He Shall Be Called

THE NAMES OF CHRIST

Advent Series Guide



This guide is designed to help you stay connected to each week's message beyond Sunday morning. For five days after each message, you'll find a short reading and a question or two to help you reflect, pray, and consider how the message might take shape in your life.

Our hope is simply that it gives you an easy way to keep the conversation going with God throughout the week.

Wonderful Counselor

We have more access to advice than any generation in history, yet knowing what to do doesn't seem any easier. We want clarity, certainty, and answers, especially when life gets complicated. But when Isaiah described the coming Messiah as the Wonderful Counselor, he was promising something greater than someone who would simply tell us what to do. In the first week of Advent, we explore what it means that Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves, loves us completely, and invites us to trust him even when we don't have all the answers. Because God's answer to our uncertainty wasn't certainty. It was his presence.

Message memories for Sunday, November 29:

Day 1 – More Than an Answer-Giver

"And he shall be called Wonderful Counselor…" ISAIAH 9:6

Isaiah does not promise a Wonderful Answer-Giver who will make every decision obvious. He promises a Wonderful Counselor.

Following Jesus does not mean we will always know exactly what to do. It means we have someone trustworthy to lead us when we don't.

Consider:
Where in your life are you wishing God would simply tell you what to do?

What would it mean to trust God even before you have a clear answer?

Pray:
God, I want clarity, especially when the stakes feel high. Thank you that when I do not know what to do, I am not left on my own. Teach me to seek your wisdom and trust your character even when you do not give me every answer I want. Amen.

Day 2 – **Seen Clearly, Loved Completely**

Read Mark 10:17-22.

Before Jesus challenged the wealthy young man, Mark gives us an important detail: "Jesus looked at him and loved him."

Jesus saw something the man could not see about himself. But his correction did not come from judgment or carelessness. It came from love. God sees you clearly and loves you completely.

Consider:
How does knowing Jesus loves you affect the way you receive correction from him?

Is it easier for you to believe that God knows you completely or that he loves you completely?

Pray:
Jesus, thank you that nothing about me is hidden from you and that I am still loved. When you expose something in me that needs to change, help me remember that your counsel comes from love. Give me humility to receive what you want to show me. Amen.

Day 3 – Show Me What I'm Not Seeing

We all have blind spots. We can misunderstand our motives, defend what we have already decided, or become remarkably good at convincing ourselves that a bad idea is a good one.

Maybe one of the wisest prayers we can pray is simply: Jesus, show me what I'm not seeing.

Consider:

Where might you already have your mind made up and simply asking God to agree with you?

What could Jesus be trying to show you about yourself?

Pray:

Jesus, show me what I am not seeing. Reveal the fears, motives, assumptions, and blind spots that I have trouble recognizing on my own. Give me enough humility to listen and enough trust to believe that whatever you reveal will be handled with love. Amen.

Day 4 – When the Counselor Disagrees

Read Mark 10:21-22 again.

The young man asked Jesus for direction. Then Jesus gave him an answer he did not want.

We all want a Wonderful Counselor, until the Counselor disagrees with us. Sometimes we are not really looking for God's counsel. We are looking for permission. Following Jesus means allowing him to challenge us, not merely affirm us.

Consider:
Where is Jesus' teaching hardest for you to accept right now?

How can you tell the difference between seeking God's wisdom and seeking his approval of what you already want?

Pray:
Jesus, forgive me for the times I ask for your guidance while already deciding what I want the answer to be. Give me courage to follow you when your way conflicts with mine. Help me trust that you know me, love me, and see farther than I can. Amen.

Day 5 – **The Counselor Came Near**

"He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." PHILIPPIANS 2:7

Sometimes when we ask God for clarity, what we really want is enough information that trust becomes unnecessary. But Christmas reminds us that God's answer to our uncertainty is not certainty, but presence.

The Wonderful Counselor came near. You may not always know the way forward, but the One who does has come to you.

Consider:
Which frustrates you more: not knowing what God wants, or not knowing how things will turn out?

Where do you need to trust God with what you cannot see this Advent?

Pray:
God, thank you that you did not remain distant from us. You came near in Jesus. When I cannot see what lies ahead, give me wisdom to listen, humility to recognize what I may be missing, and courage to trust you with what I cannot see. Thank you for being our Wonderful Counselor. Amen.

Mighty God

In week two of *He Shall Be Called*, we look at Isaiah's name for the coming Messiah: Mighty God. Power is only good news if you can trust the person who has it, and Jesus shows us exactly what God does with power. Rather than using strength to control or protect himself, Jesus uses it to heal, restore, welcome, serve, and ultimately give himself away. Christmas introduces us to a Mighty God whose power bends down for the good of others.

Message memories for Sunday, December 6:

Day 1 – **Power You Can Trust**

"And he shall be called… Mighty God." ISAIAH 9:6

Power by itself is not necessarily comforting. Power can protect or destroy, depending on the character of the person who holds it.

That is why Isaiah's promise matters. Jesus is not merely powerful. He is powerful and good.

Consider:
What experiences have shaped the way you think about power?

What makes Jesus' power trustworthy?

Pray:
God, thank you that your strength is never separated from your goodness. When power in this world has made me cautious or afraid, help me look to Jesus and see what your power is truly like. Teach me to trust your strength because I can trust your character. Amen.

Day 2 – **Not So With You**

Read Mark 10:42-45.

The disciples understood power the way most people do: the people at the top get recognition, influence, and control. Jesus turned that upside down. "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant."

In Jesus' kingdom, strength becomes an opportunity to seek someone else's good.

Consider:
Where are you tempted to think of greatness in terms of recognition, influence, or control?

How does Jesus redefine greatness?

Pray:
Jesus, reshape the way I think about strength and success. Keep me from using what I have to elevate myself. Teach me to see influence, authority, and ability as opportunities to serve, and make my definition of greatness look more like yours. Amen.

Day 3 – **Watch What Jesus Does With Power**

Read Mark 1:40-42.

Jesus had extraordinary power, but notice who benefited from it. He healed the sick, welcomed children, noticed the ignored, restored outsiders, defended the vulnerable, and served his friends.

Jesus' power keeps bending down.

Consider:
Which examples of Jesus using his power for someone else stand out most to you?

What does that tell you about the character of God?

Pray:
Jesus, help me see God more clearly by watching you. Thank you that your power moves toward people who are hurting, overlooked, or in need. Let your compassion reshape the way I imagine God and the way I respond to people around me. Amen.

Day 4 – **Who Is Better Off Because of Your Power?**

Read Philippians 2:3-4.

All of us have some kind of power. It might come through a job, relationship, money, knowledge, influence, experience, or simply having a voice someone else does not have.

The question is not whether you have power. The better question is: Who is better off because of it?

Consider:
What kind of power or influence has God entrusted to you?

Who could be safer, noticed, lifted, or served because of the way you use your power?

Pray:
God, help me recognize the influence and strength you have entrusted to me. Keep me from using it only for myself. Show me who I can protect, encourage, notice, or serve, and let the way I use power reflect the way Jesus used his. Amen.

Day 5 – **Two Kinds of Power**

Read Matthew 2:1-3, 16.

At Christmas, two very different kinds of power collide.

Herod used power to protect himself, even at the expense of others. Jesus, the Mighty God, would spend his life doing the opposite by using his power for others and eventually giving himself away.

Herod tried to preserve his name through control. Ironically, we remember Herod because of Jesus.

Consider:

Where do you see the contrast between Herod's power and Jesus' power?

Where do gentleness and strength exist together in Jesus, and where could they grow together in you?

Pray:

Jesus, thank you for showing us a different kind of power. You are strong without being cruel, authoritative without being controlling, and mighty while still serving. This Advent, form the same strength and gentleness in me, and teach me to use whatever power I have for the good of others. Amen.

Everlasting Father

In week three of *He Shall Be Called*, we look at Isaiah's name for the coming Messiah: Everlasting Father. Everything we build our lives around eventually changes, but Jesus' care doesn't expire. Christmas is the surprising announcement that the One who came into the world needing to be held is the One who came to assure us that we are held.

Message memories for Sunday, December 13:

Day 1 – You Were Never Meant to Hold Everything

"And he shall be called… Everlasting Father." ISAIAH 9:6

Sooner or later, life becomes bigger than us. A diagnosis, a relationship, a child we cannot help, a future we cannot predict, or a loss we cannot undo can remind us that our strength has limits.

You were never supposed to be the biggest person in your life.

Consider:

What are you carrying right now that feels bigger than you?

Where are you acting as though everything depends on you?

Pray:

God, remind me that I was never meant to hold everything together on my own. When life feels bigger than me, help me release the pressure to be strong enough for every situation. Teach me to trust the One who is stronger than I am. Amen.

Day 2 – **What Kind of Father?**

"A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling." PSALM 68:5

Isaiah's word "Father" describes the care of the coming King. A good father protects, provides, and seeks the good of those entrusted to him.

Isaiah is not asking us to project our own experiences of fathers onto God. Instead, the best fathers are trying to become a little more like him.

Consider:
How has your own experience with fathers shaped the way you hear this title for God?

What does Jesus show you about what fatherly care is meant to look like?

Pray:
God, where my experiences of fatherhood have been good, help me receive them with gratitude. Where they have been painful or incomplete, help me not make those limits the measure of you. Show me more clearly what your protection, provision, and care are like. Amen.

Day 3 – **You Will Not Be Abandoned**

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." JOHN 14:18

Jesus did not promise his disciples that nothing frightening would happen. He did not promise they would understand everything or never feel afraid.

He promised something deeper: you will not be abandoned.

Consider:
When life feels uncertain, is your deeper fear sometimes that you will have to face it alone?

What difference does Jesus' promise of presence make?

Pray:
Jesus, thank you that you do not promise an easy life, but you do promise your presence. When I feel alone, scared, or unsure of what comes next, remind me that I have not been abandoned. Help me trust your presence even when I cannot always feel it. Amen.

Day 4 – **Temporary Things Cannot Carry Everlasting Weight**

"He has also set eternity in the human heart…"
ECCLESIASTES 3:11

Health, income, relationships, family, and stability are good gifts. But none of them are everlasting.

When we ask temporary things to give us permanent security, eventually they will fail under the weight.

Consider:

What temporary thing are you most tempted to depend on for lasting peace or security?

How can you enjoy the gift without asking it to be something it cannot be?

Pray:

God, thank you for the good and temporary gifts you have placed in my life. Help me enjoy them without turning them into ultimate things. When I am tempted to build my security on something that can change, redirect my trust toward you, the One who does not. Amen.

Day 5 – **The One Who Holds Us**

"For to us a child is born… And he shall be called… Everlasting Father." ISAIAH 9:6

It is one of the strange and beautiful claims of Christmas: a baby, completely dependent on others, is called our Everlasting Father.

The One who entered the world needing to be held is the One who came to assure us that we are held.

Consider:
What burden could you begin releasing instead of carrying as though everything depends on you?

What would it look like to trust that God is holding you this Advent?

Pray:
God, thank you that when everything around me changes, you do not. Thank you that I do not have to be strong enough to hold everything together because you are my Everlasting Father. Help me release what I cannot control and rest in the assurance that I am held by you. Amen.

Prince of Peace

Christmas is filled with promises of peace, yet life rarely feels very peaceful. In the final week of *He Shall Be Called*, we look at Isaiah's name for the coming Messiah: Prince of Peace. Jesus offers something deeper than the absence of stress, conflict, or uncertainty. The biblical idea of *shalom* describes wholeness, well-being, and life being put right, and Jesus says his peace can exist even in the presence of trouble. Whether this Christmas feels joyful, chaotic, uncertain, or painful, the promise is not that everything around us will suddenly become peaceful, but that the Prince of Peace has come near.

Message memories for Sunday, December 20:

Day 1 – **Stop Postponing Peace**

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you." JOHN 14:27

It is easy to tell ourselves that peace is one solution away. Once the problem is solved, the conversation happens, the bills are paid, or the uncertainty disappears, then we can relax.

But if peace requires everything around us to be peaceful first, we may spend our whole lives postponing it.

Consider:

What circumstance are you currently waiting to resolve before allowing yourself to experience peace?

What might it mean to receive Jesus' peace before that situation changes?

Pray:

Jesus, I confess how often I postpone peace until my circumstances cooperate. Help me receive the peace you offer even when questions remain unanswered and problems remain unresolved. Teach me to depend more on your presence than on my ability to control what happens next. Amen.

Day 2 – **More Than Calm**

"And he shall be called… Prince of Peace." ISAIAH 9:6

The Hebrew word Isaiah uses for peace is *shalom*. It means more than calm or the absence of conflict. It carries the idea of wholeness, well-being, and things being put right.

Jesus does not merely promise to make us feel calmer. He invites us into a life increasingly grounded in him.

Consider:
How is *shalom* different from the way you normally define peace?

Where in your life are you longing for something to be made whole?

Pray:
God, deepen my understanding of peace. I want more than temporary calm. Bring your wholeness into the places in me and around me that feel fractured. Help me become increasingly grounded in you rather than held hostage by whatever happens around me. Amen.

Day 3 – **Peace in the Presence of Trouble**

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart**!** I have overcome the world." JOHN 16:33

Jesus never promised a trouble-free life. In fact, he told his disciples plainly that trouble would come. And yet, he still promises peace.

The peace Jesus gives does not require the absence of difficulty. Trouble may be present without getting the final word.

Consider:
How have you tended to connect peace with the absence of trouble?

What trouble do you need to stop giving the final word in your life?

Pray:
Jesus, thank you for being honest about the trouble we experience in this world. When life feels chaotic, remind me that trouble does not have the final word. Give me a peace rooted in you; one that can remain even when my circumstances are difficult. Amen.

Christmas Eve – **Peace Has Entered the World**

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace…" LUKE 2:14

When the angels announced Jesus' birth, they declared peace on earth. But Rome was still Rome. Herod was still Herod. People still suffered, fought, worried, and died.

Christmas Eve reminds us that peace did not arrive because all the world's problems disappeared. Peace arrived because the Prince of Peace entered the world.

Consider:
What does it mean to you that Jesus entered an unpeaceful world rather than waiting for the world to become peaceful?

What do you want to bring before the Prince of Peace tonight?

Pray:
Jesus, tonight we remember that you entered a world that was still broken, frightened, and longing for peace. Thank you for coming into a world like ours and into lives like mine. Meet me in whatever I carry today, and help me receive the peace your presence brings. Amen.

Christmas Day – **The Prince of Peace Has Come**

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you…" LUKE 2:11

Today we celebrate the announcement at the heart of Christmas: the Prince of Peace has come**!**

The world is not yet completely peaceful. Our lives are not completely whole. But Christmas declares that God has entered the story and that trouble will not have the final word. Peace is no longer only something we wait for. In Jesus, peace has come near.

Consider:
Where do you most need the presence of the Prince of Peace today?

How could you carry the peace of Jesus into someone else's life this Christmas?

Pray:
Jesus, Prince of Peace, thank you for coming near. Thank you that Christmas means God has entered our broken world and has not abandoned us to it. Fill me with your peace today, and make me someone who carries your wholeness, grace, hope, and love into the lives of others. Amen.