

Isaiah 6:9

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Date: 11 April 2010

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[0 : 00] Let's turn together to John chapter 11. John's Gospel in chapter 11.

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Isaiah chapter 9. And 9 and verse 6. Remember, in the turbulent days of Isaiah's own ministry, he saw a great king, Isaiah, dying after a reign of 52 years.

And it was a great reign in many ways. But towards the end of it, he had really become very proud and arrogant and had sought glory for himself that he should never have done.

Anyway, he died. And we know that Isaiah at that time saw another king, one high and lifted up. He saw him on the throne in Isaiah 6.

[1 : 23] And we know that another king is promised. And here we find in verse 6 of chapter 9. To us, a child is born. To us, a son is given.

The government will be on his shoulders. And look at what he will be called. Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father.

Prince of Peace. I mean, we know that these are a description of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

And what I would like to do today is to actually take these, which constitute the name of Jesus, and apply them to the incident in chapter 11 in John's Gospel, the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

This incident here is just one incident in the ministry of Jesus while he was on earth, where you see what he's like as the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace.

[2 : 38] First of all, he's the Wonderful Counselor. See, in Isaiah's day, there were kings, mighty people, rulers, there were leaders, but there weren't great, wonderful counselors.

They were very often leading the people astray, and leading them away from God's path. And when Isaiah is told here, you know, there's going to be a child born, there's going to be a son given, a royal child, and he will be a wonderful counselor.

The idea is that he will be someone who will lead people in the ways of God. He will be endowed with the Holy Spirit, and he will always give the right counsel.

He will always give the right instruction. This is someone who will never, ever lead the people astray. And how better could you describe Jesus himself than that?

He is the Wonderful Counselor. You look at all the various people that came into contact with Jesus throughout his ministry. Did he ever make a mistake? Did he ever give wrong advice?

[3 : 44] Did he ever give unwise counsel? Is it not true that with all the different people that came to him, from the richest to the poorest, from the most immoral prostitute to somebody who was married five times, did he not always give the right answer?

He has that gift and that desire always to give that wonderful counsel. And here you find that Mary and Martha, two sisters who were very close, obviously, to their brother Lazarus, and they noticed that he had taken ill.

Not only they had taken ill, but that he was very ill. So what do they do? The first thing they do is they send this wonderful message to Jesus. The sisters sent word to Jesus.

Lord, they said, the one you love is sick. They knew exactly who to go to. He is the one who could really deal with this kind of situation.

The one whom you love is sick. The message was sent. They went to him. They went to him. Not just because he had power, but because he had wisdom.

[5 : 00] He would know exactly what to do. And you know this, Jesus did know exactly what to do. And yet he surprised Mary and Martha.

Maybe they had a plan. Maybe they thought as soon as Jesus hears, he will come very, very quickly to Bethany, and he will stop Lazarus from dying.

But that's not what the wonderful counselor did. He was even wiser than Mary and Martha. He could see much further than they could.

He knew exactly what to do. It's not that he was at a loss. It's not that he was scratching his head. It's not that he was wringing his hands wondering, what must I do about Lazarus?

No. As soon as the message comes to him, he knows exactly what to do. In verse 4 we read, when he heard this, Jesus said, this sickness will not end in death.

[6 : 01] He knew exactly. Here is somebody who has knowledge. Yes, he can see into the future. There is certainly that in it.

He can see into the long future, though. It's not just that Lazarus is ill. He also knows that Lazarus will die. But he knows that beyond that, again, Lazarus was going to be raised from the dead by him.

And you see, he looks further into the future than Mary or Martha. Mary and Martha, quite understandably, and if any of you have ever had a young one that's ill or a friend or a sibling, a parent that's ill, you know what it's like.

You know what it's like. You want that person to be made well again. And nothing else seems to get into your mind more than that. You really would love to hear good news.

You would love when you go to the hospital to speak to a consultant. Yes, things are turning. I remember once going in to visit Alassie. Very burdened to do so.

[7 : 06] And I knew she was dying. And we went in and we were praying. And then the message came from the nurses. She's turned the corner. Great news. She didn't die.

She's still living. Wonderful, wonderful news. And sometimes that's what we want for everyone. And, you know, that's the kind of counsel we would give to people to seek the Lord's hand so that your loved one would not die.

But Jesus, he knew God's agenda, not just man's agenda. Have you got your plan for your life? Have you got it all written out, the kind of things you want to do? One, two, three. Even the very order in which they will happen.

You dream dreams. You have visions. You can see yourself doing this, doing that, going somewhere, starting something, new relationship, and so on.

[8 : 12] You maybe have it planned. You and I can't help that. It's not wrong to plan your life. It's not wrong to think. It's not wrong to have ambitions.

It's not wrong to have goals. And if you prayerfully bring these things before the Lord, all the better. But remember, the wonderful counselor might have even greater goals.

Because he can see beyond, much further than you can. He can see into the long distance. He can really go beyond just your life.

He can see how your life fits in with the seven billion other lives in this world now. And in the billions of lives that will be in this world in a hundred years' time, if the Lord spares, or in a thousand years' time, if the Lord spares as well.

He actually is able to work together everything for good. Every single one of you can bring your prayers and desires before the Lord, and the Lord can work them all together.

[9 : 24] God's agenda is absolutely superb. But it can also be scary. Who else can work together everything for good?

How many congregations are worshipping throughout this planet today? How many are addressing God? We're talking in the millions, and we know that God hears them all.

God is present with them all. Think of all the believers who are crying out to God, and yet God hears them. Everyone is an individual, and there are many Marthas and Marys crying out with their agendas, and there's nothing wrong with that.

They cry out with the burdens that they have, and burdens often motivated by the purest love of all. But Jesus, when he hears the message about Mary and Martha's brother Lazarus being sick, he doesn't follow their agenda.

He sees the greater agenda of God. He says, this sickness will not end in death. God's agenda. Because he knew that what was going to happen was that he would actually go there.

[10 : 46] Lazarus, by this time, would be four days dead. His body would be at the point, you might have thought, of corrupting and decaying. And then he would raise him from the dead.

Martha and Mary didn't know that at all. They didn't understand that. It wasn't on their agenda that Jesus would raise the dead that day, only that he would prevent the living from dying.

God's agenda can be surprising. And you have to be open to it, and I have to be open to it. In this kind of switch-on-the-switch, Christianity kind of world, where we really like to have things very planned out, how much room do we leave for God's agenda?

We have to learn. And God will teach us. Martha and Mary, you know, would never be the same after this incident.

They would never pray in the same way again. They would always remember that God can do immeasurably more than we can ask or think.

[12 : 04] God's agenda. And as you see, the wonderful counselor, he will always remember God's agenda. But he will also remember God's glory.

This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory, so that God's Son may be glorified through it. Or as he said to Martha at the grave, Jesus said, Did I not tell you, Martha, that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?

See, the kings in Isaiah's day, they had power, but they weren't using it for God's glory. They were giving instruction, but they were more interested in building up their own power bases.

But when this wonderful king comes into the world, Isaiah is told he will be a wonderful counselor. And the implication is he will always, always, always conduct his reign, giving instruction, that will bring glory to God.

That's what he will always aim at. He will never aim to draw people away from God, away from trusting in God. Indeed, he will draw people closer to God so that they will have faith in him, believe in him, trust in him, live for him, serve him all their days.

[13 : 31] That's what the wonderful counselor king does. He draws people to God to see the glory of God, to see the majesty of God.

What's Jesus' desire when he comes into this world? It's not just to die for your sins and my sins. It's not just so that he could go to the cross and take away our sins as the lamb.

No. Something even greater than that is to actually create a people who will worship and serve his father forever and ever.

You think of 1 Corinthians 15. What does Jesus do? When the kingdom is completed, it's all handed over to the father. He gives eternal life to everyone that the father gave to him.

That's what he does. He wants people to have a relationship with God, a real, authentic, genuine, heartfelt relationship with his father.

[14 : 34] And you see, all that he does will work towards that great, great end. So when Jesus is told that Lazarus is ill, he thinks, now, how will this work for God's glory?

How will this work so that God's majesty impressiveness will be made known to the people? And that's why he says, soon as the message comes, in the hearing of the disciples, he says, the sickness will not end in death.

No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it. They heard him say that. It's as if they're being told here, this is what he's always talking about.

He's always bringing God into it, and rightly so. The best counselor is one that will ensure that God will be glorified.

That requires faith. And Jesus knows that the disciples who are gathered around him need to believe.

[15 : 56] They need to believe. As Jesus says himself, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep. I am going there to wake him up.

But they misunderstood him. Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better. That's their counsel. Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he made natural sleep. He told them plainly, Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there so that you may believe.

In other words, what do I want from this whole situation? It's that you may believe in God. So that you may believe in what God is doing through me.

I want you to see my glory. I want you to see God's glory. glory. That's what I want this situation to be used for. And you see, that's what every true elder, leader, ruler within the church wants as well. God's agenda above any other agenda. God's glory rather than anyone else's glory. And the people to have faith and belief and trust in God.

[17:15] That is what we all want as leaders in the church. So he's the wonderful counselor. Secondly, he's the mighty God.

He will be called wonderful counselor, mighty God. When this king comes, my, he will give instruction. Wonderful instruction that will take God's agenda and God's glory and the people's faith into account.

But he will come as the mighty God. Well, you might want to dispute that. After all, if he was so mighty, could he not have stopped Lazarus from dying?

Isn't that what some people said in verse 37? Some people, when they saw him weeping, they said, see how he loved him. Others were saying, could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?

That's what the people were saying. He could have kept Lazarus from dying. Martha, when she meets Jesus, what does she say to him? If you had been here, Lord, my brother would not have died.

[18:29] You could have stopped him dying. When Mary meets him, same words again in verse 32, she fell at his feet and said, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

And it's true, you know. If Jesus had been there, and if it was God's will, he could have exerted the might of God, and Lazarus would have been prevented from dying.

Now, Martha, even though her own brother has died, she still believes that Jesus can keep other people from dying.

In verse 21, Lord, Martha said to Jesus, if you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.

What's she thinking about there? Are you thinking there that maybe Martha's expecting Jesus to raise Lazarus from the dead? Doesn't seem to square with what you find in verse 39.

[19:38] Take away the stone, said Jesus, but Lord, said Martha, the sister of the dead man, by this time there is a bad order, he's been there four days. You would read that and think she never expected that Jesus would raise Lazarus from the dead, perhaps.

We're not sure, but whatever is the case, we know that Martha still believed that if there were other sick people ready to die, Jesus could stop them dying.

Martha and Mary were quite convinced on that. Even though he didn't save Lazarus, he could still call on the Father, call on God, who will save others through him.

I know that even now, God will give you whatever you ask. But you see, they're not understanding fully just how mighty is the might of God at work in Jesus.

It's not just that he can keep people who are ill from dying, it's that he can even reverse physical death itself and impart spiritual life.

[21:05] That's why he says to the disciples, you know, I'm glad I wasn't there. Why does he say that? If he had been there, he would have been tempted to stop Lazarus from dying.

I'm quite sure that's the case. I cannot imagine Jesus, the Jesus who raised Peter's mother-in-law with a touch, and the widow of Nain's son with a touch, and Lajerus' daughter with a touch.

I cannot imagine him in the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and just sitting there and watching him die. I can understand then why he says, I am glad I wasn't there.

You see, not being there enables him to then go and raise him from the dead.

If he had been there and done nothing, it may well have been misunderstood, but when he comes, isn't it great that he has the power to actually reverse death?

[22:20] Do you notice in verse 14, the end words there, for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe, but let us go to him.

Isn't Lazarus dead? Well, at one level, yes, he's certainly dead. His body is already in the grave, and yet here's Jesus saying, let's go to Lazarus.

And for him, Lazarus is not just a corpse, it's not just the remains, it's a person. Let us go to him.

And when he comes there, when he meets with Martha, and Martha says to him, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Your brother will rise again, said Jesus.

I know he will rise again in the resurrection of the last day. Yes, says Jesus, but I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even though he dies.

[23:27] Whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Martha, do you believe this? I'm not asking you, Martha, if you believe the dead will rise on the day of the resurrection.

I know you do. But Martha, do you know who I am today in your circumstances? Do you know that even now I am not just Jesus?

I am the resurrection and the life. I am the life. When I give life to people, they will never die. I am the resurrection.

Even when people die, I can bring them back to life. I engage in these matters of life and death and life. That's what I do.

And the might of God is at work in me to do this. Do you believe this, Martha? Yeah, he wants the people to believe that.

[24 : 30] He wanted Martha to believe it. He wanted the crowd outside the tomb to believe it.

That's why he said, did I not tell you, Martha, that if you believed you would see the glory of God?

So they took away the stone and Jesus looked up and said, Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.

In other words, he wants them to know that what he's doing, he's not just doing as a wonder worker, he's doing it in association, in relationship with the Father.

Very, very publicly, he says, you're going to see the glory of God. Very publicly, he actually looks up, there's the tomb, he looks up, and he addresses the Father.

He looked up and said, Father, I thank you that you always hear me. I'm saying this for their benefit, so that they may believe that you sent me.

[25 : 38] So, anything that's going to happen from that moment is going to display and manifest and demonstrate the might and the power of God at work in and through Jesus.

And it did. It did. He just stands there at the tomb. Just think of it. Here, Jesus actually knows that he has the power to reverse death.

I mean, no one else, no one else has this, but he knows it, and he just stands there, calls out for the public to hear in a loud voice, Lazarus, come out.

and Lazarus comes out. His body and his soul meet together again.

And this man who had been dead shuffles his way out of the tomb, hands and feet still wrapped with the strips of linen and death, the cloth still around his face.

[26 : 55] In one way would have been the eeriest thing that anyone had ever seen in that area. To see a dead person is very, very solemn, and I'm sure some of you have seen that.

But to see someone wearing the clothes of death, coming out of a tomb, that's something so eerie. But Jesus expects it to happen.

He expects the might of the creator God, who can create a world out of nothing, to actually reverse death. And Lazarus comes out.

In some ways, what's remarkable is, effortless this was. He just says these three words in English, Lazarus, come out.

Just, that's all it is, just a word. You know, if you're ever wondering how can God convert someone, he can just use his word.

[28 : 06] He can will something to happen from heaven and people's lives change on earth. He can actually reverse somebody's life. He can reverse people who are spiritually dead so they are spiritually alive.

Jesus himself said that in John 5. the days are coming, he says, and now they're here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear they will live.

They've passed over, he says, from death to life. And he's talking about believers. We would call them Christians today. They heard the voice of God and when they did, they began to live.

They began to relate to God as never before. God came into their lives. They were hard, they were away from him, and now they're turned towards him and they live for him.

God can make it happen. That's what God does. That's the mighty God. This mighty God in many ways actually respects us.

[29 : 16] You noticed he asks somebody else to roll the stone away from the tomb. He doesn't roll it away himself by his mighty power.

And he doesn't take the grave clothes off by some miracle from Lazarus. He says, take off the grave clothes and let him go. He even asks, he even asks, you know, Mary, where have they buried him?

Jesus knows where they've buried him, and yet he asks where. Then move the stone away, then unrobe him.

And in that way, you see, he is happy to use us as he sees fit. But his power is what is obviously present here, the mighty God.

Thirdly, the everlasting father. The king who was promised to Isaiah would be, he would be the everlasting father. Somebody would really care for people.

[30 : 30] Really care. They weren't just people to be abused, the poor who would have their faces ground into the dust. They weren't people, you know, there were kings in the Old Testament, and they would rob the poor just to build up their own ridges, take away the vineyard from Naboth, just so that Ahab could have more.

That's what they were like. Well, here, another king is promised Jesus, and he will be someone who really cares. And you'll have noticed yourselves how Mary and Martha thought of Jesus.

Lord, the one whom you love is sick. Verse five, Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

When they faced this crisis in their lives, they didn't just believe that Jesus had power to stop their brother dying.

They actually believed that Jesus cared. they didn't just say, let's send for the one who has the power, but let's send for the one who loves, for the one who is like this everlasting father.

[31 : 49] And when Jesus comes, have you noticed his response? When he comes to see Mary, Mary runs out to see Jesus quickly.

In verse 31, when doubt they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn thee, when Mary reached the place she fell at his feet and said, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

When he came to the tomb in verse 38, once more, Jesus was deeply moved. This is not somebody who's playing games with robots on earth.

This is somebody who has intertwined his life with ours. This is somebody who can actually be moved by our tears.

[32 : 58] When he sees Mary and the others weeping, he's deeply moved, he's troubled on the inside. Jesus has a heart.

He can be moved, he can be greatly moved, he can be deeply moved. And even when he's there at the tomb, even though he knows in a few moments time Lazarus is going to be alive, he's still deeply moved.

You see, this is him. He actually cares. He doesn't say, well, I know how it's all going to work out in the end. He's not just God on a throne saying, I can see the far distance.

I've got my plan and I just wind it up and it happens. No, he actually really cares. He's the everlasting father.

You know, he's there and he really does care other. Now, divine love, because it's quite unique, can actually be misunderstood.

[34 : 14] Do you wonder maybe if Martha and Mary, who sent the message to Jesus, the one you love is seeking, Jesus doesn't turn up. I wonder if they were tempted to think maybe he doesn't love enough to come.

And you may be thinking the same. Maybe the Lord doesn't love enough to do what you want him to do now. But remember, divine love is unique love.

There's no one else who loves as many as God and God's Son does. No one else loves as many as he does.

And he loves to a degree and to a depth and to a distance. He has a plan motivated by that divine fatherly love.

And I think he would say to you, don't measure my love till the story ends. You know, you can go back to the cross cross.

[35 : 28] And you can see God's love there in the most wonderful way. But lots of terrible things have happened since the cross. And you and I have heard even the Lord's people sometimes in the spirit wondering why are things happening the way they're happening.

You find even the saints in the book of the Revelation asking why. Fifty years after the resurrection they're still asking why in that book.

But they are told that the end is coming. Everything has its place. And we mustn't measure the fullness of God's love till the journey ends.

But we must, we must trust him. He is the everlasting father. Finally and very briefly he's the prince of peace.

Isn't that what Jesus brought that day in Bethany? I mean Bethany at the beginning of the day is very much a troubled place.

[36 : 40] Full of tears full of weeping. And by the end of that day the prince of peace has brought wonderful peace among the community themselves.

Yeah, they would have smiled, they would have talked, they would have spoken about how it happened that day, the next day, visitors would have come from the region just to see, to hear, to talk with Lazarus.

And Lazarus, I doubt, would be able to tell much about it. But the others who were there to see the story from the other side, as it were, my, they would talk about the peace that came.

Lazarus, prior to his death, his moments in this world were moments of illness, possibly pain.

Presumably now that he is risen from the dead, he knows peace. although Lazarus went on to die a second time.

[37 : 49] But there was peace there. Martha and Mary, they knew peace. They stopped weeping. The Prince of Peace had done something in them too.

But you know, it's the peace with God, I think, that really is so beautifully stark here. this peace with God, that God is a God who is able to care evil and death.

If I knew nothing else about God, I would love to know this, that he is the kind of God into whose hands I can commit my spirit at the point of my death and know that all is well.

peace. What peace do you have? Do you have a peace rich in life, but can't take you into the valley of the shadow?

Or do you have that kind of peace with God and you know, you know it goes beyond the grave?

There was a Baptist minister, and with this I'll close, a Baptist minister, his daughter died in a car crash.

[39 : 12] And he did something that I could never, I don't think, do. He actually took his own daughter's funeral. And being asked, he says, how can you do that?

Ah, well, he says, I believe my Bible. She's not dead. She's alive. She has passed from life to life.

death. And that's the kind of peace you see that the Lord's people have at their best moments. And they certainly have it when the Spirit enables them.

That kind of peace that the Prince of Peace alone can give through and resurrection. Let us pray. pray.

We need a lord Basketball and ■ go.