



"DOES ANYBODY KNOW WHO I AM?" - ISAIAH 9:6 (NRSV)

By: Rev. Cynthia Parnell McDonald, Ph.D.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Following World War II, there were more than two hundred French soldiers with amnesia who returned to Paris. They had been prisoners in Japanese camps and suffered through horrible ordeals of privation and torture. These men had been so psychologically devastated by their imprisonment that they lost the conscious awareness of who they were and where they had lived before the war. Most of the soldiers' identities were quickly established from Red Cross records or with the help of fellow prisoners, but after all known efforts were exhausted, there were still thirty-two men whose existence seemed impossible to trace. Not only were there no records of them, but none of the other soldiers knew anything about them. The doctors who were treating these thirty-two men believed that the chance for recovery would be impossible unless they were reconnected with family and friends.

Someone proposed publishing photographs of the men on the front page of newspapers throughout the country. A date, time, and place of meeting would also be given, hoping anyone having information about them would come. The plan was implemented and French newspapers soon published the pictures, adding that the Paris Opera House would open its doors for the potential identification and connection with loved ones.

On the assigned day, a huge crowd gathered inside the opera house to view the veterans. Every seat was taken and people spilled out onto the streets. Finally, in a dramatic entrance, the first of the amnesia victims walked onto the stage of the darkened room and slowly turned around under the glare of the spotlight, giving everyone a full view. Then, according to instruction, he and the other thirty-one soldiers who followed asked the same pleading question: “Does anybody out there know who I am . . . does anybody know who I am?”

Thankfully, many of the men were soon reunited with their families.

Isn't this the same question that many of us ask as Christians? Sadly, many people have a terrible case of self-imposed amnesia when it comes to who we are because we get distracted by life circumstance and forget about the character of the gift that we have been given in the child described in Isaiah 9:6. May I remind you this today of the indescribable gift that God gave to us? Despite life and the stress, fear, self-doubt, and the issues that we might have, we have a gift that transforms it all. It is the gift of Jesus Christ. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. So, who are we? We are called sons and daughters of God (Galatians 3); new creations (2 Corinthians 5); children of God and heirs of God (Romans 8). So, we celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ in this Advent season because of who He is.

Does anybody know who this child is? Isaiah tell us that he is a Wonderful Counselor and that his name reveals his Personality. He is indeed wonderful! The supernatural one. He is the guiding force in our lives and the planner of our paths. He is wonderfully qualified for his job, as Alan Perkins comments, “When the Scriptures refer to Jesus as a “wonderful” counselor, it does not just mean that he is good at giving advice. It means that he understands things which are beyond the ability of our finite minds to comprehend. He knows things which only God can know. He knows the ways of God; He understands God's plans and purposes. His knowledge, and intelligence, and wisdom, and insight far exceed that of any man who ever lived. So, in Jesus Christ, we have someone who, by virtue of his great knowledge and understanding, is abundantly qualified to guide and direct our lives, someone who is never confused or mistaken, someone who always knows exactly what to do, someone who will never lead us astray.”

Does anybody know who this child is? He is the Mighty God and the Everlasting Father, and his name reveals his Power! For he is the sovereign one, strong, mighty, and invincible. He is the sustaining one because he is our source and sustains us by His mighty power. Not only that, but he is “everlasting.” There was never a time when He was not and there will never be a time when He is not. He is the great “I AM.” He is the eternal, self-existent One! Our lives are directly tied to His; because He lives, we live over everything that comes against us!

This means that if God could close the mouth of the lions for Daniel, stand in the fiery furnace with the three Hebrew boys, part the Red Sea for Moses, make the sun stand still for Joshua, open the prison for Peter, put a baby in the arms of Sarah, and raise Lazarus from the dead then he can certainly take care of you. Nothing you are facing today is too hard for Him to handle!

So, I ask again, does anybody know who this child is? He is the Prince of Peace and His name reveals His purpose. The word “peace” refers to “a state of happiness, well- being and prosperity.” The word “prince” speaks of “a captain, a steward and a keeper.” He is the Creator and the Sustainer of our peace. He accomplished peace with God when He died on the cross, 1 John 2:2; Rom. 5:1. He extends His peace to all who receive Him by faith, John 14:27. He provides His peace to all those who trust Him in the valleys of life, Phil 4:6-7. He is the keeper of our peace and the guarantee of continued peace throughout eternity.

The story is told that at the end of the war of 1812, Andrew Jackson lead a famous battle that never should have been fought. He led his frontier riflemen to defeat a group of British troops in a battle near New Orleans. The ironic thing about the battle is that it was too late. A peace treaty was signed days earlier. Jackson did not get word in time to avoid the battle. Neither the Americans nor the British knew the war was over. Are you fighting a war that is over because God desires to give us peace while God fights the battle and works out the plan?

Keep in mind that God did not design the human mind to figure out the future or to fight any type of battle. It is beyond our capability. God created us minds to be in continual communication with Him so that we receive peace and stand still. Sometimes this peace may come in the form of comfort when God takes away the storm. Jesus did this for His disciples. On one occasion Jesus and His disciples were on the Sea of Galilee when a storm arose. Jesus disciples were overwhelmed by fear.

Jesus spoke to the storm and calmed the storm. Sometimes He will take away the storm. Peace may also come in the form of comfort through inner peace. God will give hope that comforts. Isaiah gave a promise that God's people would find hope in Jesus Christ. Sometimes, God will comfort by giving peace in the midst of the storm. God never promised that He would always take away the storm. Sometimes the miracle is to find peace in the midst of the storm. However God gives you peace, know that nothing can happen without God's permission and God will not allow a difficulty unless He has a divine purpose for it. If you will keep your peace, you'll pass the test, and God will bring you out better than you were before!

Does anybody know who this child is? His name is Jesus! And at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth (Philippians 2:10). His name is the hope of our hearts. It breaks sin's bondage and cools the fevered brow. His name comforts the broken heart, relieves the source of our greatest burdens; unlocks the door of heaven and closes the gates of Hell. He saves the sinner; redeems the soul; and secures his children with power. His name is Jesus! And we praise him this morning because He remains our Wonderful Counselor, our Everlasting Father, our Mighty God, the Prince of Peace. Praise our God!

All references used in the development of this sermon are available upon request.