

**And He will be called...**

## *Wonderful Counsellor*

An old woman sat at the gate of a village. A man entered the village. “What are the people in this village like?” he asked her.

“What were they like in the village you came from?” she responded.

“Ach! Dreadful people! Stupid, surly, stingy, treacherous. I was glad to be rid of them,” he said.

“Alas, you will find the people in this village much the same.”

A little later, another man entered the village. He asked the old woman the same question, and she in turn asked him the same question: “What were the people like in the village you came from?”

“Ah – wonderful people! Bright, kind, generous, trustworthy. I was sad to say goodbye.”

“Hurrah! You will find the people in this village much the same.”

I didn't feel the need for a counsellor until I was well into my forties. People close to me felt my need for a counsellor. But I didn't. I was oblivious, traipsing along with hardly a backward glance. My first clue I needed help was *déjà vu*: *Haven't I been here before? This complaint, this argument, this mess, it all looks so eerily familiar...*

The people in my present village bore an uncanny resemblance to the people in my previous village. I was, it turned out, the single common denominator.

So I booked some time with a counsellor, and now I'm all better.

Well, now at least I understand myself better. Counselling gave me good, though sometimes painful, insights into myself. Which in turn gave me a fresh start.

That's what Advent is – a fresh start. But for many of us, we need a good counsellor to get from here to there. Or more than good: we need a *wonderful* counsellor.

Isaiah announces good news to those who need it most and expect it least. Their situation is grim. It's hopeless. They dwell in gloom, darkness, distress. They are under the shadow of death.<sup>i</sup>

Then God breaks in:

The people walking in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness  
a light has dawned.<sup>ii</sup>

God's in-breaking is not by the classic means of rescue – a conquering army, a windfall of money. It is by a strange sign, an unexpected source: a baby.

A baby? Well, this is no ordinary child. He will be called *Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*.

*Wonderful Counsellor*. A counsellor can mean a soul guide, someone who helps you sort out your personal issues. Or a lawyer, someone who helps you sort out your legal matters. Or a city trustee (though spelled councillor, and meaning something slightly different), someone who helps the community sort out its various needs and crises.

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There are variations on all these: career counsellor, athletic counsellor, and more. But all fundamentally do the same thing: *they sort us out*. They guide us over tricky terrain through which, left to ourselves, we might get lost or hurt.

Jesus is the one who sorts us out. In fact, Jesus is so good at this, those who know him best call him *wonderful*.

And yet ... most of us can think of times and circumstances where the divine Counsellor didn't sort things out so wonderfully. A relationship that

failed despite our desperate prayers. A loss that was irreversible. A mess with fallout in every direction.

But this is where this name gets very personal. One of the words the New Testament uses for the Holy Spirit is exactly this: Counsellor.

And the Spirit's primary work is to keep drawing you to Jesus, deeper and deeper, in season and out, so that you are never alone, you are always loved, there is always enough, there is grace and mercy to spare, and that more and more, inch by inch, day by day, Christ is being formed in you.

The Counsellor is in, always available, and he sorts us out wonderfully.

**NOTES:**

<sup>i</sup> See Isaiah 8 for context.

<sup>ii</sup> Isaiah 9:2.

