

# STRENGTH FOR TODAY, HOPE FOR TOMORROW

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## A SERMON

DELIVERED ON THE SABBATH MORNING OF NOVEMBER 28TH, 2021 BY

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George was born on a crisp winters morning in a small town in the middle of Germany. His parents were believers and at a young age he was baptized into the Lutheran church. However despite his education in law, Georges first love was music and by the time he was in his early teens he had already learnt to play three instruments. Not being content just to play other peoples music he began to write his own and by the time he was 27 he'd moved to England and started his own music business. Sadly however things didn't go well and after a few years George was bankrupt. However he did not give up. He got back on the horse, and more many years continued to write and perform music across England. However the church soon become outraged by his music, accusing him of blasphemy. One pastor said of his music, "What are we coming to when the will of Satan is imposed upon us in this fashion?" When George was in his mid 50's, a close friend came to him with a number of songs asking if he could write the music to accompany them. George agreed and in less than a month had written just over two and a half hours of music. What made the words so amazing was they were taken directly from the pages of scripture. Although this again caused a huge controversy within the church the piece went on to become one of the world's most beloved piece of music.

But let's leave George for a bit and move on to looking at our text. For this morning we're going to focus just on verse 6,

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9: 6 (New King James)

This lead up to this verse is amazing, God has called Isaiah to bring judgement to the rulers of Jerusalem, for they have been rebelling against God and His people. Isaiah has told them that God is going to judge the city and bringing 'the nations' to rule over them. This judgement act as a sort of 'purifying fire' that would burn away all that was ungodly with Israel. But in this message of judgement was also a message of hope. God would send a new king to rule over them. He would rescue His people from their oppressors and establish a new kingdom filled with the hope of God's love and peace. However God knew that His people would ignore Isaiah's words, so He would bring trials upon them through way of judgement and persecution. In a way, he would bring darkness over their land. But God's plan was not to leave His people in this dark place. Instead He promised He'd send light into the darkness, a Messiah who would save His people, bring unity between God and man.

As Isaiah's prophetic words began to circulate among the people there were whisperings of what was to come. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14). The people learnt the Messiah would come from Nazareth and that some sort of messenger would prepare the way. A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Isaiah 40:3). But there was also something else they were hearing, something darker. This saviour would be rejected by His own people. He would be spat on and beaten. He was going to be killed, murdered by those he came to redeem. Is this really the king God was promising to His people?

Also these prophetic words weren't entirely understood, it was clear God was sending a 'message of hope' to His people. In fact more than a 'message', a 'saviour'. Today 2,700 years later we are still in need of this same message, we are still in need of a saviour? Isaiah said, The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. (Isaiah 9:2). How often do we find ourselves walking in the darkness. Lost in what appears to be the chaos of life. Sometimes this is caused by our own sinfulness. Sometimes through trials brought by God. And sometimes we'll never know why they came. In this room alone I know some of you are snuggling with your health, or with your family, or with your work.

**B**ut I also know that we are holding fast to the gospel, holding on to the promises of God. In all these situations, God's work comes as a lamp to our feet, bringing illumination and guidance. For us who are struggling with health, God has promised: He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4). Or for us who are struggling with our families, God has promised: In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge. (Proverbs 14:26). And for those of us struggling with work, God has promised: ...fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10). Whatever the situation God is there bringing grace, love and hope to our lives. ...he who began a good work in you, will bring it to completion... (Philippians 1:6). Whatever you are struggling with, don't lose hope. He will wipe away every tear as we put our trust in Him for He is our God.

For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father,  
Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9: 6

**F**or unto us a child is born, born to bring hope, to bring light into the darkness. A child who will command governments, and bring peace to the world. He is the light that has overcome the darkness. He is our wonderful counselor. The Lord of life, the Lord of all. He is the Prince of Peace, the Mighty God, the Holy One. He is Emmanuel. God with us. But God chose to send Christ to us as a baby. He would be fully man, and yet still fully God. But why this way? Why was it important for God to become man? And why was it important things happened in the way they did? Let us remember what happened.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Matthew 1:18, 20 and 24

**O**ne of the first things we should remember is that Mary was a virgin. This is important because it shows that salvation ultimately comes from God alone. That through the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary become pregnant. Also it reminds us that God promised that the 'seed' of the women would destroy satan. Jesus, God's Son is our representative and because he was sinless He fulfilled God's commands where Adam had failed. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:18-19). And if Jesus had not been fully man, he could not have died in our place. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 2:16-17). We also needed Christ to be our mediator between us and God. And for this to happen Christ needed to be both fully God and fully man. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all. (1 Timothy 2:5-6). For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 2:18 and 4:15). Christ was God incarnate.

**B**ut not only was Christ born, He was also given. God gave for us this most precious gift, the gift of His only Son. How often when we think of giving a gift to someone we always go out and buy something from the store. If we really wanted to do something special we'll make something. This obviously shows we've put special time and care into the gift instead of just going out and buying something. But how much more special is it to give something of ourselves, something we already own, something which is very precious. What would that look like for you? Think about giving away one of your children, or your closest friend. This is what God did for us. But not only did He give us His Son. He gave us His Son knowing we were rebellious and hateful towards Him. He gave us His only son, knowing we would kill Him in one of the most violent ways ever imagined by man. Listen to the words of Paul from Romans 8, What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but [freely] gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:31-32). In giving Christ to us, God knew that one day He would have to pay the penalty for our sin. He would stand in our place, our proposition, dying the death we deserved. In sending Christ to us, in having him die in our place, God was literally condemning His own Son to death. That is how much God loves us.

Isaiah goes on, when he says, For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; the government shall be upon his shoulder... Here Isaiah is letting us know that this Christ child will one day be our ruler. The very governments of this world will be upon his shoulders. But what kind of ruler will Christ be? As we read on we see... and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9: 6). We see that as our ruler, Christ will be wise. As the mighty God, He will be strong. As our everlasting Father, He is kind and caring towards us. And as the Prince of Peace, He brings stability, harmony and peace to the world. Christ will be our infinitely wise king. Our infinitely strong ruler. Our infinitely loving Father. And will lead us into glorious peace. Let's spend a little bit of time looking at each of these names individually.

Firstly 'Wonderful Counselor'. In Isaiah 28:29, This also comes from the Lord of hosts; he is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom. Christ is wonderful in counsel. Before He does anything He takes into account His own counsel. He counsels Himself in all knowledge and wisdom. In Ephesians 1 we read, In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will. (Ephesians 1:11). We were chosen because of the counsel of His will. We have obtained an inheritance, because of the counsel of His will. All things are done according to His will, not ours. And in Romans 11 we read, Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" (Romans 11:33-34). Here we see that no one can improve on His wisdom and counsel. How often we come to God with our plans and ideas, as if we know better than Him. We are not God's counsellor. It is God who counsels us, I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. (Psalm 32:8). Our hope rests in Christ because he is our mighty counselor. Counselling both Himself in all wisdom and knowledge, and us.

Secondly, 'Mighty God'. So he is not only wise but also strong. He is strong because He is fully God. Hebrews tells us, Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. (Hebrews 1:1-3). Jesus upholds the universe by the word of His power. He creates the lightning for the rain. But He also holds us in His hands, loving us individually, caring for our every need.

**T**hirdly, He is called 'Everlasting Father'. This part I initially found pretty confusing. Here we read the God 'Son' being called our 'Father'. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given and his name shall be called Everlasting Father. But in chapter 53 of Isaiah I read, Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. (Isaiah 53:10). Here it seems in some way that when Christ died for us on the Cross we became His children. Christ became both a brother and a father to us. Listen to the words of Jesus talking to his disciples in John 14, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. (John 14:18–20). Here Jesus is promising not to leave us as orphans, so in essence Jesus is adopting us as his children, and is therefore in some way our father, just as God is ultimately the Father.

**A**nd finally we come to 'Prince of Peace'. Through Christ's amazing work on the cross we now have peace with God. Once we were enemies of God, now we can come near and call him Abba Father. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:1–2). But maybe the fullest statement of how Christ is our Prince of Peace is found in Ephesians, For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. (Ephesians 2:14–16). In Christ's death on the cross we are reconciled to both God and each other.

**A**s we are coming up to Christmas it can be easy to become overwhelmed. It can feel that there's too much going on and life is spiralling out of control. First covid, then all the upset at church, then a summer of extreme heat, then flooding, then, then, then. And that's before we even get to what's happening in our personal lives. But great is God's faithfulness, His mercy is new every morning. All we need He has provided, a hope for our future. For he has given us His Son, so we can be reconciled to Him. Nothing can my sin erase, Naught of works, 'tis all of grace—This is all my hope and peace—This is all my righteousness. Our hope for this Christmas stands on nothing but the blood of Jesus. He who did not spare his own Son but [freely] gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:31–32). Even when life feels hopeless remind yourself of who Christ is our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, our Prince of Peace.

**L**isten to these glorious truths by Mr. Spurgeon, “My hope lives, not because I am not a sinner, but because I am a sinner for whom Christ died. My trust is not that I am holy, but that being unholy, Christ is my righteousness. My faith rests not upon what I am or shall be or feel or know – but in who Christ is, in what He has done, and in what He is now doing for me.”

**I** started this morning by telling you a little about George. In a moment we will listen to that amazing piece of music he wrote. Please use this time to focus on all that God has done for you. And if you have never put your trust in God’s son, use this time to turn your eyes towards Him, ask for His forgiveness of your sins. So as I close, I should say I failed to let you know George lived nearly 300 years ago. He was born George Fredric Handel. And his music, fitting for today is simply known as ‘Handel’s Messiah’.