

12/12/07 Midweek Advent Sermon: "Mighty God!"

(Texts: Isaiah 9:1-2, 6-7; Titus 2:11-14; John 5:16-18 & 8:48-59)

Last Wednesday we began our midweek Advent sermon series based on Isaiah 9:6, which reads: **"For 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."**

So, who is this child whom people will call by these various titles? Last Wednesday I quoted Isaiah 7:14, which reads: **"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."** Here we see that 800 years before the Son of God was born of the virgin the prophet Isaiah is moved by the Holy Spirit to pen words that point people ahead to their Savior.

Now, if you read the 1st chapter of Matthew's Gospel, which we heard last Wednesday, you find out that an angel is sent to Joseph to explain to him that his fiancé, Mary, is still a virgin because the baby in her womb was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Then the angel tells Joseph to name the baby "Jesus" - a name that means "God saves." So, the child's actual name is Jesus!

However, Matthew then says that Jesus' birth fulfills the words of Isaiah 7:14, which I just read for you. If you recall, Isaiah said that the child born of the virgin would be called "Immanuel" - a Hebrew word that means "God with us."

Wait a minute! I thought the child's actual name was Jesus. So, why does Isaiah say that he will be called Immanuel? Well, remember what we learned last Wednesday. We learned that many people are called by titles in addition to their actual given names because those titles describe something about themselves.

Therefore, one of the titles given to Jesus is "Immanuel" because he is the eternal Son of God in human flesh. In addition, if you go ahead to Isaiah 9:6 we find four more titles that will be given to the baby named Jesus.

Last Wednesday we learned about the first title, **"Wonderful Counselor."** Jesus was given that title because He spoke with authority. In other words, Jesus spoke as though He were God Himself! Jesus' counsel is wonderful because His teaching is the teaching of God. That is why it is so important for us Christians to hear, read, study and believe Holy Scripture. As Jesus says in John chapter 8: **"...Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'"**

Now we're read to focus on tonight's sermon theme which is the second title given to the child as found in Isaiah 9:6 - namely, **"Mighty God."** My friends, there were people in Jesus' day who refused to believe that Jesus was God in human flesh. Guess what. Things haven't changed. Even more so today we can find people who celebrate Christmas but refuse to believe that Jesus is God. However, if we take Scripture seriously, we can't avoid the fact that the child born of Mary is Mighty God!

For example, some try to say that the original Hebrew of this title in Isaiah 9:6 should actually be translated as "great hero," implying that this child would be a famous man - but still just a man. But there are serious problems with this assertion.

First, we already know that the child will be called "Immanuel" - which means "God with us." Second, the original Hebrew of this title really can't be translated as "great hero." You see, the original Hebrew of this title is אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר which just happens to be found in three other places in the Old Testament. Guess what. In each of these 3 other cases the title אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר clearly refers to God Himself and not some mere human who happens to be a "great hero."

For example, we find אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר in Deuteronomy 10:17, which reads: **"For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes."** We also find אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר in Jeremiah chapter 32, where we read: **"O great and powerful God, whose name is the LORD Almighty, great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds."** Finally, just one chapter after Isaiah 9:6 we find these words in Isaiah 10:21: **"A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God."**

So, based on this evidence, the title אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר in Isaiah 9:6 can only mean "Mighty God." The child born of the virgin will be called "Might God" because he is the Son of God in human flesh. In fact, the first 3 verses of John's Gospel stress this point. John 1:1-3 reads: **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."** What does this mean?

Simply put, the "Word" is one of the titles John gives to Jesus because Jesus speaks for His Father. John says "the Word" was with God AND "the Word" was God. How can this be? John is here teaching what later Christians would call "The Trinity." In other words, there is only one God who exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Now, the Son of God was with the Father and the Spirit "In the beginning." However, please listen to what John goes on to write a few verses later in John 1:14, **"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."** By these words John is alluding to the fact that the Son of God took on human flesh in the womb of the virgin Mary. This takes us to our Gospel reading for tonight, which is taken from John chapters 5 and 8.

In John chapter 5 we read about Jesus performing miracles on the Sabbath, a day when God's people were supposed to rest from their work so they could focus on God's work for them as Creator and Savior. But Jesus says that He must work on the Sabbath. Why? The reason He must work is that His Father is also working!

In other words, Jesus is claiming to be God and that He must work on the Sabbath because as God He upholds all creation. As it says at the beginning of Hebrews chapter 1: **"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."**

With that said, we must now look at the second half of our Gospel reading from John chapter 8. There Jesus tells the Jews who refuse to believe in Him that they are NOT children of God. Then Jesus says that all Old Testament believers - including the father of Israel, Abraham - believed in Jesus and look forward to His coming.

Now, when the unbelieving Jews hear this they say: *"Jesus! How could Abraham have known you? He lived and died hundreds of years before you were born!"* Then Jesus spoke these awesome words: **"Before Abraham was born, I am."** By these words Jesus is teaching that He is the eternal Son of God in human flesh.

My friends, there are many other passages I could share with you that clearly teach that Jesus deserves the title **אל גבור** - **Mighty God** - because He was and still is God in the flesh. But why am I stressing this point? The reason is that the devil does not want you to believe that Jesus is God in human flesh. Why?

Well, if Jesus was only a man, then He is NOT our Savior. On Sunday, December 2nd, the sermon title was: "*Eve: Waiting for Jesus.*" We heard God's first Gospel promise in Genesis 3:15 where God said that "the woman" give birth to a male child who would crush the power of the devil. Only GOD can crush the power of the devil. Therefore, the male child born of "the woman" had to be God Himself in human flesh.

You see, the way that God's Son would crush the devil was by allowing Himself to be crushed by our sin so that we might be saved from the death and eternal Hell we deserve. But no mere human could pay for the sin of all. Only God Himself could do that!

So, if God was not the One hanging on that cross, then you are still under the curse of your sins. You are still a slave of the devil. No wonder the devil does NOT want you to believe that Jesus is "Mighty God."

Think about it. All who deny that Jesus is God either have to deny the reality of sin or they have to try to deal with their sin themselves. But both options are based on a lie to keep us from receiving salvation from the "Mighty God!"

For example, sometimes we're tempted to deny that our sin is any big deal. Even we Christians are guilty of this. But if we really seriously believe that Jesus is God and that He is with us always, as He said, then we would not get so comfortable with our sin.

But sometimes we DO get comfortable with our sin! Why? Maybe we think that Jesus was just a man who lived in the past and therefore He is no longer with us. Why should we worry about what a dead guy thinks about our sin? However, the reality is that Jesus lives and He is with us - *even when we are sinning against Him!* Therefore, we better take our sins seriously, because Jesus is Mighty God and He sees all.

On the other hand, maybe we DO take our sins seriously - but we foolishly think that we can deal with our sins ourselves. We think that we can make up for our sins by doing a few good deeds to impress God.

However, when we think like this we don't realize that our sins deserve God's present and eternal punishment. We don't realize that only God Himself can save us from our sins and that He did this by sending His own Son to the cross for us. So, when we try to deal with sin ourselves instead of repenting and trusting in Jesus we thereby show that we actually deny that Jesus is Mighty God who came to die on the cross for our sins.

But the Good News is that God has used His Word to rescue us from the devil's lies! Tonight God has taught you that the male child born of the virgin Mary is Mighty God, the One who hung on the cross for all your sins - including your sin of forgetting that Jesus is Mighty God in the flesh and that He is with you always, as He said. Jesus is Mighty God and He forgives you - and if the Mighty God forgives you, the devil has no claim on you.

Jesus is Mighty God and He claimed you as His own in Baptism where He put His Name on you and washed you free from your sin by the power of His Divine Blood.

Jesus is Mighty God and He nurtures your faith in Him as He teaches you with His Word.

Jesus is Mighty God and He gives you His own Body and Blood in Holy Communion to assure you that your sins are forgiven and that your Mighty God is with you!

Jesus is Mighty God and He will help you to live as His child in this world.

Jesus is Mighty God and He will give you eternal life in His love when He returns in power and glory.

With that said, I now close this sermon with the words of our second reading. Titus 2:11-14 reads: **"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."** Amen!