

The True Leader of All Mankind-Wonderful Counselor

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Date: 10 December 2017

Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 00] And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, Where are you? And he said, I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself. He said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat? The man said, The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruits of the tree, and I ate. Then the Lord God said to the woman, What is this that you have done? The woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate. The Lord God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field, and on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.

He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. Then the Lord God said, Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever. Therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden, he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

The wonder of Christmas is that it tells of how that terrible estrangement from God that's signified there by the fierce angels with their flaming sword barring the way to man to enter God's presence. It tells us how that estrangement is overcome. Not by us, because we have no power to do that, but by God himself coming into our world as a savior.

[2 : 58] So that now the angels have a new role, not barring the way, but proclaiming the great good news that now at last there can be peace, peace and goodwill from God towards men and women on earth.

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.

For she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord.

Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.

[4 : 13] And the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.

And all flesh shall see it together. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. O Zion, that bringeth good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain.

O Jerusalem, that bringeth good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength. Lift it up, be not afraid.

Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God. Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him.

Behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.

[5 : 16] He shall gather his lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead them, those that are with young. Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign.

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call him Emmanuel. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.

They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder.

And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

These are words from Isaiah the prophet, speaking hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus. And telling us of God's promise not to forget his people, despite all their waywardness, all their rejection, all their unfaithfulness.

[6 : 37] And telling of a wonderful promise of a coming one, who would be Emmanuel, which means God with us to save.

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 of old, from ancient times. Therefore, Israel will be abandoned until the time when she, who is in labor, gives birth, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.

He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

And they will live securely. For then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth, and he will be their peace.

[7 : 56] O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie. Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by, and yet in thy streets shineth the everlasting light.

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight. In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin who he trod to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David.

And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, Greetings, O favored one. The Lord is with you.

But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

And the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.

[9 : 14] And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

And Mary said to the angel, How will this be, since I am a virgin? And the angel answered her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

Therefore, the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth, in her old age, has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

For nothing will be impossible with God. And Mary said, Behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word.

And the angel departed from her. The promise was for God himself to be with us.

[10 : 22] And in the birth of Jesus Christ, he who was truly God became truly man. He really did come to be with us, to be one of us.

Jesus, our Emmanuel. And he came for a purpose. Mild he lays his glory by. Born that man no more may die.

Born to raise the sons of earth. Born to give them second birth. And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered. Each to his own town.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

[11 : 42] And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.

Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain. Heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign. And yet, in the bleak midwinter, a stable place sufficed the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

And there were, in the same country, shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you.

[13:06] You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. And suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe, lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told to them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen as it was told unto them. A God who has not remained hidden and distant, but has come from the realms of glory and drawn near to make the light of his heavenly presence shine in this dark world forever.

[14:46] God with man is now residing. Yonder shines the infant light. Glory to God in the highest. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

And when the time came for their purification, according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. And this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of the Lord, the consolation of Israel.

And the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

[16:04] And he came in the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, now you are letting your servant part in peace according to your word.

For my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples. A light for the revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. That reading tells of the joy of the faithful who'd been waiting and longing for the fulfillment of all that the prophets had spoken. Because God's covenant promise had glimmered all down the ages through all the darkness of human history. But the message of Christmas is that in the birth of Jesus Christ all that was promised has now come.

In the birth of Jesus the yearning is over. Darkness is banished and light has come. And that's why Christmas is a message of great rejoicing and great joy.

[17:28] Now ye need not fear the grave because Jesus Christ was born to save. The story of Christmas alone and chanting as it is that makes people want to sing.

The multitude of these lovely carols that we sing they were written by people who understood what that story means. What the birth of Jesus Christ really is about. Our last reading now takes us back again to the words of Isaiah the prophet speaking in around 734 BC.

Listen again as he tells people what to expect of the miraculous child that God promised would come in answer to their prayers and in answer to all the longings of the human heart and in answer to all the darkness of our human world.

Isaiah says people will look to the earth and behold distress and darkness the gloom of anguish but the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light those who dwelled in the land of deep darkness on them has the light shined for unto us a child is born unto 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 of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this before we think for a little about what this message of Isaiah is all about we're going to sing one of the simplest perhaps one of the best loved carols of all and the last verse says this son of God oh how bright love is smiling from thy face strikes for us now the hour of grace savior since thou art born well in our various

Christmas services this year we're trying to answer the question in one of the carols who is he in yonder stall at whose feet the shepherds fall who is this child whose birth Christmas celebrates might seem a pretty odd question to have to ask at Christmas but the fact is recent polls have shown that around a third of Britons under the age of 24 don't know where Jesus was born and around one in ten of all adults in our population couldn't answer four questions correctly about the Christmas story so maybe the question is actually necessary I'm not going to spend tonight moaning about the war on Christmas I'll leave that to the Daily Mail and to Donald Trump who's determined to make Christmas great again but I do want to focus on this question because it's important who is this child that we're talking about and who is it that is at the heart of the Christmas message and the

[21 : 01] Christian church's message to the world our second last reading this evening spoke about old Simeon the old man that you meet in Luke's gospel at the beginning and he was we're told waiting for the consolation of Israel for the coming of the Lord's Christ but what and who was he really waiting for well as the very last reading told us he was waiting for a child to be born whom Isaiah the prophet had spoken about more than 700 years previously now those days the the 730s BC those have been very dark days for the known world rather like I suppose the 1930s were dark days for the world in more recent times one by one the countries surrounding Israel had been falling to the huge power of the great world empire of that day the power of Assyria Assyria was famed for its military might and also famed for its abject cruelty its merciless ways to those peoples that they conquered and the little nation of Judah was now isolated surrounded by enemies living in fear living with trembling newspapers if they had them would have been full of reports of fevered diplomacy desperate efforts at a peace process and all those sorts of things in a strange way it sounds really rather contemporary doesn't it because the world hasn't actually changed that much in 700 years or in 2,700 years indeed for us certainly not in the Middle

East and really not in many other places either our newspapers still are full of crisis after crisis talks about alliances about partnerships about joining them or about leaving them Brexit and all that trade talks military alliances climate accords NATO think of the military threats that are still bubbling in North Korea and Iran in the crisis that we faced over several years with ISIS and so on and interestingly it's when things often get really bad in our world or in our own personal world maybe we see it don't we after a huge terror attack or something of the like it does tend to be then that people start to get a bit more religious wonder if you've noticed that maybe you've done that yourself you've you've found that some real crisis has erupted in your life and and you've thought to yourself well well maybe

I'll pray to God never really given a thought to God before that but when you're up against it when everything seems to be so bleak you think well what else can I do there's nowhere else to turn to get help maybe praying to God is worth a shot it's sort of like taking echinacea you know when everybody's getting a cold I know it's mumbo jumbo but my mother keeps sending me my 82 year old mother keeps sending me echinacea tablets and telling me to take them so I'm thinking well what the heck I'll give it a go seems to be working so far by the way because all my family have had a cold and I haven't just wait but it's often rather like what people do with God isn't it well there's nowhere else to turn there's nothing to lose maybe maybe I'll give him a thought I wonder how you'd think about that if you were God probably not very much really to be treated like that anyway that

was really what was going on in the 8th century

BC the people were desperate for something to happen to save them and so they turned to God they prayed but God's answer to their prayers really wrong footed them he didn't say okay I'll step in I'll answer your prayer I'll sort out your current political crisis I'll stop the war I'll bring peace in your time no he didn't say that instead he said something far far more extraordinary he said I will step in and I will intervene in world affairs but I'll do it in an ultimate way I will save you but but when I do so it won't just be to sort out a few local issues for you Israelites it will be to sort out this whole universe once and for all and so I promise you that I will send someone who can do just that a child will be born to save the whole world it was an extraordinary promise but that is the birth that old Simeon was longing for and waiting for all those years later a child as Isaiah had promised born of a virgin whose name would be Emmanuel God himself with us God become man so that that child would be the ultimate king of this world forever his throne would restore the kingly throne of David but forever and he would establish justice and righteousness to restore the whole world from the disastrous government of man to his perfect government a government and a peace that would know no end and when Simeon saw this child when he saw the infant Jesus he knew that what God had promised had at last come true now my eyes have seen your salvation he said and [27 : 01] I can depart this world in peace but what does it all really mean what would this child be what would he do to achieve all that extraordinary promise well in fact we get some very important clues in the names that Isaiah the prophet gives to this child and in the Bible as Phil Copeland was saying in our morning service the names that people were given are full of very deep significance because they speak of the bearers identity indeed of their destiny they tell us truth about them rather I suppose in the way that nicknames do for us your name might be John or Bill or Mary and probably that doesn't tell you much but if your friends call you basher or psycho well it certainly does tell you something doesn't it or if they call you tigger or eeyore for example or if you're known as the ice maiden that's a pretty bad one girls avoid that one if you can but it tells us something doesn't it and in the

Bible names are full of significance in that way and the first name for this child in Isaiah 9 verse 6 is this his name shall be called wonderful counselor well what does that mean and what does that tell us about how this child will be the savior of this world and its people immediately I know what perhaps some of you might be thinking you'll be thinking well it's all about psychological wholeness he'll help us to understand ourselves properly to discover ourselves so that we can find that inner peace that harmony that's that's what a good counselor does well certainly counseling is a growth industry today I read that while in the 1960s around 14% of Americans had received some form of psychological counseling today it's over 80% can you believe that I mean I realize that being an American is probably quite difficult but even so that seems extraordinary to me but actually the truth is here in

Britain it's not much better every day there are hundreds of thousands of counseling sessions taking place two million sessions every month apparently it seems that people love counseling and of course you can now choose any form of counseling any kind that you like that will promise you the way to a wonderful counseling experience leading you to health and to wholeness that may be that you are a fan of that sort of thing but on the other hand you may well be the very sort of person who says well that is just a load of feeble nonsense and if that's what the Christian faith is all about if that's what you're going to tell me Jesus is then it's just another example isn't it of the feeble crutches that wounded people need and it's got nothing to offer a sane person like me well if that is what Jesus is all about Jesus the counselor well then I concede you might very well be right I read an article by a consultant psychiatrist the professor of psychiatry and the article was called it was titled this looking for a counselor you need your head examined I think you can probably guess it was a fairly skeptical article and in fact it quoted a massive scientific study of more than 22,000 counseling sessions and what it found was that the more therapy you had the worse the patient got and the conclusion of this professor of psychiatry was this and I'm quoting much of the benefit you can get from therapy is practically indistinguishable from what you obtain from confiding in a reliable understanding and intelligent friend so there you are you see if you find yourself a friend you can save yourself a fortune in counseling so do stay behind for coffee afterwards but I'm not going to get into a debate about the benefits or not of that kind of counseling what I do want to say and make very plain is that that has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with what the prophet

Isaiah is telling us about this child to say that he would be called a wonderful counselor is absolutely nothing to do with that notion of counseling at all in fact it's the precise opposite of so much of what we think when we use that word our idea of counseling often is about looking inside ourselves to find our true selves to bring health and healing out from within and at best yes under medically trained supervision and so on that might well be some very great help to problem areas in our lives that we struggle with although at worst it can of course be ineffective and just make things worse but here you see we're dealing with something that is the exact opposite of all that we're not talking about turning towards ourselves but turning away from ourselves to look outwards to look at God and to look at his marvelous saving acts because he alone is a

[32 : 17] God who really can and who really does perform wonders for our lives and for this world see what the prophet is promising is emphatically not a solution that comes from inside ourselves friends if that is where we're looking for the answer there is precious little help to be found there there's precious little hope for us to live by I remember seeing a cartoon of a man lying on a psychiatrist couch and the doctor was saying to him in a little balloon I'm afraid to tell you that your true inner self is very much like your true outer self and that is often the truth isn't it the real hope for us does not come from within ourselves however deep down we will go now the only hope the real hope for the human condition is to be found in looking beyond ourselves to the true leader of all mankind

Jesus Christ and the Bible's contention is that he alone is the one who can perform wonders and he alone is the one who is planning and purposing wonders for all those who will look to him in trusting faith because the wonderful counselor really means that he is a wonder counselor he's one who counsels wonders who purposes wonders wonder is a noun it's not the adjective and what this praise is saying about this promised child is that he'll be one who both performs wonders and purposes wonders for his people think the first of those he performs wonders wonderful things that's a word that's used all through the Bible of God's saving wonders go back to the story of the exodus and you'll hear God saying I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do and after that Pharaoh will let you go and that's what happened isn't it and on the other side of the Red Sea the people sang a great song who is like you oh

Lord awesome in glorious deed doing wonders if you read the book of Psalms you'll find so many of the songs praising and proclaiming the wonders of God let the heavens declare your wonders oh Lord we will tell the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord the wonders that he has done you see all through history God has been a powerful leader to his people and they can trust him and they can follow him not because he helps them to find strength within themselves but because he gives real help and strength from outside themselves when they have none from him from the wonders that he performs for them he is the true leader into the wonders of God's salvation and that's what Isaiah promised hundreds of years before the first Christmas the birth of one who would be a wonder and who would perform the wonders of God himself in this world so that he will be the true leader a powerful present permanent leader for all human beings to trust and to follow to salvation that's what it means that the name of this child will be wonderful his wonders will fill us with wonder and they will be wonders that transform this world forever what about the second word counselor well again the point there is that these wonders of

God belong not just to history not just to the past but to the future he is the one who not only has done wonders but he purposes wonders for his people now and forever the word counsel means to plan means to purpose something again it's the very opposite of our idea of non-directive counseling it's just facilitates it helps someone to help themselves no no no not with God Isaiah's crystal clear God's counsel is his plan his purpose for the whole of human history and that's what pervades the whole prophecy of Isaiah God plans God purposes he counsels and what he declares can never ever fail listen to some of the verses from Isaiah's prophecy as the Lord of hosts has sworn as I have planned so shall it be as I have counseled so shall it stand or again this is the purpose that is purposed or the counsel that is counseled concerning the whole earth for the Lord of hosts has counseled who will annul it his hand is stretched out who will turn it back see what God counsels what he purposes must and will stand and all the way through Isaiah's prophecy even amid that time of great darkness and danger and despair in the world what he tells us is that what God counsels what he plans and purposes for his people are wonders of great salvation you are my God I will praise your name the prophet says for you have done wonderful things plans from of old faithful and sure and the Lord saw behold I will do again wonderful things with this people with

wonder upon wonder in that day the deaf shall hear and out of their gloom and darkness the blind will see the meek shall obtain fresh joy in the

[38 : 32] Lord and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel and this child says Isaiah the one that you are to wait for and hope for he will be the one who will do all these things he will be the wonder counselor he's the one who is planning something utterly wonderful for this world something filled with wonder for the whole earth and something that will fill people with wonder in all the marvelous purposes of God that are revealed fully when he comes and that wonder is you see that in the later chapters of Isaiah's prophecy nothing less he says than the recreation of this whole universe world world world world world world but it's so so much more than that it's a promise of utter renewal utter recreation of all this whole soiled and sad and suffering and tragic world a world that's so full of heartbreak so full of despair so desperately overshadowed in so many ways for every single one of us every single one of us at some stage in our life will find our life overshadowed with the dark shadow of death and

Christmas is a time often when that dark shadow is so evident so tangible because we can't help remembering can we the loved ones who are no longer with us in the midst of the joy no longer at the table of rejoicing and there's an aching void often in many people's hearts as we mourn those whom death has snatched away so often the shadow of death casts its pall over our lives love but but this child who is coming says Isaiah he cancels he plans something truly wonderful for this sad unbroken and sin sick world he will be God's servant king he will come full of the spirit of God himself he will come as Emmanuel as God in our flesh to bring good news and he says in these marvelous words near the end of his prophecy that he comes to proclaim the to grant those who mourn a crown of beauty instead of ashes the oil of gladness instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair the spirit of the

Lord he says is upon me to do all this says the one who will be the wonder counselor he who is planning something wonderful and marvelous the Lord has anointed me to bring that great good news and when Jesus Christ was born you see all of that came to fulfillment one day Jesus stood in a synagogue in Galilee and he took out the scroll and he quoted and read from these very words in Isaiah and he said today all these scriptures have been fulfilled in your hearing about God himself coming in the flesh of man no other guru or religious leader in the world in history has ever claimed so much and in me says Jesus the people walking in darkness have seen a great light because at last

God's wonder counselor has come to be the true leader of all mankind a present leader a permanent leader to tend his flock like a shepherd to gather his lost sheep as Isaiah promised to lead them in the wonders of his salvation and that's what old Simeon recognized when he saw Jesus now Lord you're letting your servant depart in peace according to your word because my eyes have seen your salvation a salvation you've prepared in the purpose of all peoples a light for generation for revelation to the peoples as well as a glory for your people Israel this is for the world and I've seen it with my own eyes he recognized that now at last he knew that God's permanent powerful leader for the world was present and he could lead him an old man facing death he could lead him through death with no fear to depart in absolute peace because he had seen the dawn of God's great salvation who is he in yonder stall he is the counselor he is the one who plans and purposes and fulfills all the wonders of God's great salvation for this world and for you and for me I don't know what you're looking for in life I don't know whether you think you can find it in counseling or whether you scorn all that is a lot of nonsense I don't know whether you think you can find it in yourself or somewhere through your own searches but I do know this that he who is planning something wonderful God's wonder counselor the Lord Jesus Christ that he has a wonderful plan and purpose for your life and that purpose is that you should trust in him and submit to him as your true leader as the permanent

[44 : 37] Lord and leader of your life in this world and forever because he alone can do the wonders that you need and that's true whether you really know it or not the forgiveness of your sins and the liberation from your past that only God can free you from and will free you from forever when you bow to him as Lord and leader that's God's wonderful purpose for everyone sitting in this room tonight for everyone listening in and looking in at this recording but friends the Bible makes it very clear and Jesus makes it very clear it's not a foregone conclusion the tragedy of history is that so often even those who knew God's great and mighty wonders they still rejected him despite his wonders says the psalmist they still did not believe there's no different in

Jesus day Luke tells us very plainly they weren't all like Simeon the Pharisees the lawyers rejected God's purpose God's counsel for themselves those who thought themselves among the most decent among the most law abiding religious people of their day because they rejected the wonders of God in Jesus Christ Matthew's gospel puts it even more shockingly when they saw the wonderful things that he did and the children crying Hosanna they were indignant they turned their face away from him they scorned his wonders and in the end Matthew tells us Jesus departed from those people forever seems astonishing doesn't it but it's really no different still today why why why would you reject the wonderful promises of God for your life forever well friends

Jesus calls a spade a spade he tells us why it's not because he isn't truly wonderful but it's because we are truly wicked he says light has come into the world but people love darkness rather than light why because their deeds were evil in the end Jesus says what keeps people back from the wonders of his salvation is that there are things that are so precious to them so precious to us that we just will not give them up we won't yield them to his permanent leadership to his lordship over our lives we want to keep them my beloved autonomy my living life my way my loves my desires the things I want that Jesus says are wrong and have to be repented of so we keep them tight to our chest we won't let them go to but what a price

Jesus says to remain walking in darkness not only in this world but forever and ever friends my plea to you this Christmas is this don't let that be you don't let it be you don't despise the wonderful purpose of God in the wonder counselor of God the Lord Jesus Christ the savior for you that he's made known in the message of the coming of his son at the first Christmas he alone is the wonder counselor his true and permanent leadership calls you this Christmas and he's saying still to everyone everyone who will heed his call I am the light of the world whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life he's the one who purposes wonders for the people of this world and to all to all who follow him he will perform those wonders wonders upon wonders and will go on doing so forever and ever so listen to him and heed his voice this

Christmas amen let's pray his name shall be called wonder counselor so come all you faithful joyful and triumphant come ye to Bethlehem come and behold him born the king of angels come let us adore him Christ the Lord gracious God grant this to be truly the response of all of our hearts this Christmas time for Jesus Christ sake amen