

Midwinter 1 Wonderful Counselor for a dark helpless world

Midwinter Bumper Video

Welcome to December! We are Redemption Church of Plano Tx! I am Chris Fluitt, and I am glad to share the Word of God with you today.

I pray that everyone has a wonderful Christmas season... but I need to admit something to you. I HATE THIS TIME OF YEAR...

“Did Pastor Chris just say he hates Christmas, giving gifts, and the birth of the Lord?” No relax. I love Christmas... I just hate winter. Can I hate on winter for a moment?

Winter is... dark, cold, lifeless, difficult, and lonely. I am all for moving Christmas to July, because I do not like winter.

It is clear; the birth of Christ did not take place in the winter. There are many reasons why Jesus' birthdate is NOT December 25th. Yet in its own way, winter is a perfect time to celebrate Christ coming to Earth. I ask that you allow me to use winter as a metaphor.

Midwinter

We are calling this series midwinter. I was inspired when I heard an old Christmas hymn I never recall hearing before entitled "In the Bleak Midwinter."

"In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,

Earth stood hard as iron, water like a
stone;

Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on
snow,

In the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold Him, nor
earth sustain;

Heaven and earth shall flee away when He
comes to reign.

In the bleak midwinter a stable place
sufficed

The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.”

Christ came to an earth that was in a state
of winter...

Christ came to a dark world.

Christ came to a helpless world.

Christ came to us in a bleak midwinter of the soul, the heart, the spirit...

We love to dress this Christmas season up in tinsel & lights but let us remember the condition of the world on that first Christmas.

400 years silence – No Word - No Wonder

Your Old Testament ends with these words of the prophet Malachi.

Malachi 4:5-6(NIV) “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents;

or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.”

The Old Testament ends with this promise of God sending a prophet with the power and anointing of Elijah. This promised prophet will turn the heart of people, and the turning of their hearts will save them from destruction.

God speaks this to Malachi. Malachi writes it down. And then... nothing. God does not say anything else. This was the last thing Malachi ever heard God say. God did not speak again for 400 years.

God's Word is powerful and true... but for 400 years God's Word was silent.

The beauty and power of miraculous signs and wonders were not seen. Heaven

seemed closed for 400 years with no Word and no wonder coming to Earth.

This was the state of the world at that first Christmas.

A Dark Helpless World

This midwinter world was dark and helpless.

I know you have experienced trying to walk through a room that is completely dark. You have your arms out in front of you making sure you are not about to run into something. You really need help navigating in darkness.

This is the state of the world at that first Christmas.

God spoke light into existence at the creation, yet John describes the world as a dark place in John 1. John tells us that the light appears to darkness... it shines in the darkness and the darkness can't even understand it. John is giving us a perfect description of the world on that first Christmas.

The world was as helpless as we are when we are trying to walk through that dark room. The world did not know how to repent. The world did not know how to find God.

Midwinter

This is the state of the world at that first Christmas.

God had been silent for 400 years. The world had no Word and no wonder. There was no light, leaving us to stumble helplessly in darkness.

Does this describe you? Are you midwinter?

When have you heard from God? Does Heaven seem closed?

When was the last time you experienced God's wonder?

Are you stumbling in darkness? Are you in need of help? Are you trying to figure out which way to go in life?

Stop trying to dress up your life with tinsel and a string of lights for a moment. Allow

the truth of that original Christmas to speak to your life today.

Jesus comes to us Midwinter

Jesus did not come to a world full of light and hope... but a dark hopeless world.

Jesus did not come to a world that had it all together... but a confused world.

Jesus did not come to a world that knew the truth... but a world that had rejected truth and rejoiced over lies.

Jesus did not come to receive *from* us... He came to receive us and give to us all we lack.

If you are in a dark place, a hopeless place, a confused place... Jesus will still come to you. This promise is at the heart of the Christmas story.

Here is how God responds to us
midwinter.

Isaiah 9:6 (NIV) For to us a child is
born, to us a son is given, and the
government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful
Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting
Father, Prince of Peace.

In the middle of our dark, lifeless struggle,
with nothing to offer but our weakness
and failure, God responds with love and
care. God gives us His son. God fulfills His
promise to send a messiah to save.

Jesus is what is great about Christmas.
Jesus is that child born, and the son given.
Jesus is that promised messiah savior.
Jesus came to us Midwinter, and all your

struggle to govern your life can be placed upon His shoulders. “The government will be on His shoulders... and He will be called...”

Over the next few weeks, we are going to be focusing on the promise of this Isaiah 9:6 messianic prophecy. Especially “And He will be called.” For the remaining moments of our time together I want to draw your attention to the promise that He will be called Wonderful & Counselor.

Remember we talked about the state of the world at that first Christmas 2000 years ago. It was a world where God had been silent for 400 years, and the people living then had not seen any of the miraculous wonder of God. To a world

that lacked Word & Wonder – God sent us someone Wonderful!

Wonderful comes to us

Midwinter

A man named Zechariah was certainly not expecting God to speak to him. He was not expecting to see God's wonder on display. Zechariah was working as a priest in the temple. He was near the table of incense when suddenly something wonderful happened and an angel named Gabriel appeared and began to speak the most wonderful news to him.

Luke 1:12-13(NIV) 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. 13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid,

Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.

Zechariah had never heard God speak. Zechariah had never seen a miracle or seen an angel. Heaven had been closed and the world was in a state of midwinter, but this is how God responds to us midwinter.

God brings wonder back into our lives. God sends the beautiful. God sends the miraculous. And we hear from God that He has heard our prayers.

That first Christmas was wonderful. An angel also appeared to Joseph in a dream. An Angel appeared to Mary. The Holy Spirit overshadows Mary and blesses her.

A host of Angels appear to shepherds. A supernatural star leads wisemen. After 400 years of silence all this wonder was on display, because the one coming would be called “wonderful.”

This wonderful messiah would be named Jesus. He would do wonders: healing the sick; raising the dead; and revealing the Kingdom of God through His teaching.

This is how God responds to us midwinter.

In our Midwinter, God allows us to experience wonder again.

Our own midwinter - where we no longer hear God, nor seek His Will – this midwinter stills holds great promise. God still causes a star to shine in our night and offers us wonder.

To the person who has not heard God in a while, or perhaps has never heard - God still comes midwinter. Get ready to hear His voice.

To the person who has not seen evidence of God working in his/her life... Your life lacks beauty & wonder... but God still comes midwinter. Get ready to see His wonder, because the One who is “Wonderful” has come.

Pray this 1 sentence prayer – “Lord let me experience your wonder.”

The world was without Word & Wonder until God showed up midwinter.

The World was also dark and helpless.

The world was stumbling to find its way, and this is how God responded. God sent us the counselor.

The Counselor comes to us

Midwinter

“His name shall be called wonderful counselor.” (Isaiah 9:6)

This word counselor means advisor and guide.

To that dark world that was helplessly stumbling, trying to find its way, God responds. God sent us someone to help us, lead us, advise us, and guide us. Jesus is the light of the world. He reveals to us what is True.

The disciples were asking Jesus about directions in John 14.

John 14:5-6(NIV) 5Thomas said to him,
“Lord, we don’t know where you are
going, so how can we know the way?”

6Jesus answered, “I am the way and
the truth and the life. No one comes
to the Father except through me.

A world that had lost its way, God responds to us midwinter and sends us a counselor who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Jesus shows us how to come to the Father.

Matthew 11:28-29(NIV) “Come to me,
all you who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you and learn
from me, for I am gentle and humble

in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

If you are lost midwinter, needing direction and truth, this is how God responds. He sends you a counselor named Jesus.

Pray this one sentence prayer with me –
Jesus be my counselor.

musician

Christmas should teach us how God responds to us when we are midwinter.

Wonderful comes to us

Midwinter

The Counselor comes to us

Midwinter

Jesus comes to us Midwinter

Are you midwinter? Are you lost in darkness? Are you feeling hopeless?

The Wonderful Counselor has come. Will you seek him today?

Is your world lacking wonder? Have you not heard God's voice? Let's call on the Lord together. Let him put an end to a silence from Heaven.

Have you lost your way? Do you need direction and advice? Let's talk to Jesus.

Do you know someone midwinter? Let's pray for them. Let's ask God how we can be a help.