

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 people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. 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. 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. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. 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. 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. Isaiah 9:1-7

Tasha made Buck wait two years before Tasha agreed to go on a date with him. When they finally did get together, everyone knew that it was meant to be. Among the many things they had in common, the couple bonded over their mutual adoration for "Star Trek," old movies, fried bologna sandwiches and their deep faith in Jesus Christ. On Saturday, October 19, 2013 Tasha and Buck were married at the High Praise Worship Center in Panama City, Florida. It was a joyous wedding. Tasha's grandfather walked her down the aisle and gave her away. Pastor Joshua Gay officiated and gave the couple communion, and they read letters they had written to each other. There was tons of food and lots of family and plenty of friends at the reception, most of them from church. They ended the evening with a big bonfire for making s'mores and the newlyweds danced to the song "God Gave Me You". The next day the couple drove to Gatlinburg, Tennessee for their honeymoon. They spent the week visiting museums, going to shows and hanging out in a small cozy coffee shop. On their last night, they ate at Burger King because they had been given a gift card and watched the Tennessee vs. Alabama football game. The next morning - Sunday, October 27th - they woke up in the dark to get a head start on the drive home so they would be back in Panama City for the evening church service. Because it would be a long drive Buck encouraged Tasha to sleep; "I'll be OK," he told her. Tasha remembers telling him she would do so and that she loved him. Bundled in a blanket because the heater wasn't working in their 2001 Chevrolet Blazer, she lay back in the passenger seat and closed her eyes as they continued on Interstate 85. But at some point she woke up to the SUV rolling and rolling. It landed upside down in the median on I-85 near LaGrange, Georgia, between Atlanta and Columbus. The car was totaled, but you could still see the words "Tasha & Buck" on one of the backseat windows. No one knows what happened for sure. Buck was pronounced dead at the scene, but Tasha didn't learn that until after she was airlifted to a hospital. She remembers looking down and seeing that her right leg was mangled and her foot was gone. She remembers yanking on her seat belt to get out. She remembers screaming for her mom, her grandmother, anyone she knew. She remembers all the strangers who came to her aid.

The fabric of our life on this earth can be just like this story. In midst of the goodness of life we can suddenly find ourselves involved in tragic accidents, deadly misfortunes, frustrated expectations, and unrealized dreams. All of us have experienced some of kind dramatic circumstance in our journey through this world - which deeply and painfully still pervades our attitudes and our thinking even today. This was the atmosphere in which Isaiah wrote the words from our text this morning. Isaiah lived at a time when God's people were living under a dark and heavy spiritual cloud. In their journey with God they had wandered far off the road where God had been leading them. And as a result of prostituting themselves by worshipping pagan idols and living for themselves, rather than loving the holy God who deeply loved them - God allowed the Assyrians of the north to invade and dominate Israel, thickening the gloom of their lives. It was into this dark pit of desperation that the prophet Isaiah also spoke of the coming hope of the Kingdom of God; where God Himself will bring victory over the enemies of God who ruled and reigned over the land and within the hearts of God's people.

Isaiah 9:1-7 tells us that our God is in the king of victory. In the face of tragic accidents, deadly misfortunes, frustrated expectations, and unrealized dreams - God sovereignly rules, reigns and works out amazing turnarounds and great reversals. Think of Job and the sudden turn in his life; his pain and despair at losing everything and then of how God miraculously restored it all. Think of the many instances when God delivered His people when they faced seemingly overwhelming odds, such as when Gideon defeated 120,000 men with only 300. God specializes in that which is stunning and dramatic. The most dramatic work of God is His ability to take the darkness of death and change it into the light of life. Think of our own lives. Where were we going before coming to Christ? We were headed into eternal darkness. But then the light of Jesus entered the darkness of our hearts - and our lives took a 180-degree turn. And it is only by the sovereign grace of God that we were changed. It is by the sovereign power of God that we come to know victory in the life of this world, and in the life hereafter.

“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.” The promise of light given to a people who were walking in the darkness is the same promise of victory we have been given in Jesus! *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light”* - is a promise for both those in Israel 700 years before Christ entered the world *and* for those in the valley of Port Alberni 2000 years after He was born. But while the joy of victory over sin, evil and death was prophetic in the days of Isaiah - it is a *reality* for those of us on this side of the cross. In Christ we now know the tomb of death is helpless against the living God who now lives in us!

This is an awe and wonder that is often lost during the Christmas season because we tend to focus on the Jesus who is the baby in the manger. We all like babies; babies touch our hearts in a special way. But while babies may be cute and we may be struck at the miraculous way they are made, babies are not as awe-inspiring as the awe, the astonishment, the wonder of Jesus, the Son of God - begotten by the Father from all eternity; reflecting all the glory of God; being the very image and essence of God, through whom all things were created; upholding and reigning as King over the universe by the word of His power. We are like babies: we'll never become greater than the baby Jesus who is God Himself.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.” Yes, a “child” was “born” in this season. A “son” was “given.” And yes, he does sit on the throne of David and over the kingdom of Israel. But this “child” who was “born” was also the seed of God whom God planted at the very entry point of sin into the world at the Garden of Eden - to fulfill His purpose and His plan, when He pronounced His sovereign judgment on the devil: *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel”* (Genesis 3:15). And this “son” that was “given” was not just a baby born in a manger but the “Son” of God who was “given” on a cross for the forgiveness of our sins. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him”* (John 3:16-17). God’s son is our Saviour!

“And the government shall be upon his shoulder.” The “government” Isaiah speaks of here is not like governments we know of in this world. This “government” is a “kingdom” where the King of Kings and Lord of Lords rules over the entire universe. Jesus was born a King, claimed to be King, worshipped as King, and identified himself as King even in his death. His kingdom was and is and always will be an everlasting kingdom. Jesus himself said: *“My kingdom is not of this world”* (John 18:36). His dominion is an eternal dominion, of universal height, width and depth. His kingdom extends eternally beyond the governments of the earth and endures from generation to generation, forever and ever. This King brought His light in the darkness of our lives - and his rule and reign has brought us victory over sin! In our text Isaiah lists the attributes and characteristics of Jesus as King that give us victory in life.

Jesus is our *“Wonderful Counselor.”* John 2:24 says Jesus *“knew all men”* Jesus knows what we are thinking and he knows about everything that is going on in our hearts and lives. A counselor knows and understands and gives guidance. Jesus has counsel for every crisis, a plan for every problem, a direction for every dilemma, a prescription for every pain, and an answer to every question. When we’re weary Jesus says, *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matt 11:28). When we are in need, Jesus tells us to, *“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you”* (Matthew 6:33). When we are worried or anxious, Jesus says, *“Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid”* (Matthew 14:27). When we are sick, Jesus says, *“Get up, take up your bed, and walk”* (John 5:8). Jesus knows us and understands our predicaments in life better than we or anyone else understands them. He knows our needs in view of His sovereign plan and purpose. Jesus is the One who eliminates the confusion of our lives because he gives insight into the real eternal issues of life. Jesus is the Word of God who cuts through the fog and reveals reality of God. Jesus is our *“wonderful counselor”* - our King, who reigns and rules over the universe - knows everything!

Jesus is our *“Mighty God.”* The Bible does not say Jesus is LIKE God. No, Jesus IS God. Jesus is God in all His divinity. He is omnipotent. He is the Sovereign over all. He is in total control. In Jesus there is no confusion or chaos. In his book *God With Us* John MacArthur writes, “Christ the King loves to step into a life of chaos and not only provide wonderful counsel, but also display His divine power by bringing order to the chaos. In other words, He not only tells His subjects what to do as a Wonderful Counselor but He can also energize them to do it --because He is the Mighty God - Because He is God, He can forgive sin, defeat Satan, liberate people from the power of evil, redeem them, answer their prayers, restore their broken souls, and reign over a rebuilt life, bringing His order to our chaos.”

Someone once said, “Jesus Christ dug deep the valleys, piled up the hills, and probed the mountains with His will. The moon and the stars leaped into Jesus’s arms. Jesus did not have to write His signature on the corner of a sunrise because He is the creator. Jesus did not have to place a laundry mark in the lapel of a meadow because He is the owner. Jesus did not have to carve His initials in the side of the mountain because He is the titleholder. Jesus did not have to put a brand on the cattle of a thousand hills because He is the proprietor. Jesus did not have to take out a copyright on the songs the birds sing because He is the author.” Jesus, Sovereign King, King of the Universe – owns everything!

Colossians 1:15-17 tells us Jesus is *“the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”* Jesus is our *“Mighty God”* the one who gives strength and might beyond measure or comprehension. While on earth he demonstrated his power to heal, his power to forgive, his power over life, his power over sin, his power over death, his power over all. Jesus is our *“Mighty God”*!

Jesus is our *“Everlasting Father.”* In John 10:30 Jesus said: *“I and the Father are one.”* In the mystery of the Trinity, which is beyond human understanding, the Bible tells us that God the Father *is also* Christ the Son. Isaiah is saying the same here, with a special focus on the *eternality* of Jesus Christ in God. He is saying Christ is our *“Everlasting Father.”* Jesus will be God the Father long after Canada and the US and the whole world becomes dust. He will be God the Father when the mist our lives *evaporate*.

Jesus will still be God the Father when the stars leap at His command from their orbit, and when the earth melts with the blazing heat of His judgment. Jesus will still be God the Father after all our confusions are wonderfully resolved in a heavenly understanding, when all of our weaknesses become strengths, and when all of our defeats become victories. Jesus will still be God the Father when we no longer wander through the desert wilderness of this life to the end of the path that leads to eternity.

We all, to some degree, due to the failures *and* successes of our earthly fathers, have warped views and distorted perceptions of what God the “*Father*” means. Jesus is the “*Everlasting Father*” and so Jesus is the perfection of what fatherhood is. Jesus protects, sustains, provides, empowers, equips, loves, and disciplines like a father should protect, sustain, provide, empower, equip, love, and discipline. Like a father, Jesus cares about every aspect of our lives. As God the Father, Jesus loves us perfectly and unconditionally – like a godly father should. Because Jesus is a perfect, holy, loving God the Father - he does not live out the shortcomings of His life through his children like many earthly fathers do. Jesus as God the Father is the perfection of God’s love and God’s wrath, so that His children might know him as Lord and Savior. Jesus is our “*Everlasting Father*” – our Fatherly King!

Jesus is our “*Prince of Peace*.” Romans 5:1 says: “*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” The promised Messiah came to earth in order to bring peace to a once broken relationship with God. God created man in His image for the purpose of an intimate glorious relationship with Himself. Sin entered the world and broke that relationship. Jesus came into the world to die on a cross to restore that relationship. In Christ we again have peace with God. “*Peace*” is the word “*shalom*” which means the absence of strife, and the fullness and wholeness of life. In Christ we now have that fullness and wholeness. The victory of the cross is our peace. Jesus said, “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you*” (John 14:27). In Luke 2:14 the angels proclaimed: “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!*”

This also speaks of the *peace* to come in the future, when Christ our Savior will rule and reign over all the earth as Christ the King. It is going to be different when Jesus comes back again. The first time he rode a donkey; he will return on a white horse. The first time he stood before Pilate; next time Pilate will kneel before him. The first time Jesus was rejected; next time every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The first time Jesus wore a crown of thorns; next time he will wear the crown of glory! The first time Jesus walked on water; the next time he will step out of eternity and walk onto the clouds – with a rainbow of victory wrapped around his shoulders, with his arms open and a smile on his face, as the laws of gravity and time and space collapse, as peace rains down on us like a waterfall as we stand with him on the shores of heaven. Jesus is our “*Prince of Peace*” – our King, our victory!

“*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.*” It was by the “*zeal*” (the passion) of the “*LORD of hosts*” that Jesus, our King, who rules and reigns over all sin and all evil and all death and all life and all people and all the universe and all of history - that we now know the victory of light over darkness, joy over gloom, peace over war, mercy over condemnation, grace over sin, good over evil, life over death. Jesus is the glorious, all-powerful, victorious King - who died on a cross and rose from the dead and rules and reigns over His kingdom *forever, because* Jesus our King has come and he will come again! The old tradition says, “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” The way we say that today is “God is most glorified *in us* when we are most satisfied *in Him*. What this means for us during this season is that if Jesus is truly our King, we will not be satisfied with just the baby in the manger. We must not let the joy of Christmas be the manger, the gifts, a decorated tree, food, fellowship, candles, cookies, or the songs of the season. The truth is the chief end of man is to glorify God by finding our greatest joy in Jesus Christ – as our Lord and Savior and glorious King!

Jesus sits as King of the universe on His throne in heaven today. Tasha knew that in the midst of experiencing a tragic accident. The catastrophic misfortune that took her husband Buck, also took her right leg and part of her colon. But the accident did not take away her faith in God through Jesus Christ. Tasha said she felt the glorious grace of God’s presence as they pulled her from the wreckage of the accident: “All I knew was peace and comfort,” she said. She also says that she knows Buck, her husband, is “*in a much better place*” today because he knew Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. And on reflecting on her tragic accident Tasha says: “God has a greater plan than I’ll ever know.”

This is what it means to know Jesus as King. Jesus sovereignly rules and reigns over all things – even when you lose your husband and your right leg a week after getting married. Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor in the midst of tragic accidents. Jesus is our Mighty God when we become a victim of a deadly misfortune. He is our Everlasting Father when our most passionate dreams are shattered. He is our Prince of Peace when we are incensed by an unmet expectation. Jesus is our Savior when we are faced with the deadly reality of our inbred sin. Jesus is our Lord when we humbly obey him in spite of our rebellious nature. Jesus is our God, our King, the creator and the sustainer of everything in life.

When the angel of the Lord came to Mary and told her about God's plan for her to give birth Jesus, he said: *"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end"* (Luke 1:32-33). A *"child"* was *"born"* and *"son"* was *"given"* and today he rules and reigns as King on throne of heaven - and on the throne of the hearts and lives of those who truly know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. This is what we celebrate in this season. Our King has come! And for all of us who missed his first coming, none of us will miss the power and glory of his second coming.

"Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS." Revelation 19:11-16

Know that whatever your circumstance or situation or struggle might be today, Jesus is sovereignly in control. In John 16:33 Jesus said: *"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."* Jesus is our *King*; our resurrected Savior sovereignly and omnipotently rules and reigns over all of creation. John 18:37 tells us that when Pilate asked Jesus, *"So you are a king?"* Jesus answered: *"You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world."* Jesus is our King and Jesus will be our king forever!

One of these days lightning is going to fill the sky from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting - and Jesus our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace will appear in the clouds with a host of angels in flaming fire. And its then that we all will clearly see that Jesus is the King of the universe. And we will tremble – either in deadly fear or joyous awe. And everyone and everything will stand before Jesus and with one voice proclaim the words of 1 Timothy 1:17: *"To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen"* As we celebrate this Christmas, may we all embrace Jesus as our Savior, our Lord and our King - and humbly bow before Him and worship Him by allowing him to rule and reign in our hearts.

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Pastor Leland Botzet

Arrowsmith Baptist Church