

The Prophecy

An Indescribable Gift, Part 1

Isaiah 9:6

A couple of Sunday night's ago in our worship service, our Cubbies were on the platform quoting scripture verses that they had been memorizing. About 60 children in all . . . they were really precious. They then surprised me with homemade thanksgiving cards . . . they were stock cards where they could fill in the blank – I thank God for – dash – and they wrote in their answers.

In a season often viewed as nothing more than a speed bump on the way to Christmas, I thought you'd like to hear what some of our Cubbies were thankful for – these are children ages 3 and 4.

1. **Evelyn wrote** in black ink – I thank God for Pastor Davey.

Her teacher made her write that. I'm sure of it. Actually, her mother told me later her daughter wanted to make sure I got her card – in fact, she asked her mother if I'd read it yet and to go ask me. She had glued all these wonderful sparkly diamonds on it for me – I found it . . . and I'm keeping this card.

2. **Michael wrote**, I thank God for food.

He said what he wanted to say. I can just see him, "Okay, let me fill out this crummy card so I can get outta here and get some food."

3. **Braden writes**, I thank God for our new baby.

I couldn't help but thing: there goes Silent Night . . . congratulations Braden and family – and hang in there mom.

4. **Granger wrote**, I thank God for Jesus and all He made – we've got a little creationist theologian right there in Cubbies.

5. **Amellia wrote**, I thank God for Mama and Papa (I'm guessing that might be a reference to grandparents).

6. **Megan wrote**, I thank God for church and mommy and flowers – she used lots of different crayons, lots of creative coloring.

7. **Hosea writes** – I thank God for fishing.

No coloring – let's just cut to the chase . . . thank God for fishing.

8. **Nehemiah writes**, I thank God for my brother letting me have his car to play with – way to go big brother.

9. **Dani writes**, "I thank God for trees, Mom, Dad, my sister and Jesus – hopefully not in that order.

10. I loved this one, **Faith writes**, "I thank God for dresses . . . and alligators." What a girl . . . she likes dresses *and* alligators. Is that a great combination or what?

The problem is she's gonna grow up and say, no what I meant was I like dresses and expensive alligator purses . . . and high heels.

We got a problem here.

11. One more, **Adi wrote**, "I thank God for Jesus, Mommy and Daddy and Cubbies."

She is probably their favorite student.

Thank you parents for allowing us to invest in your children in our AWANA program – our Sunday evenings are full around here . . . AWANA resumes tonight as usual – as well as our teen discipleship programs, and in the Chapel we will continue our study of key verses and biographies of Christian leaders – and a look tonight at a man and his wife who sparked a movement that would care for more than 100,000 children without any living parent – at a time in history when London, England alone had some 10,000 children in prison under the age of 8.

Now, over these next few December Sundays, and at our Christmas Eve services, I want to address the subject of our Lord's incarnation.

Jesus Christ is called by the Apostle Paul *in 2 Corinthians 9:15* an indescribable gift.

The word, indescribable, in that context means that the gift of God's grace through the coming of Jesus Christ is impossible to fully describe with human words.¹

Jesus Christ is indescribable.

This Christmas season will see its share of gift giving – but have you ever thought about the fact that few, if any of the gifts will be considered indescribable.

We'll probably be able to measure them and price them.

In my study I found it interesting to read one article that traces the hottest selling toys for kids over the past few decades and how those gifts have changed – not only in price, but in complexity.

For instance, in 1967 the top selling Christmas gift was the board game Battleship. Fifty years later – in 2007, it was the Ipod touch.

In 1990 the biggest seller was Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. If you don't know who they are, I don't have time to explain.

In 1995 it was the Beeny Baby craze.

In 1980 it was Rubik's Cube.

Go back even further and the most popular Christmas gift for kids in 1965 was An Easy Bake Oven.

Four years later, in 1969 it was your own personal chemistry set. I remember getting one of those . . . and nearly burning the house down – I wonder what will happen if I mix these?

I read in the AP news, just this past month that somebody gave his sweetheart the most expensive diamond ever sold in history – a 59 carat pink diamond sold at auction for 83.2 million dollars.

Now that's an expensive gift.

Now as expensive or amazing or creative or technologically savvy as some of these gifts are, none of them are indescribable. They can be measured, valued, packaged and sold.

They can be fully described and defined.

Nearly 2,000 years ago, a gift arrives from God the Father – not wrapped in shiny ribbon, but in swaddling clothes; placed, not under a Christmas tree, but in a feed trough carved into the side of a dugout animal shelter next to a tavern in Bethlehem.

That gift was literally surrounded with mud and the smell of manure. And yet, that gift, to this day – is indescribable.

- You cannot place a value upon Him; you can only say, He is infinitely priceless.
- You can talk about Him, but you can never fully define Him.
- You can love and serve Him but you cannot measure His majesty or His attributes.
- You can sing to Him and about Him, but you cannot fully comprehend Him.

Some 600 years before the birth of Christ, the prophet *Isaiah* had the most challenging task of attempting to put some understandable terms together to give us some inkling of this indescribable Messiah.

Let me invite you to Isaiah chapter 9 and this list of description for the coming Messiah.

Isaiah 9:6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

He's called a child, or a baby.

This describes the humanity of Jesus Christ. God, yet man.

But He is also called here *a son*.

He will be the son of Mary revealing His relationship of flesh and blood to the human race.

In scripture Jesus will be called the *son of Man* – revealing His relationship as the Royal Messiah to human history.

He will be called the *Son of God* – revealing His relationship as deity within the Trinity.

For unto us a child is born, a son is given – but He's no ordinary baby.

He is:

- Fully human in form and substance,
- Royally Messianic in purpose,
- Fully divine in essence.

Now Isaiah goes on to give this little baby boy five different names He will grow up to represent.

Five descriptions of this indescribable gift.

1. First, Isaiah refers to Him as Wonderful.

Notice verse 6, the middle part, And His name shall be called, Wonderful.

There should be, I believe a comma after that English word. This is not an adjective, describing the next word, it is a noun.

He is simply, *wonderful*.

The text isn't telling us that He will do wonderful things – and He will; Isaiah isn't telling us that He has provided a wonderful future for all who follow Him – and He will;

Isaiah is simply telling us that He is wonderful.

Hebrew prophecy is based on truth, not flattery – He really is indescribably wonderful.

I've had young ladies and young men in my office, planning their wedding ceremony. I've had more than one describe their husband to be with gushing and sighing and saying, "He's just wonderful." Give it a few months.

Then he'll be wonderful and some other stuff too.

He will be wonderful – at times. He will act wonderfully on occasions.

Isaiah says, "This One is consistently, unchangeably wonderful!"

By the way, I believe this first description can serve as a categorical heading for every other term.

You could read it to mean, "*He is a wonderful counselor – He is a wonderful Mighty God . . . He is a wonderful Prince of Peace.*"

In other words, the more you get to know Him – the more wonderful He becomes.

This indescribable gift from God is not only wonderful, notice,

2. And His name shall be called . . . Counselor

Jesus Christ is our infallible Counselor. He never gives wrong advice. He never has to say – "I wasn't aware of that issue – I gave you the wrong direction . . . I'm sorry, but I gave you bad advice."

I'm going to say something that might take you by surprise.

Every woman in this auditorium needs counseling. All the men said? AMEN! "I don't know where you're going Stephen but it sounds dangerous."

I'm not finished yet . . . every man in here needs counseling too.

And all the women said? AMEN!

The truth is every person on this campus – of every age – needs advice and counsel throughout life.

But think about it – would you ever go to someone for advice if they needed advice for the same issue?

About anything!

A few weeks ago I hopped into my daughter's Volkswagen Bug and we took off for the auto

mechanic. His name is Dimitrios – he's a member of our church and an unbelievably accurate and wonderfully honest auto mechanic.

Her car had started idling hot as soon as she turned on the car – it gained intensity until she put it in gear.

Can you imagine if we got to his shop and described the noise to him and then he said, "You know, I've got the same problem – hey, come over here and listen to my car . . . what do you think I oughtta do about it?"

I would look at him and say, "Okay, where's Dimitrios and what have you done with his body?"

The truth is, you'd never ask someone for help if they couldn't solve their own problem.

Would you go to a Christian counselor for marriage counseling if before you got started he said, "Listen before we get to your problem, I've got a problem in my own marriage and I need your advice first."

When *Isaiah* describes Him *as the Counselor*, he's not just describing a good one – he's describing a Counselor who never needs counsel. He's describing the Divine Advisor who will never need your advice.

He is divinely insightful – He is omnisciently aware of everything.

When the woman came to the well for water – thirsty and tired of life – Jesus Christ knew it all and told her she had divorced 5 husbands and was now living with her 6th attempt at love and she rushed to the village telling people, "*Come see a man who told me everything I ever did.*" (*John 4:29*)

No wonder the whole village turned out . . .

The people would later say, "*No one ever spoke like this before.*" (*John 7*)

Paul wrote in Romans 11:34, Who has known the mind of the God – who has been His counselor?

The answer? No one!

Isaiah says, "Let me try to describe the indescribable – *His name shall be called Wonderful . . . Counselor . . . notice,*

3. Mighty God

This is perhaps one of the strongest descriptions of Christ's deity anywhere in Old Testament prophecy.

He, the Messiah, the Son of God will be, literally, the Mighty El. (e – 1)

Whenever *Isaiah* uses the name El, he is referring to deity.

El forms the beginning of Elohim – the name for our triune God. El is at the end of Emmanuel – the name for God with us.

- Think of that as you picture Him lying in a borrowed manger – He’s the mighty El – the mighty God.
- Think of that as you picture Him condemned in Pilate’s Hall – He is the mighty El – the mighty God.
- Think of that as you picture Him on the cross – He is the mighty El . . . Jesus Christ is the mighty God.

Now, although *Isaiah* has already given us enough to exhaust our comprehension, but he’s not through.

4. And His name shall be called, Everlasting Father.

Of all his titles, this one sounds somewhat strange. We don’t tend to think of Jesus as Father – we reserve that title for God the Father – and Jesus, as God the Son.

However, this word literally refers to the one who *rules over the ages* – the *one who directs the ages* – *all of time*.

You could translate it then as the *Ruler of eternity* – again, this is a strong declaration of the deity and eternity of Jesus Christ.

In fact listen to the writer of *Hebrews* as He pens a conversation between God the Father and God the Son. *Hebrews 1:8. But of the Son He (God the Father) says, “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom . . . On the cross, Jesus referred to God the Father as His God – here in Hebrews 1 God the Father refers to God the Son as His God.*

The Father continues being quoted in Hebrews 1, You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the word of your hands . . . they will wear out, but you are the same, and your years will have no end.”

The Jewish leaders were scandalized by the obvious implication when Jesus said to them, *“Before Abraham was I am.” (John 8:58)*

He is the Father – the Ruler – the Originator of eternity.

On one occasion, Jesus called Satan *the Father of lies. (John 8:44)*. He used that title in the same

way *Isaiah* uses the title of Father – Satan is the ruler – Satan is the originator of lies.

Jesus Christ is the originator, the ruler over all of eternity.

He is the everlasting Father – the Father of eternity.

5. The last name Isaiah ascribes to this coming Messiah is, Prince of Peace

Because of Jesus Christ we can have peace with God. (*Romans 1:7*)

Because of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Glory, we can also have the peace of God, as we walk with Him in obedience. (*Phil. 4:7*)

But this phrase in *Isaiah* is also highly prophetic – even beyond our generation today.

The birth of Christ didn’t bring peace to planet earth. From his birth until now the earth is filled with wars and violence.

In fact, Jesus Christ clearly said, *“I haven’t come to bring peace, but a sword (Matthew 10:34); in other words, you who follow Me will have trouble and persecution (John 16:33).*

This title, Prince of Peace, speaks of a time when Christ will ascend the throne of David and rule the world at His second coming.

At His first coming they put the Prince of Peace upon a cross.

But at His second coming we will sing as the Prince of Peace ascends the Throne of David as the majestic, ruling Sovereign, Prince . . . and peace will flood the earth.

These are five wonderful descriptions of **who Jesus Christ is.**

You might notice that *Isaiah* tells us at least one thing Jesus Christ does.

Go back to the middle part of *verse 6. And the government shall be upon his shoulder.*

This is wedding terminology of a bridegroom processing with His bride.

There were three stages to an Old Testament Jewish marriage.

a. The first stage was called the Engagement.

This is where the man went out and sold all his livestock, emptied his bank account, sold everything he owned, including the shirt off his back and bought a diamond ring for his fiancé.

Oh, that’s the American custom, sorry.

But it was worth it though, wasn't it men? Amen? This time you wanna say it – it was worth it, Amen?!

In Old Testament times, an engagement was something carried out by the parents while the children were younger. Parents normally picked out the spouses of their children.

The older my kids get, the more I like this custom.

If you can imagine it, and I'm not recommending this, the couple to be married never met until the second stage.

b. This stage was called the Betrothal – or the Kiddushin.

It was a formal event, considered binding by both families.

At this ceremony, the Bridegroom would pay the dowry, or the (mohar) – this was known as the bridal price; it was normally paid in cattle or clothing or money – or all three, depending on the wealth of the bridegroom.

The dowry was delivered at this Betrothal ceremony and it was given to the bride's father to compensate him for wedding expenses.ⁱⁱ

I really like this custom. In fact, it's biblical!

After this ceremony, the bride and groom were considered married, although they didn't live together or consummate their marriage; this Kiddushin period typically lasted for a year.

It was so binding, that should the man die before their wedding ceremony, the woman would be considered a widow.

During this year long period of time the bridegroom would spend the year preparing a home for his bride. It was typically an addition to his family home . . . they just kept building on additions.

You can immediately see the analogy of prophecy to our own, soon coming Bridegroom.

The Bridegroom pays the price for us His bride – He leaves to prepare a home for us and then returns to take us back to a home ***He's prepared for us in His father's house (John 14:2).***

In Joseph and Mary's day, the Kiddushin was binding. They were actually considered husband and wife. They were considered legally married, even though the third stage had not yet been reached.ⁱⁱⁱ

c. Finally, the wedding ceremony would take place – the third stage, called the Hoopa.

When the year of kiddushin was over, the groom would begin a noisy procession to the bride's home. All the neighborhood would turn out for the procession. Relatives came from all over and they would jam the narrow streets with their singing and shouting.

Upon arriving at the bride's home, the two of them would begin the walk back to his home and the beginning of several days of festivities and feasting.

During that walk to his home, at some point in the brief journey, she would remove a veil from her face and lay it upon his shoulder, and the crowd would chant a song that included the words, *her authority is upon his shoulder* – her life is upon his shoulder – the government of her life was now upon his shoulder.

Obviously this reference includes the sovereign rule of Christ over all the governments of the world, but what's lost is the imagery of a husband who loves his wife and bears the responsibility to care for her and she finds security and rest in his authority and provision.

That's the picture Isaiah is drawing . . .

This One who will be born . . . He is wonderful . . . He is Counselor . . . He is mighty God . . . He is the Father of Eternity . . . He is the Prince of Peace – and He loves you, His beloved.

He's coming for you – and upon His broad, omnipotent shoulder you can, as His bride, lay your veil as you surrender to His authority and His care and His provision.

We say to Jesus Christ – the authority of my life is upon your shoulder. My trust for care and provision is upon your shoulder.

We cannot fully describe Him, but we can fully surrender to Him.

And as you place the veil of your dreams and your wishes and your will upon His shoulder, you discover a little bit more of this indescribable gift . . . that He is:

- Wonderful
- Counselor
- Mighty God
- Eternal Father
- Prince of peace

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i Fritz Rienecker/Cleon Rogers, Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Regency, 1976), p. 484

ii Adapted from John MacArthur, Matthew (Moody Press, 1985), p. 16

iii Adapted from Ivor Powell, Matthew's Majestic Gospel (Kregel, 1986), p. 26