

Mighty God

“Joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the Son of Mary!” Dear joyful people of God, followers of and believers in the newborn Savior, today be filled with joy, **“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.”** And *“what child is this”* (as we just sang)? **“He will be called... Mighty God.”**

For the last couple of years at Christmas, I've been preaching on this beautiful and theologically packed passage from Isaiah 9. A few years ago we looked at **“To us a child is born, to us a son is given.”** And we said that this child is from God, for us; and that everything Jesus does is for us – he was born for us, lived for us, died for us, brought salvation for us, opened heaven for us. He is for us. And, **“The government will be on his shoulders.”** His government is his kingdom, his church, his people. So instead of us carrying him and bearing his weight, Jesus carries us – he carries his people and bears our sins on his shoulders.

And then there's the names. **“He will be called”** (first) **“Wonderful Counselor.”** Last year we saw how Jesus is wonderful – he's a wonder – everything he does is wonderful. And he's our counselor, who counsels us and comforts us with his gospel of full and free forgiveness and grace. And that's just the first name. If I was to preach on all the names from Isaiah 9:6 in one sermon, we would be here all day! But you have ham to eat and people to see. So today in this sermon, let's just focus on the next name for Jesus – **“He will be called...Mighty God.”**

Start with that second word, God. Jesus is God. Okay – as Christians, that's not really anything new for us. We know that Jesus is God. But the miracle of Christmas is that this baby in the manger is God! This baby, that needs to be nursed and changed and held and hugged and taught and cared for – this baby is God! – the eternal God, who has no beginning and no end. **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gn 1:1).** And this baby in the manger is that God – the creator of the universe, who keeps the planets in orbit and sustains life on earth. He's the same God who created you and knit you together in your mother's womb. Now he is knit together in a womb – now he is a little child baby. Baby Jesus in the manger is God!

And what is he doing there, anyway? If he is God, shouldn't he be on a throne in heaven? Shouldn't he be dispatching angels to carry out his will? Should he be attending to his governance of the universe? Why is he cooing at Mary and drooling on Joseph? Why is God a baby in a manger?

The reason Jesus is a baby in a manger is because Jesus came to be with us! Jesus is Immanuel, the God who is with us. Remember, **“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel!” – which means, ‘God with us’” (Mt 1:22-23, NIV '84).** Jesus is God with us – not God in an ivory tower, not God unaware of our problems and sufferings, not God disinterested in our lives – but God with us, down here on earth with us – where you suffer and you get sick and you get sad and you die and your friends die – this hopeless place where life is only occasionally not miserable. God came here to be with us!

And you know what he suffered while he was here with us. Today is Christmas Day; jump ahead to Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, and look at Jesus now. Look at him being whipped and punched, spit on and mocked, crowned with thorns and nailed to a cross. They killed him – we killed him! And he didn't have to go through any of it. But Jesus, willingly, came down to earth – God was born on earth – to be with us.

Back in the 90s there was a really dumb song that came on the radio, and every time I heard it I just wanted to scream. The song said, *“What if God was one of us? / Just a slob like one of us / Just a stranger on the bus / Trying to make his way home.”* Well, Jesus is no slob. But he is God. And on Christmas, Jesus did come to be one of us! A much better song is the one from our hymnal, “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” which says, *“Christ, by highest heaven adored / Christ, the everlasting Lord / Late in time behold him come, / Offspring of a virgin's womb.”* Now listen to this: *“Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, (so Jesus, who is God, took on human flesh to be one of us) / Hail the incarnate Deity! (incarnate means having human flesh, a human body; and deity means God) / Pleased as man with us to dwell, (God came to live with us as a human) / Jesus, our Immanuel!”* So Jesus is God with us. God incarnate. God in human flesh. *“What if God was one of us?”* Give me a break! He is one of us! At Christmas, Jesus became human to be one of us.

And so therefore, Jesus is both true man and true God at the same time. In the Catechism, Luther says it this way: *"I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord."* And in the New Testament, in the Gospels, the words and works of Jesus testify to both the humanity and the deity of Jesus. Whenever Jesus eats, drinks, sleeps, cries, hurts, bleeds – that's his humanity. But whenever Jesus performs a miracle, performs a healing, drives out a demon, walks on water, when he rises from the dead, when he says he is God – that's his divinity. And that's easy for us to see, 2000 years later. But Isaiah wrote these words over 700 before Jesus was even born. So it's like Isaiah was saying, "Hey everyone, our Savior is coming! And he's coming as a baby. And this Savior-baby is no ordinary man, prophet, or rabbi; this Savior-baby is God himself!" So the adorable little baby Jesus in the arms of Mary is God himself! He is God!

And he is Mighty God! Here's another song maybe you've heard before: *"My God is so great, so strong, and so...mighty! There's nothing my God cannot do!"* We used to sing that song in VBS all the time. *"The mountains are his, the rivers are his, the stars are his handiwork, too. My God is so great, so strong, and so mighty! There's nothing my God cannot do!"* That's the cute way of thinking about Mighty God. Here's the serious way of thinking about the Mighty God: Jesus is a warrior, he's a fighter, he's our strong hero who fights the battles we cannot win and defeats the enemies we cannot conquer. He's a military champion, he's mighty!

But you wouldn't think so by looking at him. I mean, today he's just a harmless baby. And the closest we come to seeing aggression in Jesus is when he overturns the tables in the temple. Other than that, he's is pretty mild mannered, right? At least, that's what we see, because we are his people and not his enemies. He doesn't wield his might against us. With us **"He tends his flock like a shepherd; he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart."** That's Isaiah 40:11. And yet one verse earlier, **"The Sovereign Lord comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm."** And so while Jesus may be a gentle shepherd to his people, to his enemies (like sin and death, Satan and hell) Jesus is Mighty God – a terrible, wrathful, warrior – our hero, their conqueror.

And to conquer his enemies, not once did Jesus draw a sword, or fire an arrow, or wield the weapons of war. Instead, he used a cross. He beat the life out of death with a cross; he stormed hell and paralyzed Satan with a cross; he unleashed his fury against sin by absorbing it (from us!) and bearing its punishment on a cross. And that message of the cross, which we call the gospel, the good news – (and I think good is an understatement; the cross means deliverance from hell) – that good news of salvation through Jesus comes through a cross. That was the weapon our Mighty God used to destroy his enemies – like sin, that wants to accuse you; and death, that wants to capture you; and Satan, that wants to own you; and hell, that wants to imprison you. Jesus went to war for you – yes, the same swaddled baby in the manger – he fought the battle you could not win and defeated the enemies you could not conquer. He is your champion, your hero, your Savior, and Satan's worst nightmare. He is Mighty God.

Never forget that when you feel weak! When you feel crushed, depressed, defeated, lonely, guilty, ready to give up – when you feel weak, Jesus is your might, because he is your Mighty God. And he will never leave you on the battlefield of life all alone. He's your strongest ally, who uses his might not only to defeat your enemies, but also to lift you up when you fall. When you feel like a fallen soldier, because of your sin, or because life just smacks you to the ground, Jesus lifts up his fallen comrades, and with an arm around your shoulder gets you back on your feet. Jesus uses his might to carry you; from this battlefield here on earth, to the peaceful homeland of heaven. He is mighty.

Next year – next Christmas – we'll think about Jesus as our Everlasting Father. But today, just think: *"What if God was one of us?"* – aargh! – because of Christmas, God is one of us! *"Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate Deity!"* Jesus is God! And *"My God is so great, so strong, and so mighty! There's nothing my God cannot do!"* Jesus is Mighty God! Amen.

Isaiah 9:6

⁶For 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.