

Week 2: Mighty God - Pastor Theresa
December 14-15

Welcome to Church. If you are joining us for the first time, we are in week two of our series Entitled Christmas Presence. Where we have been exploring the eternal and priceless gifts found in Jesus Christ, as prophesied in Isaiah 9:6, for review lets read it together,

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Last week we learned that The Birth of Jesus was Immanuel, God who is with us. A powerful message that causes us to be challenged to slow down this season, prune back, so that we can truly experience the gift that was given to us this Christmas season - God's very presence dwelling among us in the form of a child.

Today, we will come to understand, that despite being born in humble circumstances, the birth of Jesus was, and is, the arrival of El Gibbor, the Mighty God, in human form. Throughout the Bible there are countless stories that demonstrate that our God is El Gibbor, the Mighty God!!

The word "Gibbor" means "mighty," "strong," or "valiant." It often describes warriors or those who demonstrate great strength. In the context of God, it emphasizes His unmatched power and ability to defend, protect, and deliver His people.

This reminds me of the story of David and Goliath found in 1 Samuel 17 which illustrates God's might and power. David, though a young shepherd, faced the giant Goliath with only a sling and a stone, declaring that he came in the name of the Lord Almighty. This story exemplifies how God's might can triumph when the odds seem to be stacked against us.

Another familiar story would be the Parting of the Red Sea in Exodus 14, when God displays His mighty power by separating the waters of the Red Sea to allow His people to walk across and escape from slavery in Egypt. This miraculous act not only shows His might but also His faithfulness to His people.

As a young worshipper I grew up singing songs that referenced Psalm 24:8, "Who is the king of glory? The Lord of Heaven's Armies - He is the King of Glory," which left a strong impression of how mighty and powerful our God truly is.

When reflecting on Our Mighty God, I began to think back to all the times when I felt stuck, down and out, and hopeless or in a situation that seemed impossible. I remember in those times being built up in my faith as I mediated on scriptures such as Jeremiah 32:17,

O Sovereign Lord! You made the heavens and earth by your strong hand and powerful arm. Nothing is too hard for You!

Although we could probably find countless stories in the Bible and within our own lives where we experienced the Mighty right hand of God move on our behalf, none more profoundly demonstrates Mighty God better than the stories leading up to the birth of Jesus Christ.

One of my favorite stories is that of Mary's cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth was married to a Jewish priest named Zechariah. The word tells us that Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God's eyes, and careful to obey all the Lord's commandments (Luke 1:6). We also learn that they had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, or in other words she was barren, and now they were both very old.

Interestingly, One of the curses for disobedience in Deuteronomy 28 is barrenness. Therefore, it was commonly inferred in biblical times that barrenness could be due to sinfulness or simply a lack of blessing from

God. And yet in Elizabeth's case we are told she was righteous in God's eyes. So what's going on with their story. What we will discover is El Gibbor, Mighty God, in his divine providence planned immense blessing and honor upon this righteous couple. A blessing that would be hard for them to fathom! Let's pick up the story at Luke 1:11,

While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. But the angel said, 'Don't be afraid Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord (Luke 1:11-15a).

Can you imagine what was going through Zechariah's mind. It is suggested that Elizabeth was around 60 years old when she conceived John the Baptist. So, I'm sure hearing what Zechariah heard would have been shocking to him. Your 60 year old wife was getting ready to have a child you thought you would never have. On top of that, this child would be great in the eyes of the Lord! Imagine what a miracle this must have been. As if that wasn't enough, God gives Zechariah specific instructions for his son,

He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the Godly (Luke 1:15b-17).

Now Zechariah's world is being turned upside down! His son was going to be filled with the Holy Spirit. At this point in the story, there is no indication that Zechariah himself had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. According to the story, He gets filled with the Spirit later after his son is born. Also, He did know the mighty Elijah and his son to be born is going to operate with

this kind of spirit and power! This must have been mind blowing. So it's no surprise how Zechariah's responds to such news,

Zechariah said to the angel, 'How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years. Then the angel said, I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! But now, since you didn't believe what I said, you will be sent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time (Luke 1:18-20)."

If we fast forward in the story, Mary visits Elizabeth. They are both pregnant at this time. And the word tells us that "At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." The angel Gabriel said John would be filled the Holy Spirit and through his mother Elizabeth, I believe he was!! Mary was carrying Jesus Christ, the anointed one and his anointing, she was carrying El Gibbor, the Mighty God, in her womb and as soon as she approached Elizabeth the power of God within that little baby activates! Hallelujah!

What happened to Zechariah you might be wondering? The Mighty God chose to keep him silent as to not ruin God's perfect and divine plan. Well later in the story, John the Baptist was born and as soon as they asked what the baby's name would be, El Gibbor returns Zechariah's voice to him just on time and he shouts, NO, his name is John! God's timing is always perfect. He is an on time God! You see, the people wanted to name the baby Zechariah after the father, but in that perfect moment, God caused him to speak NO, his name is John!

This is a totally dramatic and epic story, and yet if we look at the birth of Jesus, it was so simple, nothing grand at all, and yet we still see El Gibbor, the Mighty God, at work. Let's look at Luke 2:1-7,

At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria). All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

Even though we've been talking this entire time about the all-powerful God, Jesus was born in a lowly stable. Was this a mistake? NO! It was the will of the Father. The beginning of God's perfect plan and powerful plan.

1 Corinthians 1:27 tells us that "God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful." In this moment He will choose the lowly one born in a mere stable to confound those who seemingly appear all high and mighty.

This demonstrates that God's power is not limited to grand displays such as the parting of the Red Sea, or causing a woman who was barren in her late age to give birth to an anointed child. El Gibbor, the Mighty God, Immanuel who has come to be with us can be seen in the most ordinary day to day circumstances.

This passage of the birth of Jesus, is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah's birthplace showing how Our Mighty God is meticulous and into the details. This shows that God is in control over every aspect of our lives and we can trust him! In the words of Charles Spurgeon,

The greatest gift that God can give you is the gift to be able to trust him for anything. At each turn, let's remember how mighty our God is.
- Charles Spurgeon,

You might be thinking, why are we even talking about this? What's the big deal. Why is it important that we explore and meditate on the nature of Immanuel, this Mighty God who has come to be with us? What significance does it bear on my life right now? Well in the words of A.W. Tozer,

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. If we see Him as mighty and powerful, our perspective on life changes dramatically.

If we truly have a revelation on the inside of how mighty and powerful this God we serve and are loved by is, we will see the problems, and pains in our lives as small in comparison to the Power of His Presence! Can I get an amen? Whenever I feel overwhelmed, I must cause myself to pause, and reflect and gaze on the beauty of HIS MAJESTY, EL GIBBOR, MY MIGHTY GOD, and remember, I may feel as if I can't, but HE ABSOLUTELY CAN!

Even now, I put my hope and trust in the Lord that the same Mighty God who brings certain people into our lives can keep them in our lives.

Prayer for Massad and closing prayer.

1 Corinthians 5:3a, "Even though I am not with you in person, I am with you in the Spirit."

Ohana Group Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think it means for Jesus to be called "Mighty God"? Which part of the Christmas Story helps you more deeply understand why "Mighty God" is so significant for you and I?
2. Jesus was born in humble circumstances. Why do you think God chose such a simple setting for the birth of His Son? How does this relate to the idea of strength and humility?
3. Can you think of a time when you faced a challenge and needed to be brave or depend on God's might? How do the stories of David and Goliath, the Parting of the Red Sea, the Birth of John the Baptist and Jesus teach us about God being EL Gibbor and what does it show us about trusting God in difficult situations?
4. Can you think of a time when you felt stuck or hopeless? How did you find hope or strength during that time? What role can faith in our Mighty God play in helping us through tough moments?