

Christ the Only Hope for the New Year

New Years Day

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Congregation, a very blessed new year 2021. It's amazing how fast it goes. Another year has begun, another year is behind us. We need forgiveness of the past and we need hope for the future. We thank you very much for all the best wishes, the cards, the emails, the texts, the personal words. They are very much appreciated. Thank you also on behalf of my family and a special blessed new year to the consistory. I would have loved to have them here to my left hand but they aren't here but they are listening along also today. We have been close to each other, we experience brotherhood and love, we are kind of friends. It's a real blessing to have you as a consistory and may the Lord continue to be with us and to give us also wisdom and love contact, and especially love for souls for eternity. A blessed new year to the custodians. A blessed new year also to the organists, to the ushers, to them also helping out in the sound booth. May the Lord give us all his blessing. Also best wishes for our confession class. May the Lord give also some time yet to meet again, to see each other also and to have some personal contact in church here in the hall. Let us pray for that and see what happens.

Also all the young people, the children at home. I know it's hard, it's hard to sit in that chair in the living room, sit next to your dad and next to your mom on the couch, and then to listen the whole service long, but I would like to ask you a favor, young people, children, I would like to ask you a favor: let your parents listen, give them time to listen that they may concentrate, don't annoy them, don't make it difficult for them and just sit on your chair and sit on the couch and listen yourself, try to understand something of it. I try also to insert some pieces for the young people, children. And parents, insist this is a worship service and respect it. And you might have to be a little stronger and say, "No, you sit in that chair. No, you don't do that." Of course, the younger ones it's different again, the older ones, may the Lord give wisdom.

Hope. We all like that hope but we don't know what the future will bring. It can get worse. It can get really worse when we see what's happening in this world. It's not getting any better and yet may we also be positive and rely on the Lord and give it in God's hands and believe in his providence and not panic and be calm and trusting. Give us this day our daily bread. But let me try to fill it in this morning what that trusting is. Trusting who? Trusting what? Trusting how?

The text for this morning is from Isaiah 9, the well-known verses, I'll look them up for you, the well-known verses in 6b,

6 ... and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

You know, if we have that, if we rely on the Lord Jesus Christ who is called Wonderful, Counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, to rely entirely, then we have hope and courage.

So Christ the only hope for the new year. That's the theme, Christ is the only hope for the new year. Four thoughts. In the first place, as Wonderful Counselor. I took that comma out, do you see that? It says in our translation, "Wonderful," comma, "Counsellor." I took the comma out because I think it means Wonderful Counselor. Secondly, The mighty God. In the third place, The everlasting Father. And in the fourth place as The Prince of Peace. So Christ the only hope for the new year, what a hope if we may rely on that Wonderful Counselor, that mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace.

Congregation, as I said, I took the comma out but let us first look at the word "wonderful" and then the word "counselor" and then combine them. Wonderful. Why do we say wonderful? What does that mean anyways, wonderful? Well, it's a wonderful person, so well behaved and you can talk with that person. A wonderful person. A wonderful young man to marry. A wonderful young lady. Wonderful people. Nice people. Wonderful meal, it tastes good. We use the word "wonderful" in many ways. It's something amazing, something that we like, something that works well. A wonderful car. You know, that's actually not what it means here. It might be included because Christ is a wonderful God, he's a wonderful Savior. He is wonderful but here it's a little different, though.

Wonderful. You know words change over time, right, in meaning? They may originally mean something else than they mean today. Sometimes it changes completely. For example, we read about the disciples, that they were andres idiotes, they were idiots it says in the Bible, but in those days "idiot" meant "simple; not educated," and now it means something completely different. So you have to be really careful when you translate the Bible that you understand that words change in meaning. Also this word "wonderful." Wonderful here means miraculous. It means amazing in the sense of, "I did not expect that. This is beyond ordinary. This is so strange. It is so miraculous. Wonders are happening." And that's what Christ is, he is doing wonders, right? He is able to do wonders. Sometimes people are stuck and say, "I'm suffering with this so long, I don't know how to get out of this and how to solve this problem." And then somehow a wonderful person can empathize but the Lord Jesus does not just empathize, he can solve things because he is doing wonders. He's doing wonders in the sense that he is healing people and bringing people together. He is wonderful in the sense that he changes hearts, that he draws people out of that miry clay, that he is doing the impossible.

You know, when you look at church history and you see what people were like, like John Bunyan when he was a young person, he was really rambunctious. He was a very difficult child. He was so ungodly. He didn't care. He was stealing. And the Lord changed him because there is a Wonderful Counselor who is doing wonders. And also people so pious and so high-minded and so proud, the Lord can just break them like that and draw them in for himself so that they may see who God is and need a Savior. So whatever is on your heart, whatever your concerns are today for the future, maybe there are sort of things in your mind and you say, "I want that to change. I can't handle that anymore." Your family, marriage, raising children, whatever it is, I would like to tell you the Lord Jesus is a wonderful, a wonder-doing, a wonder-doing Savior. He can do it. I'm not saying that he will exactly the way you desire it but he can do it. He is able to do so. All power is given unto him in his hands. Nothing is too wonderful for him.

You know, the disciples said, "Who can then be saved?" If the rich young ruler cannot be saved, who else can be saved? And he said it's impossible with men, not difficult, impossible, but all things, all things think about that this day, think about all things does mean what? All things are possible with God and with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is that wonderful, wonder-doing counselor. Christ leads to miraculous results. It's much more than being nice and good and wonderful, it is the power of God.

So I have a text here in my sketch, Isaiah 28:29, "This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel." Why is that text here on my sketch? Isaiah 28:29, in that verse you see the same thing, the combination of the words "wonderful" and "counselor." That's one of the reasons why I took the comma out. Also, "This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts," the Lord of armies, the almighty God, "which is wonderful in counsel," wonder-doing in counsel. So you might feel paralyzed and struck and locked up and limited and uncertain or whatever you feel, you know, let me just emphatically say this morning that it is the Lord Jesus, the Triune God but now the Lord Jesus who is wonderful, a wonder-doing counselor.

Counselor. You know, English is my second language, not yours, but counselor is spelled in two different ways, right? Sometimes with an "s" as he coun-sel-or, and sometimes it's translated with a "c" and "i," coun-cil-or. A councilor is someone in a council, student council or city council, and then there are councilors and those councilors decide and those councilors discuss and those councilors advise one another to get with the mayor, right? They decide and rule and govern together. Councilor. There's also the word "counselor" with an "se." Also it has different meanings but the main meaning is "advise." You go for counseling. You go to someone who qualifies for marriage counseling or educational counseling or counseling for depression or communication or something else to understand you, to listen to you, to help you to get out of the rut.

So what is it here? Well, you say counselor here is written with an "se" so it must be advising. Well, it's actually both. The Lord Jesus is not only advising, he is not only saying, "Well, I would think this is the best, it's your choice," he works it himself. He is also deciding and in the original words, you find that combination that he advises but he advises in such a way that it is so wise and so powerful that people listen and things

change because he's a wonderful counselor, a wonder-doing counselor. He rules and governs and advises.

Now many have advised mankind. Satan, "You know, you can eat of that tree, no problem. Look, it looks so good and you will be like God and you will know good and evil. So I advise you to eat of it," Satan said. His advice, it was the wrong advice, and they took that wrong advice but Satan is such in craftiness he gives the wrong advice. He brings darkness. He brings hopelessness. And Satan tells you, "You can do that. Everyone is doing it. No wonder the consequences are not that big and, you know, you will deal with that afterwards. No problem. Just go ahead." And he encourages young friends and old ones to sin. "Sin is sweet and feels good, it feels fantastic, it feels heavenly, it feels godly. Just go ahead, do it." He advises against God's will and then when you do it, he's laughing and he's advising to just leave the church and to give up on it and to say, "No, it's senseless and you can't be saved anyway, anyhow. You have sinned too much." He is so discouraging or he's also sometimes over-encouraging people.

But the counsel of Christ, his advice, his strong advice and his work is, he is so faithful, so trustworthy in his counseling. Mighty God. Also Wonderful Counselor. He is so faithful and he's someone you can immediately trust and pour your heart out for. He's unselfish in his counseling. He's wise and he counsels personally from the heart. You know, some counselors just do their job, some counselors want to get paid a lot and it's about the money, I am afraid, and many good counselors as well, but this counselor counsels for free and from the heart. Some counselors are very good at what they have read in the books and they have a good memory and they can immediately diagnose you, but they have no warmth, no heart, and you just don't connect with them so easily. But this is the wonderful counselor and when he speaks, he speaks sense into people. You know, the way he counsels the Samaritan woman, so beautiful, so cautious, so friendly, not condemning her but just asking her, "Get your husband." "I have no husband." "Right." And so on with the counselor.

Or for this counselor you don't need an appointment. He's always available. You can contact him anytime. Doctors, counselors, pastors, psychologists, psychiatrists, can be so wrong, can be just fooled by them, but the Lord Jesus is the wonderful counselor. He exactly knows what people are in need of and you don't confuse him.

So now combine those thoughts. Wonderful counselor. He decides in council. He is the highest one in the council of heaven, governing everything, guiding everything but he is also able and powerful enough to change people's heart and to change their course in life, and he is able to help people out in difficult circumstances and especially regarding their hearts. The impossible is possible for him. Now sometimes counselors say, "You have been here now for 10 times or 20 times or 30 times. I can't help you." Some are very honest to all that and say, "I can't help you anymore." But he can. Wonderful, wonder-doing counselor. Rely on him. Seek him also for the new year and make a point of it every day to pray to that counselor for his counsel, and open that book, open the word of the living God because to whom else shall we go, he has the words. He has the words of eternal life and he is called the Word, and he is the prophet.

Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Second thought, might God. What do you think? Well, the Lord Jesus is also God. The Savior is the second person in the Godhead. He is not less God than the Father is, or than the Holy Spirit is. He's the almighty God. The might God. So you think of God who is able in strength and in wisdom to do things. He has the power, right, the mighty God, the Lord Jesus being God and being mighty. Right. But sometimes words have a different flavor. What do you mean? Well, I can say to someone, "Hey, boy," or, "Hey, man," or, "Hey, dude," or, "Hey," and many different words I can use for a young man, but all those words have a different flavor. "Hey, fellow." So in different context words have different flavors, we call that a connotation, a certain ring, a certain fragrance, a feeling in that word.

So words don't only have a content, it's about a young man, it's also they have also a feeling to it. So also the word "mighty" in our text has a flavor. It has a military flavor. It's about someone who is at war, someone with a sword, someone with a spear, someone who is strong, I mean bodily strong, and is able to fight like young David. He was able, he was able to kill Goliath; he had such courage and wisdom and power. You know, King Saul was sometimes quite down. He was a very difficult person. He had mood changes and an evil spirit came to him and just disturbed him and he got so angry at everything and one day he said, "You know, I'd like to become more calm through music. So do you know someone who could provide, a person who can play well on the harp or so?" 1 Samuel 16, "And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him." So there David already was a type of the Lord Jesus, playing well on the music of the gospel, a mighty valiant man with courage, a hero and a man of war, a trained soldier, and prudent in matters, not being ahead of himself but doing things at time, a comely person, the Lord being with him.

So I see that in the mighty God, I see in him someone at war and fighting. You know, when there's war, you need someone to deliver, someone to conquer, and sometimes our situation is compared to that, in our families there is war, and for sure there's also by nature war with God and we like to win from the Lord and rebel against God and take things in our own hands and being our own boss. But Christ is the mighty man. You don't slay him. You don't win from him. You don't conquer him. He is the mighty man, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most might, with thy glory. And in thy majesty and in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee." Do you see? Often that word "mighty God" is connected to war. And you may also know the name already in Hebrew. You know the angel Gabriel, right? Gabriel. Well, that's almost the same as mighty God. El is God, and gabar or gibbor is mighty. So Gabriel is the mighty God angel sent by the almighty God and that's also here. He is the gibbor, the gibbor-El, the Gabriel himself. That's why the people of Israel were able to return from captivity. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob unto the mighty God.

Or think of Judges 6, "And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." Who is this king of glory? The Lord strong and mighty. The Lord mighty in battle. He is mighty in battle, "For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward." So he's not just strong, he conquers, and combine that with the previous thought, that all things are in his hands and that he is also the Wonderful Counselor and the mighty God at the same time. The strength, the strategy or the power, "that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, and take up thy bed, and go into thine house."

So that power of the Lord Jesus, very early in his ministry he let the disciples experience his mighty God side when they were together in a boat on the lake of Galilee and there was a storm, a tempest, and the waves were lapping into the boat and began to sink, and they cried, "We drown! We perish!" And he calmed the storm and the wind was laying down and they said, "What manner of man is this for he commandeth even the winds and water and they obey him." I mean the Lord Jesus. So yes, we may also pray to the Lord Jesus. We may pray to God in general but also to Jesus himself and say today on your knees, for example, "O thou Wonderful Counselor, O thou mighty God, go with me in this new year. May thou be my warrior, my Counselor."

He has the power to lay down his life and he has the power to take it again. He has the power over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as God has given him. So he gives life with his power to whosoever God the Father has given him, the elect. He rose from the dead with his power. He paid the price for the unbelief of his church.

So what's needed now is to not only hear about this mighty God but to be reconciled to him so that he is your Savior and your mighty God and your Wonderful Counselor, and in order to receive him, we have to come to the point that we don't do anything anymore, that we just admit for that mighty God, "I can do nothing," because the mighty God is really honored when people say, "I'm hopeless. I can't save myself. I cannot help myself in any possible way." And then people feel defeated and feel in a corner, and feel at a dead end, and then the Lord appears and shows his power and his wisdom as the Wonderful Counselor, as the mighty God.

So what do we need for that? You know that. How do sinners get connected to that mighty God, to that Wonderful Counselor? It is by faith only, by believing. Him that worketh not but believeth in him that justifies the ungodly, you become an ungodly person yourself, so unworthy of life, such a hopeless case and then you see something of him, that he conquers and he is doing all the work himself, and that he does not leave anything in your hands. Oh, he is a great warrior and he has won, and he will win, and he will conquer.

In the third place, everlasting Father. I'll keep this short because we talked about, "Our Father which art in heaven," right, not too long ago? But the strange thing here is that the Lord Jesus is called everlasting Father. The Lord Jesus. When we say, "Our Father which

art in heaven," we mean the first person, also the second, and also the third, sometimes the Father refers to God completely, to the Triune God. Here in our text the word "Father" specifically refers to Christ. That's amazing. So the Lord Jesus is also Father-like. He is not the first person but he resembles the first person, doesn't he? He has the same attributes, the same kind, he's completely the same God, right? He is not the same person, he's the second person, but he is yet the same God.

Fathers feel the pain of their children, don't they? They are hurting when their daughter, their son, their child is hurting. They just feel that pain in their own hearts. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him," in godly tender fear. So Christ is also Father in that sense and it's important to look at that from the perspective of John 14. As you know, we find the word "Father," I mentioned it before a couple of weeks ago that word "Father" occurs 800 times or so in the Bible and 100 times in John. So the Lord Jesus often talked about his Father but you feel that he's so close to his Father that he is kind of Father himself. The Lord Jesus, Father himself. "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive... I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father," that I am in my Father, "and ye in me, and I in you." Do you see that? That is John 14:20, "that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."

So Christ is fatherly and he said one day, "If a son shall ask bread of you, that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil," because you are, "know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Ghost to them that ask him?" So the Lord Jesus is very close to the Father and in the Father and the second person in the Godhead.

So the Lord Jesus is empathizing. He is fatherly. He cares. He's kind. Kind. And he is an everlasting Father. He does not die. He does not leave. He is there for his church all the time. You know, fathers sometimes die. My father died not long ago. I don't have a father anymore. I would have loved to talk to him today. He is not there anymore. But the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, does not leave ever. He is always present. He's always available. He is the mighty God. He is the everlasting Father. He is the Wonderful Counselor. And he is also the Prince of Peace, fourth thought.

Our fourth thought: the Prince of Peace. The king of peace, it's the same. He is royalty. The one who gives peace and makes peace and is peace. You know, remember why the Lord has made man, why the Lord has created Adam and Eve in paradise? What was the purpose? To show peace. There was the state of rectitude that all things are peaceful between Adam and Eve and God. There was peace. There was shalom. There was eirene because eirene, eirenic means also peaceful, right? It's the same word that's in Greek, eirene and shalom meaning harmony in all aspects, reconciliation.

So we have broken that peace so there is hostility, not hostility from God to us although there is anger but hostility from people's side to God. We don't want him. We like to reign and rule ourselves and make our own decisions and God is good but we don't need him. So we broke away from God and the Lord would not have done injustice to let it be that way or that he will win and he will conquer, but the Lord Jesus has yet come to make peace where there was no peace. And he's able to make that peace, he's the Prince of Peace himself, the manifestation of peace. He can bring peace in families, in marriages, as work in church, but he can also make peace between a holy God, a righteous one, and a vile sinner who are so far apart. And he can make that peace.

You know, he, for example, met with the disciples after his resurrection and said, "Peace be unto thee," remember? Suddenly he appeared to those who were closed, "Peace be unto thee." He did not want to scare them but he wanted to show them peace, peace to reconcile sinners, to restore and repair relationships. You know, that relationship between God and men seemed to be irreparable, seemed to be irreparable. What can you do? Too much has happened. It will never be right again. You know, sometimes people say that in regard to their marriages, things have happened that cannot be solved. It's absolutely impossible. And sometimes it looks that way but it also looked that way spiritually, that it was so impossible to bring those two together again but the Lord Jesus came, the Prince of Peace, and he came to repair not only the horizontal relationships, that too, but also vertical with God. Both vertical and horizontal.

I know there is also a false peace. I know Jeremiah and Ezekiel both talk about that, about false prophets teaching peace, peace and there is no peace. They are hearing lightly and deceive people. But although we have to keep our eyes open for that possibility of deceiving yourself, the word of God is the peace book and refers to the peace child, and the word of God does not deceive us. And we read in God's word about a great peace. You know, without God, by nature without God, lonely, guilty, uncertain, lost, nobody you can be close to because, to be honest, the wicked have no peace, no calm, no peace in their hearts. But there is only one peace that really satisfies and is true peace and harmony and everything, that is the peace that is to be found in the blood of Christ because he is our peace, the Bible says.

You know, when you see as a vile sinner those outstretched arms of the Lord, of the Lord Jesus, "Peace be unto thee," when you see something of God's friendly face, then through the operation and the application of the Holy Spirit the Lord comes close by when God's children feel that way and they feel peace in their hearts. They feel peace with God, peace with people, and peace with all circumstances. Oh, what a peace, that you don't complain about anything, that you have peace with everything, you are so calm in your heart, that at the beginning of the new year you can give it all over into his hands because he is the Prince of Peace and don't have any worries left anymore. When you receive that peace in your hearts, then your heart is going a little faster because of that joy in your heart, you don't have any complaints about anything anymore because you have peace with God, you have a desire to sing God's glory, it's a peace passing all understanding. It's so full, that peace.

Have you tasted it? In church? The home? When opening the Bible? When you've heard the voice of the Shepherd? Did it take all your fears away? Did he come close to you? Did he say to you, "Peace be unto thee"? And he took all the problems away and you just had the best life? What an amazing peace. You didn't think you would ever receive that peace because you don't deserve it. You think, "I would be the last to receive that. The Lord could just pass me by." And then that Wonderful Counselor, that mighty God, the everlasting Father, all in the Lord Jesus Christ coming towards you and saving you and you believe in him. Then you don't have enemies anymore. There is joy and light and harmony.

When we see the peace of God because the Lord Jesus paid the price, it's from his blood, he gave his life, he was crucified, he said, "It is finished," it takes all the fears away and gives fullness. It's a peace that even works on your body, that even helps your, let me just give an example, it helps your blood pressure. This peace makes you healthier, stronger emotionally also. So when people have heart disease, this peace is really medication for them. This peace helps for your marriage because you become a peacemaker. This peace helps with falling asleep at night. I understand some people, they cannot sleep, they have a hard time sleeping and I don't condemn them for anything like that but I yet believe that the Lord gives peace, that it makes a difference, don't you think? You still may need sleep medication, that's really well possible, but what I want to say is that peace with God is yet so powerful it also has effect on your body and on your sleep. You know that being conscious of God's faithfulness and that you are not proud, it's not a proud peace, it's a humble peace.

Let me go out with a few texts in the Bible proving this. Psalm 4:8, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep." Do you see that? "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety." You know, you can fall asleep that way and start the new year that way. "But the meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." There is an abundance of peace coming for the church in eternity, an abundance of peace, perfect peace. Philippians 4:7, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds," hearts and minds, "through Christ Jesus." Everything. "Peace I leave you, my peace I give you not as the world give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." The Lord Jesus talking also in John 14 to his disciples, "I give my peace," that's a different peace, that's not the peace of the world. The world has no peace.

So let me end this sermon and, again, a blessed new year. Now the Lord of peace, the Lord of peace himself, I cannot do much but, "the Lord of peace himself give you peace always, by all means. The Lord be with you," 2 Thessalonians 3:16. That's a text to close with. Now the Lord of peace, he is characterized by giving peace. He does not want war. He wants peace with you. He offers peace and pardon. Now the Lord of peace himself, he is personally involved. It's not only some people talking about him but he himself give you peace. Not sometimes here and there but always. Always. By all means. In all ways in the future. So you look at the circumstance and you're down. Don't do that. May the Lord of peace give you peace. Amen.