**The Really Wonderful Counselor**

Isaiah 9:1-7; 1 Thess. 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36; Ps. 25:1-10 Dec. 2. 2018

Summary: What is a "counselor"? And what difference is Jesus as our "wonderful counselor" from the many good "counselors" we listen to every day? Intro: The year was 1809. The world was in an upheaval. Napoleon was sweeping through Austria and soldiers from many countries were dying on the battlefield. The fate of entire kingdoms and nations hung in the balance and the world seemed on the very edge of collapse

 It was 1809...

 And in that same year several significant people were born.

In Britain, there was William Gladstone - destined to become one of England’s finest statesmen. And Alfred Lord Tennyson, one of the great authors of his day, was born to an obscure preacher and wife.

 In the US - Oliver Wendell Holmes was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Not far away in Boston, Edgar Allen Poe began his eventful, albeit tragic, life.

 It was also in that same year the wife of a physician named Darwin gave birth to their child and named him Charles Robert.

 And that same year produced the cries of a newborn infant in a rugged cabin in Kentucky. The baby’s name? Abraham Lincoln.

 If there had been a news broadcast of that back in 1809 these words would have been heard: “The destiny of the world is being shaped on an Austrian battlefield today.”

 But history was actually being shaped in the cradles of England and America.

 Every age has its dangers.

 Eventually every nation faces difficulties.

 Even today in the US - one of the greatest nations that has ever existed on the face of the earth - even in the US, we’re concerned with international terrorism, political uncertainty, unrestrained immigration, looming debt, etc..

 Every nation, sooner or later, will face threats and perils that will make them believe that the destiny of the world is being shaped by that day’s events. And they will see their future as bleak, dark, and hopeless.

 And yet, in every age, the birth of a child can make a significant impact on their destiny.

 Back in the days of Isaiah, the world looked dark, and bleak, and hopeless. The nation of Israel had turned their back on God, and God, in His turn, had turned His back on them. To punish them, God was bringing a nation from the north (named Assyria) and that nation was going to sweep down upon them like a flood tide and then wash over them in vengeance.

 Isaiah said that God told Him (and any other person who’ll listen)

*“The LORD spoke to me with his strong hand upon me, warning me not to follow the way of this people. He said:… The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread, and he will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel he will be a* *stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare.”* Isaiah 8:11, 13 -14

 It was going to be a time of darkness. A time of hopelessness.

 But… just a few verses later, God said there will be a time of hope and light - hope and light brought by the birth of a child.

 Look at Isaiah 9:2: *“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”*

 Yes, Israel, you have walked in darkness.

 Yes, Israel you have been living in the land of the shadow of death.

 But there will be hope.

 And then in verse 6 He tells them why. *“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.”*

 A counselor is someone you listen to. Someone who gives you guidance or advice on things you think are important, that person is your “counselor.”

 And people will listen to the advice of all kinds of counselors.

 Some listen to talk show hosts: Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Glen Beck. Some listen to famous people like Oprah Winfrey, Dan Rather, Ellen DeGeneres. Folks will listen to political pundits, religious leaders, comedians, actors, singers, and the list goes on and on.

 If those people (whom they listen to) say it - it’s got to be true. These counselors are so influential that people will form their opinions based upon what their "counselors" say.

 Whoever you listen to is your counselor.

 Sometimes those counselors will give you good advice… and other times they won’t.

ILLUS: Back when I was in High School I took a test our guidance counselor gave me. It had a series of questions designed to help me decide what occupation would be best for me and my counselor based on that and my good grades in certain subjects concluded I should go to the University and study Chemical Engineering.

 I tried it and it didn’t fit me. I dropped out of college after the first year, but, my wise father counseled me to go back and enroll again, but this time at the University School of Agriculture. I loved it.

 A counselor is someone you listen to. Someone you accept advice from.

 The problem for Israel is that they had gotten into the habit of listening to the wrong counselors.

 Look at Isaiah 8:19: *“When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?”*

 There were men in Israel who were giving the people bad advice. These men were advising Israelites to listen to someone other than God – mediums and spiritists and folks that said they talked to the dead. Apparently these men were trusted enough by the people to be taken seriously.

 And because Israel listened to these counselors, their nation was going to suffer terribly. And so God was telling His people: You’re walking in darkness, in the shadow of death, because you’ve listened to the wrong counselors.

 BUT REJOICE because unto you a child is born, unto you a son is given and He’s going to be a wonderful counselor. He’s going to be someone you can listen to and know His advice is right. You’ll be able to stake your life on what He tells you. No mortal man or woman is going to be capable of giving you advice that will be anywhere as good as His.

 Now, I don’t want you to get the impression that I’m saying we should not take advice.

 Proverbs 15:22 tells us *“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.”*

* A wise person is someone who listens to many counselors.
* A wise person heeds the advice of people he can trust.
* A wise Christian seeks the advice of his elders.
* A wise child looks to his parents for advice.
* A wise husband talks things over with his wife (do I hear an “amen?”)
* And a wise women listens to the counsel of her husband.

 There are many skilled and trained counselors that can help you with your finances, marriage, business, guilt, sexual identity, etc.. No matter what issue you need help with there are people out there who are trained to help you. Counselors who sincerely want to help you.

 But no matter how good the advice these folks might give you they are still ONLY MORTALS. Their counsel can only accomplish so much.

ILLUS: A rehabilitation counselor took an early retirement to spend the rest of his life preaching. One day, while addressing an audience, he told of how - early in his career - he found a young boy with several birth defects. He arranged financial and medical help. Skilled surgeons restored the child’s facial appearance. Trained therapists taught him to speak and walk. By his teens, the boy was able to take part in all the activities of other young people. Addressing his crowd the retired counselor asked: “What do you think has become of this young man?” One guessed that since this young man had overcome such physical deformities he may have dedicated himself to becoming a great athlete. Someone else thought that – since his life had been changed by medical doctors that he had become a skilled surgeon. “No, none of these,” the retired counselor said sadly. “The young man is a prisoner, serving a life sentence for murder. We were able to restore his physical features and his ability to walk and act but we failed to teach him where to walk and how to act. I was successful in helping the boy physically, but I failed to help him spiritually. From that day on, I have determined to use the rest of my life to help people direct their steps and actions toward glorifying God.” (J. Furman Kearley 20th CC)

 You see there are many “Good” counselors in this world. But none can compare with the “Wonderful counselor. That’s because - when Jesus came - He came fully understanding the basic problem we face.

 Matthew 1:21 says *“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS."*

 One of the repeated pieces of advice Jesus gave people during his ministry was this: *“Go and sin no more”* (John 5:14; 8:11)

* Don’t make excuses for it.
* Don’t try to ignore it or explain it away.
* Sin isn’t going to go away on its own.
* We must deal with it.
* We must confront it.

 And the only way we can deal effectively with sin is to realize that only the Wonderful counselor can help us remove sin’s power and guilt.

 Paul said it this way: *“we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."* 1 Cor. 1:23-24

 Jesus is the wonderful counselor because He IS the power and the wisdom of God. Jesus is the one who can give us the power to help us overcome sin… and the wisdom to know how to deal with our sins when we fall prey to them.

 The counselors of this world CAN help you with your problems. But they can only help you so much.

 By contrast, Jesus (the Wonderful Counselor) has the ability to help us deal with the root cause of our problems. As Hebrews tells us:

*“He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness*.” Hebrews 5:2

*“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are— yet was without sin.”* Hebrews 4:15

 You see: Jesus understands our problems. He’s sympathetic to our failure.

But He’s too good a counselor to just let us do what we want and ignore the consequences. He knows our problems and He has counsel to help us deal with our sins. The key of course is this: listen to… and follow His advice.

 So, have you done that? Have you let Jesus be your counselor?

 Have you asked for His guidance and His advice in your problems?

 Consider grading yourself on listening to Jesus. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you answer this statement:

 “I listen to and follow the counsel and advice of Jesus Christ as I make the daily decisions in the affairs of my life.”

 If you don’t listen hardly at all to Jesus’ advice, then it’s a 1 or 2.

 If you listen “most of the time” or “all the time” it’s a 9 or 10.

CLOSE:

 We have a counselor who is able to deal gently with us. One who is sympathetic to our weaknesses. But we need to first listen to His advice.

 As Christians we need to listen to Him everyday. But if you’re not a Christian today then you need to hear what He advises you in Mark 16:16. *“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”*

 Have you made that decision yet? Jesus wants to be your “wonderful counselor”, but in order to be that kind of counselor to you, He must first be the child that is given, and the son that is born to you.

 Has Jesus been born in you?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, there are so many voices vying for our attention and bidding us to listen to their advice. May the Holy Spirit You sent guide us away from those false counselors and lead us to listen only to You. In Your great and holy name we pray. Amen.