

Jesus came to that manger in Bethlehem 2000 years ago so that he could go to the cross and bring his people back into relationship with their God. He came to pay the debt of our sins and to show us how to live the lives that God wants us to live in this world.

When he returns he will be wearing his crown.

Isaiah 9:7

**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.**

When Jesus returns, he will be recognized by all as the King of kings and Lord of lords. His rulership will be righteous and just, and he will wipe away the tear from every eye, there will be no more anxiety, pain, or suffering.

‘The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.’ Zeal means ‘intense desire’, and Lord of hosts means lord of armies.

God has an intense desire to bring salvation to his people. He will do this through his armies. Of which he has at least three different kinds at his disposal. Throughout the Old Testament God used other nations and their government and militaries to do his bidding, he used the Babylonians to accomplish his purposes with Israel. In the Old Testament we also learn that he used the stars, in fact all of creation, to do his bidding and finally we see the angels are constantly at work serving him as his angelic servants and messengers.

God uses all of his creation and all of his zeal to bring about his plans for mankind. If we just look at the birth of Jesus, we can see God at work through his armies in a way we may have not seen before.

God used the Roman Government and its authority to call for a census in a time when they did not usually call for a census, so that Mary and Joseph would have to be travelling and so that the prophecy of Jesus being born in Bethlehem could be fulfilled.

God used the star in the heavens, making it burn so bright that it caught the attention of astrologists living in foreign lands, causing them to make the pilgrimage to see what it was all about.

God released his angelic army as messengers, announcing the Good News of the Savior's birth to shepherds so they too could be part of his coming.

God zeal for his people is still as active today as it was 2000 years ago. He loves people beyond any form of human comprehension, and he is always at work trying to bring his people back into a relationship with him. Many people will share of God's work in their lives either in the story of their testimony and coming to Christ or in the day to day, where they begin to realize just how present he is in our lives. God's plan of the salvation of mankind through the birth of Jesus Christ began before the world was formed and it continues today in the lives of every people on this planet. God is right now, this very day, actively seeking to be the **'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'** In the life of every human being on this planet.

The first 3 words of Isaih 9:6

**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.**

'For to us', "FOR TO US", a child is born The birth of Jesus Christ was a personal gift from God to the people of this world. A gift that was wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger for each and every human being. There are a few different ways in which we can respond to that gift.

We can do as many in this world do, and ignore the gift completely, ensuring that we will never be in relationship with God and living unaware of what will come for us on the day of judgement.

We can acknowledge the gift, admire the gift, and thank God for the gift, but leave it sitting there in the manger. Once again ensuring that we will never be in relationship with God and living unaware of what will come for us on the day of judgement.

Or we can accept the gift, and let the Holy Spirit begin its work in us, transforming us from selfish sinners into selfless saints, people who walk the earth as the Salt and Light of God's Word in this fallen world.

Let us pray,
 Lord God, heavenly Father,
 we give thanks that in your great mercy
 and compassion you allowed your dear Son
 to become incarnate
 and through him redeemed us from sin and eternal death.
 Enlighten our hearts by your Holy Spirit
 that we may always be thankful for such grace
 and be comforted in all trouble and temptation,
 and at last, obtain eternal salvation;
 through your beloved Son,
 Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one true living God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Source: Veit Dietrich

Hymn #165: "O Little Town of Bethlehem" (V 1,2,3)

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
 Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by:
 yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;
 the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and, gathered all above,
 while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
 O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,
 and praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!
 So God imparts to human hearts the blessings born of heaven.
 No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
 where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewsperthoffering@gmail.com If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer
(Congregant Prepared)

Pastoral Prayer

God of all grace,
you who have sent your Son to be our Redeemer,
to give light in our darkness,
pardon for our sins,
and hope in our turmoil,
accept now our hearty thanks
for your Word (and for this sacrament).
We have met our Savior here;
we know your promises are true,
and our hearts have been nourished.
Send us forth to live obediently
until we gather here again in his name. **Amen.**

SILENT NIGHT

Benediction

The joy of the angels,
the eagerness of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the Magi,
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,
and the peace of the Christ child be yours this Christmas.
And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be upon you this evening and remain with you always. **Amen.**