



*Remember His Name: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*  
*Isaiah 9:2-7*

December 24th, 2017, 10:00 am service • 4th Sunday of Advent  
First Federated Church, Peoria, Illinois  
Rev. Zachary Lysdahl

What an exciting morning! It's Christmas Eve and for some of us that means we gather together with family to celebrate. Growing up my family tradition was to go over to my grandma's condo for a Christmas party. All my aunts and uncles would be there and my cousins too. There we were about 30 of us in jam into that little place and it was great! Although, sometimes my cousins and I would get a... little rambunctious. With my whole family together and a bunch of excited children running about names would get confused. At some point in the party you'd hear my aunt say "Kari I mean Coleen please come here." Or my uncle would say "Dav... Nathan knock that off." I remember one time, while looking right at me, my dad said "Nick, Luke, whoever you are please take the trash out." I always wondered why our parents got our names mixed up and it seemed to happen more around Christmas. Now, looking back, I think it was because of all the chaos and excitement of the season. So much was going on it was probably hard to keep everything straight.

Names, however, aren't only mixed up, sometimes they aren't even remembered. Sid Levy was a young sales person. He was eager to make his mark in the sales world. He stopped in every manufacturing plant he could. One day after dozens of sales calls he had a hard time remembering where he had been. The day was almost over, but there was one last plant he wanted to visit. As he sat in the plant manager's office it looked vaguely familiar, but he was tired so he didn't think much about it. Then the plant manager walked into the office. Sid greeted the manager and introduced himself. The manager looked at him confused and said "Sid, I know who you are. You were here just before lunch. Don't you remember?" When the manager said that the memory of his first visit rushed back into his mind, but the trouble wasn't over. Sid couldn't even remember the plant manager's name. In the business of his day Sid had forgotten where he had been and worse he had forgotten someone's name. The day didn't end as he had hoped.

Maybe you have had a similar experience. A time when you have forgotten someone's name. Maybe it was a classmate? Maybe it was a neighbor? Maybe it was a family member? Ironically I remember the time I forgot a friend's name. It was during summer break and I hadn't seen him for a couple of weeks. Then I ran into him at the grocery store. He stopped to say hello and I responded with the classic, I've forgotten your name "Hey... you..." Yikes, that was embarrassing, but at one time or another we have all forgotten a name or two.

Names can be confused. My family mixed them up. Names can be forgotten. Sid forgot a name. I've forgotten names too, so when the prophet Isaiah tells us that a child had been born for us (9:6) and the child has four names (9:6), I find it a bit unsettling. One person, four names. As if one name isn't hard enough to remember this child has four. But his names are not ordinary names. They are not

commonplace. They are so profound, so significant that they have been remembered for more than 2000 years. They are: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Each of those names have tremendous meaning for us. Wonderful Counselor means that this child born for us is the wisdom of God and through him comes knowledge and understanding. He is so wonderful he gently guides us through life and all its hardships. Mighty God means that this child born for us has incredible strength, both physically and spiritually. He is so strong that he is able to save all those who are imperil of any sort. Everlasting Father means that this child born for us is the author of everlasting life and has won victory over death. He is so kind that he is gracious and merciful to us even though we have done nothing to deserve it. Prince of Peace means that this child born for us brings quietness, tranquility, and contentment in a world of chaos and darkness. So loving he is that our wellbeing and safety came before his own as he hung on a cross. One child, four names and each memorable and meaningful.

Each of those names are remembered because they tell of what that child has accomplished, for us and the entire world. Isaiah talks about what he has done in verse two “The people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined.” Darkness and chaos is all around. There is evil, sin, suffering, distress, and death here on earth. Flip on the TV, open your phone and you’ll hear about all kinds of evil: war, abuse, violence, torture, bombing, homelessness, hunger, thirst, and much more. And in our own lives darkness can come in the form of family quarrels (perhaps even on Christmas Eve), disease and death, sickly parents, rebellious children, fear and guilt, loneliness and grief. In the midst of all that darkness a baby has been born for us. That child is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the great light. Although darkness is present in the world the light of Christ has brought hope, faith, joy and peace to us. We are reminded of that by the four Advent candles which have been lit and are in the middle of Advent wreath on the Lord’s table. Jesus Christ is the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. We remember his names because he is the light shining in darkness of our world. He is the light which has brought hope, faith, joy and peace to us.

So we gather here this morning to celebrate Jesus Christ who has come and is coming, remembering he is the one who guides us in wisdom, strengthens us, saves us, and gives us peace. During excitement of Christmas and the business of life, if you happen to pause in remembering the four names of Christ it might help to think about the song “Glory Be To God.”

If you know this song, please lift your voice in signing it. If you’d rather hum the song please do so. Or prefer to listen lift the song to God in your heart. Glory be to God. In the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. Amen.