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Sermon Notes

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His Name is Wonderful

Isaiah 9:6

I. An Eternal Light Shining in Darkness

A. Spurgeon's powerful image

In 1858, the great English Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon began a sermon relating an experience in which he stood by the seashore at nighttime while a powerful storm was raging. The sea and the sky seemed to be competing against each other as to which of them could raise the greatest clamor... the sea was roaring with wave upon wave crashing down in a mighty tumult. But the storm clouds above the sea were answering with claps of thunder and fearsome lightning attacking. The stormy sea sought to drown out the noise of the thunder, and to Spurgeon it seemed they battled to a draw. It was a very dark night, and the storm clouds completely blocked the stars so that not a single one was visible.

Then suddenly, far away on the horizon, as if miles away on the water, Spurgeon noticed a bright shining light... the light of the moon reflected on the distant waters. The clouds hid the actual moon from his sight, but many brilliant rays of moonlight shone radiantly on the surface of the deep.

B. Applied to the Text

1. To Charles Spurgeon, this brought to mind the introduction of the text I am going to preach to you today
2. More than twenty-six centuries ago, the prophet Isaiah was lifted above the storms and darkness of his own generation to see into the distant future
3. With the supernatural vision of the future that only the true prophets of God have ever had, Isaiah saw the coming of Jesus Christ into the world and wrote of it with these marvelous words

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.

The darkness of Isaiah's day was in some ways very different than ours, but in some ways exactly like ours

Isaiah lived seven centuries before Christ in Judah and prophesied at the time of Assyria's invasion of the northern kingdom of Israel. Because of their great wickedness and sin in turning away from the living God to serve idols, God had finally decreed the end of that northern Kingdom.

Their politics and ours are different. But the root issues are still the same... sin and death.

From the Garden of Eden, God had established the link between sin and death

He forbade Adam from eating the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, saying "When you eat of it, you will surely die." Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, and though he did not die that day, he was immediately put under the death penalty. Someday he would die physically. But for the rest of his life, he and all his descendants would walk under the shadow of death...

We would be enslaved to sin and receive the final punishment that we deserved for our sins... eternal death in hell.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death

C. But Isaiah saw a future light shining...

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.

D. This Light is None Other than Jesus Christ, the Light of the World

E. Isaiah predicted him with these unforgettable words

Isaiah 9:6-7 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. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

F. Christmas time is the celebration of this child born, this son who is given... the King who will rule for the glory of God

G. Fully unfolding every phrase of this prophetic description is beyond us

H. I want to follow Charles Spurgeon's lead in zeroing in on just one phrase: "HIS NAME WILL BE CALLED WONDERFUL"

1. Some translations link the eight words in two couplets: WONDERFUL
COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD, EVERLASTING FATHER, PRINCE of
PEACE

2. I have noted before that there is a mingling of the human and divine in these names... a combination of a supernatural element with a human element
3. This child who would be born, this son who would be given will be called MIGHT GOD... completely human, completely divine
4. So, the translations join the couplets together, and I'm fine with that
5. The most famous and widespread English translation is the King James Version, and the translators separated the first two names by a comma—such as “His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor...”
6. Spurgeon honored that comma so completely that he preached two entirely separate sermons on Isaiah 9:6a, the first being “His Name—Wonderful” and the second the following week “His Name—the Counselor”
7. I will not give you the second sermon next week... but I love the simplicity of zeroing in on the first word and applying it to Jesus: “His name will be called wonderful”

I. His Name

1. This is Jesus Christ, the child born to the virgin Mary
2. The word “name” refers to his reputation, how he is understood... a combination of his person and his works
3. The text predicts what his name will be CALLED... implying the viewing audience, the believers worldwide who will come to know him and see him as he really is
4. The elect from every tribe and language and people and nation worldwide, from Jerusalem through Judea and Samaria and to the distant valleys and islands and coastlines and hilltops where the messengers of the gospel will carry that name

J. “Wonderful”

1. The word carries with it a sense of the MIRACULOUS... the supernatural
2. It points to Jesus’ supernatural identity as the Son of God, who was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit

Luke 1:35 The angel [said to Mary], "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

3. Also it refers to the river of miracles that Jesus Christ would do to prove that he is God in the flesh

Matthew 4:24 News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them.

Matthew 11:5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

4. But for our purposes, we can zero in on the word as we usually use it, “Wonderful” referring to our sense of how amazing Jesus really is... a sense of WONDER in our hearts, of marveling at how great he is
5. In the Jewish culture, to name someone something meant that that attribute CHARACTERIZED him
 - a. Like Nabal in David’s time... his name literally meant fool, and he lived and died like a fool
 - b. Jesus changed Simon’s name to Peter... the ROCK, and that characterized him as well, as he was the undisputed leader of the Apostles and the beginning of the church in Jerusalem
 - c. Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus was named “Barnabas,” meaning “son of encouragement” because he was a river of encouragement to everyone around him
 - d. SO Jesus embodies the word WONDERFUL... he is a limitless source of wonder to all of us who know him and trust him and love him; and so he will be for all eternity

K. Spurgeon’s Three-Part Division:

Jesus Christ deserves to be called wonderful for what he was in the PAST

Jesus Christ deserves to be called wonderful for what he is in the PRESENT

Jesus Christ will deserve to be called wonderful for what he will be in the FUTURE

Though Charles Spurgeon didn’t mention it, I think an excellent parallel verse that supports this three-part division is

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

II. Christ is Wonderful for What He Was in the Past

A. The Eternal Existence of Christ

1. Christ has existed from eternity past as God, co-equal with the Father
2. The Jehovah's Witnesses have propagated the old heresy first taught by the Arians in the fourth century, and refuted courageously by Athanasius; the heresy is that Jesus is God's greatest creature...
3. But the Gospel of John makes it plain that Jesus, called "the Word" existed with the Father from the Beginning

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

4. So also the prophet Micah makes it plain that the baby who would be born in Bethlehem is eternal in his origins

Micah 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

5. Athanasius led the effort to fight the Arian heresy that Jesus was a creature, and that effort culminated in the Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
 the Father almighty,
 maker of heaven and earth,
 of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
 the only Son of God,
 begotten from the Father before all ages,
 God from God,
 Light from Light,
 true God from true God,
 begotten, not made;
 of the same essence as the Father.
 Through him all things were made.
 For us and for our salvation
 he came down from heaven;
 he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and
 was made human.

6. The eternity of Jesus Christ is WONDERFUL... it staggers us

- a. In Revelation 1, the resurrected Christ is revealed to John on the Island of Patmos

Revelation 1:14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.

- b. Jesus was born OLDER THAN THE EARTH... older than the rocks of the mountains, older than the crashing waves of the sea; older than the oldest oak tree, older than the sun, moon, and stars

B. The Incarnation Is Wonderful

1. The concept that this eternal being, who with the Father created the universe, became a helpless baby, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger is WONDERFUL... it BOGGLES the mind
2. Mary could not fully fathom it as she cared for her newborn son

Luke 2:19 Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

3. Joseph knew that Mary's account of her pregnancy was true, because the angel had told him so... "What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit"... but how could he comprehend the fullness of this wonder
4. The shepherds that were told to go see the baby in the manger looked on in wonder, hardly able to comprehend what the angel had told them: "Today, in the city of David, a Savior is born for you; he is Christ the Lord"... Christ the LORD... that is the name of Almighty God!
5. The Magi would come and offer their gifts, but how could they fully take in the WONDER of this one born a king, to whom a miraculous star had led them?
6. Even the angels that appeared and celebrated the birth of Jesus "longed to look into these things"... to inquire and discern and try to comprehend the infinite mystery
7. But the incarnation itself would not end the WONDERS of Jesus' life

C. His Death Was Wonderful

1. It is staggering to understand the link between the body Christ took on and the giving of that body as a sacrifice for the sins of the world
2. How could the infinite Son of God lower himself to be so debased by his enemies; so humiliated and despised and abused by them?
3. How could Jesus still the storm with a word and raise Lazarus from the tomb after four days, and allow his face to be smashed by a rod, and his back to be ripped to shreds by the lash, and his brow to be lacerated by the thorns, and

his hands and feet to be pierced by the nails, and his side to be pierced by a lance?

4. To his enemies, this proved that Jesus was NOT the Son of God

Matthew 27:42-43 He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

5. How can we fully comprehend the level of anguish that Jesus went through, drinking the infinite cup of God's wrath for our sins? It is TOO HIGH for US, TOO WONDERFUL to comprehend
6. How can we fully measure and absorb the LOVE of Christ, poured out in an unending stream over enemies like us? For Jesus himself said "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends... and YOU are my friends"... US? The rebels who have violated his laws and blasphemed his name and repaid his kindnesses by more sins than we can remember or recount
7. How can we measure that love? Or the humility that goes DOWN, DOWN, DOWN from the throne of heaven all the way to the grave?
8. The death of Jesus is TOO HIGH for us, TOO WONDERFUL to comprehend!

D. So also is Jesus' TRIUMPH over death on the THIRD DAY!

1. His MIGHTY VICTORY over our greatest enemy, death, is WONDERFUL
2. These are chains that we could not break; however much medical science has advanced, we still have not conquered death, and we never will
3. The mightiest ruler and wealthiest tycoon and most powerful personalities all become helpless as death wraps its chains around them
4. But like Samson, Jesus SNAPPED those chains as though they were charred threads!
5. The grave could not hold him! Jesus has triumphed over the grave forever, and he cannot die again!
6. His resurrection from the dead is WONDERFUL, far too wonderful for us to comprehend
7. This morning, if you have eyes of faith, you can see Jesus standing before us all saying:

Revelation 1:18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

So... His name is WONDERFUL for what he was in the past!

III. Christ is Wonderful for What He Is in the Present

A. With Eyes of Faith, We See Him in His Present Position

1. We believe that Jesus ascended from the surface of the earth and a cloud hid him from human sight
2. What happened next is WONDERFUL... TOO WONDERFUL for us to comprehend

Hebrews 1:3 After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Hebrews 4:13... we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God

3. Jesus is ABOVE ALL THE CREATED REALMS... higher than the highest heavens, and is ruling with Almighty God now
4. "All authority in heaven and on earth" has been given to him
5. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords
6. God put ALL THINGS UNDER HIS FEET (Ephesians 1:22)

B. From that Place, He Rules Actively Over Everything That Happens on Planet Earth

1. He is orchestrating the minutest events of history to guarantee the salvation of his chosen people from every nation on earth
2. And that is WONDERFUL!
3. The testimonies of how our brothers and sisters in other countries are being saved is WONDERFUL!
4. In many cases with Muslims, he uses supernatural dreams to give the people information on where they can go to hear the gospel
5. He turns the hearts of unbelieving officials like a watercourse whatever way he wants it to go;

C. He Is Drawing ALL PEOPLE to Himself by the Power of the Holy Spirit

John 12:32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

John 6:37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

Every single day, the worldwide church of Jesus Christ gets a little bigger and a little more glorious as more and more people are rescued from Satan's dark domain of sin and death

And that is WONDERFUL!

D. Christ is Also Protecting His Sheep with his MIGHTY HAND

1. Satan assaults his people with temptations and accusations every single day
2. But Jesus has each of us in his mighty GRIP

John 10:27-30 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

E. STOP: Is He Wonderful TO YOU?

1. Have you found Jesus to be wonderful?
2. I do not assume that everyone who is hearing me right now walked into church this morning as a believer in Christ... I do not think everyone here thought that Jesus is wonderful as you awoke and got dressed; Christmas is a time for going to church, and perhaps you came here out of annual habit or to please a Christian friend or relative
3. But my prayer is that the preaching of the word will have opened your spiritual eyes, to see how WONDERFUL Jesus really is... wonderful in his eternal existence as God the Son, wonderful in his incarnation as a human, wonderful in his death on the cross for sins, wonderful in his resurrection from the dead
4. Do you see it? Then CALL OUT TO HIM! His name is wonderful, and the greatest name you can give him right now is SAVIOR
5. How about you Christians? Is Jesus wonderful for you RIGHT NOW? Do you feel in your hearts how kind and loving and patient he has been with you? Have you allowed the deceitfulness of sin to gradually harden your hearts so that you do not feel the WONDER of Christ like you used to? Ask the Holy Spirit to soften your heart now, to see with fresh eyes how WONDERFUL Jesus really is!

IV. Christ Will Be Wonderful for What He Will Be in the Future

A. First, He Will Be Wonderful to You for the Rest of Your Lives

Hebrews 13:5 "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

1. He will never give you over to your enemies!

2. He will never allow you to be swept away back into Satan's kingdom of sin and death
3. He will continue to intercede for you at the right hand of God the Father that your faith will NEVER FAIL! And it won't
4. He will continue to call on you every day to take up your cross and follow him in self-sacrificial service to others
5. He will continue to give you marvelous GOOD WORKS to do to glorify God
6. You will have a rich, full, WONDERFUL life in Christ in proportion to your faith and obedience
7. And when you die, he will receive you into glory

B. He Will Be Infinitely Wonderful At His Second Coming

Revelation 1:7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.

Matthew 24:27 as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Matthew 24:30 At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

C. He Will Be Wonderful When He Judges All His Enemies and Rewards All His Servants

Matthew 25:31-32 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

How terrifying it will be when this majestic, glorious judge pronounces final sentence on all who have not loved him or delighted in him:

Matthew 25:41 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

BUT... how WONDERFUL for all his sheep to hear these words from Jesus, the Judge of all the earth:

Matthew 25:34 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

D. He Will Be Wonderful When You See His Glory in the New Heavens and New Earth

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

Revelation 21:9-11 "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

Revelation 21:23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

Revelation 22:3-5 The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

E. Final Words from Spurgeon

There have been times when you and I have said of Christ, "His name is Wonderful indeed, for we have been by it been transported entirely above the world and carried upward to the very gates of Heaven itself." I pity you, Beloved, if you do not understand the rhapsody I am about to use. There are moments when the Christian feels the charms of earth all broken and his wings are loosed and he begins to fly. And up he soars, till he forgets earth's sorrows and leaves them far behind and up he goes till he forgets earth's joys and leaves them like the mountaintops far below—as when the eagle flies to meet the sun. And up, up, up he goes, with his Savior full before him almost in vision beatific.

His heart is full of Christ. His soul beholds his Savior and the cloud that darkened his view of the Savior's face seems to be dispersed. ... And how is this rapture produced? By the music of flute, harp, ... and all kinds of instruments? No. How then? By riches? By fame? By wealth? Absolutely not. By a strong mind? By a lively disposition? No. HOW THEN? By the WONDERFUL name of Jesus. That one name is all sufficient to lead the Christian into heights of transport that verge upon the region where the angels fly in cloudless days."

I pray that this year, the greatest gift receive is this VISION of how wonderful the name of Jesus really is!