

A Christmas Eve meditation delivered by the Rev. Timothy C. Ahrens, senior minister at the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, December 24, 2012, 11 p.m. service dedicated to my daughter Sarah Ruth Sitler Ahrens, who has ridden to church with me early every Sunday since she was in first grade, and always to the glory of God!

## ***“Christ With Us!”\****

***Luke 2:1-20***

***(Part VI of VI in the  
sermon series “Christ is Coming”)***

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Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of each one of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and salvation. Amen.

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Tonight, the carol declares “the world in solemn stillness lays” – waiting for the birth of Christ. We wait for the peace that passes human understanding. We wait for his deliverance. We wait for his coming again. The one for whom we wait, of whom the prophets speak, is called by many names – Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Consider these amazing and powerful names and titles.

As “***Wonderful Counselor,***” the wonders of all wonders take place in his essence and in his coming. He comes out of the eternal counsel of God and becomes for us the source of all wonder and all counsel. While we struggle to understand life and the hardships we often face, he breaks through with his gentle kindness and guides us to understanding. If we pause with his name on our lips, in

prayers and petitions, he gently guides our way through the struggles we face.

As **“Mighty God,”** we acknowledge that he is the son of God – the one who is God incarnate. God with us. He is God as a newborn. **Soak that in for a minute.** Here he is. Poor like us. Human like us. His divinity is wrapped up in his humanity. It is in his divine love that he actually becomes more like us. In the power of love, he closes the gap between God and humanity. At his manger, we are amazed by his might – grasping God and handing God to us - with his tiny newborn hands.

**“Everlasting Father”** – How can this be the name of a newborn? This makes no sense. But ponder this in your heart. It is the eternal nature of God that is revealed in the Jesus. He brings eternity to earth. He brings the Father’s essence in the child’s presence. The love of God the Father becomes seen and known in God, the son.

**“Prince of Peace”** – When God enters the human heart, coming to people in love, peace is established between God and humanity. This happens one-by-one, person-by-person. Do not worry about the wrath of God because the peace of God in Christ is found in the manger tonight. If you are battling with your neighbor, finding yourself in strife with your family, come and see how God in God’s infinite love works out peace. In the world in which we live, power rules. But where Christ is, peace is. In my travels through Israel and Palestine, I often found that the few remaining Christians in the region were the leading peacemakers – joining with small but growing minorities of peacemaking Jews and Muslims to try and create a peaceable kingdom in the land of the Holy One.

**Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.** These words roll off our tongues as we stand at the manger tonight. It is as though they are easy to say, simple to understand. But they are not really easy to grasp. It is overwhelming to consider that these words, coupled with *“the government being placed upon his shoulders,”* that in this child is greatness beyond measure. His measure of rule encompasses the

whole earth. We believe that all generations will serve him. We believe all will, in the end, answer to him.

This is our faith and our belief. And this belief makes kings cringe and presidents' knees knock. Dictators and despots are fearful. It was true of Herod. It is true today. Truthfully, it makes a number of us uncomfortable. If he is ruler over all, that means he is the guide and ruler over each of our lives. It means that "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" MEANS Lord of you and me, King of you and me, too.

If you are wondering, scripture tells us that it is no less than the zeal of the Lord of Hosts that will do this. God has tenderly laid God's plans for all humanity in the manger this night. Be not afraid. Good news is born tonight! Amen.

\*Drawn from *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christmas Sermons*, Christmas 1940, Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI., 2005, pp.149-158

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