

West Valley Church
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Advent 2018
His Name Shall Be...
Everlasting Father¹
Isaiah 9:6

The birth announcement was proclaimed about 750 years *before* the baby was born, spoken of by the prophet Isaiah:

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*.

Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7, niv)

Those four names – *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace* – describe what Jesus came to do in this world and in our lives. This morning is a time of beautiful music and singing that is all about Jesus, who is all those things and more. I want to briefly share with you a little of what it means that Jesus the Son of God, born into this world as a baby, is also, and at the same time, our Everlasting Father.

Wait...what? Jesus the *Son* is the Everlasting *Father*? Is this like that silly poem, "I am my own Grandfather:"

"Many, many years ago
when I was forty-three,
I got married to a widow
who was as pretty as could be.

This widow had a grown-up daughter
who had hair of red.
My father fell in love with her,
and soon the two were wed.

This made my dad my son-in-law
and changed my very life.

¹ Much of the inspiration of this message comes from an article by R. David Reynolds

My daughter was my mother,
for she was my father's wife.

To complicate the matters worse,
although it brought me joy,
I soon became the father
of a bouncing baby boy.

My little baby then became
a brother-in-law to dad.
And so became my uncle,
though it made me very sad.

For if he was my uncle,
then that also made him brother
To the widow's grown up daughter who,
of course, was my step-mother!

Father's wife then had a son,
who kept them on the run.
And he became my grandson,
for he was my daughter's son.

My wife is now my mother's mother
and it makes me blue,
because, although she is my wife,
she's my grandma too.

If my wife is my grandmother,
then I am her grandchild.
And every time I think of it,
it simply drives me wild.

For now I have become
the strangest case you ever saw,
as the husband of my grandmother,
I am my own grandpa!"

That is not what is going on here with Jesus the Son also being the Father – some kind of crazy semantics between the members of the Trinity. It might sound confusing or even foolish, but I guarantee you because of who Jesus is, you have everything you need for abundant life now, a life of purpose and significance here, and forever life in heaven one day. Jesus' name is, for good reason, "Everlasting Father."

I have never had any difficulty calling God my Father, but I understand why many people do. I am grateful for an earthly father who loved me and took care of me. He set a good example for me; he was a good provider for Mom and me and my brother; he was a respected commander in the Oregon State Police and officer in the Oregon Army National Guard. He went back to school full time while working full time and graduated with a major and minor bachelor's and a master's degree in three and a half years. He was a good example for me to follow.

That's not always true of every father or of every parent, mother *or* father. Because of the rampant increase in neglect and child abuse by many parents, it is often hard for victims of that kind of abuse to relate to God as their Father. I cannot understand how any parent can willfully damage their child, yet tragically it happens all too often, and statistically it has happened to at least half the people in this room.

Faced with situations like these, many neglected and abused children have a difficult time relating to our Jesus as the Everlasting Father. I understand that.

We all know – instinctively - when a parent is acting in bad ways; which, conversely implies, we all know, to some degree, what a good parent *should* be like. So, if we can imagine the most loving caring, attentive parent there ever could be, then we are just scratching the surface of what kind of a Father Jesus is.

Human parents may hurt and disappoint us beyond all measure, but we can *always* depend upon our Everlasting Father. He will never leave us or let us down. God tells us in Psalm 27:10:

“Even if my father and mother left me all alone, the Lord would take me in.”
(Psalm 27:10, ceb)

We can always depend on our Everlasting Father to care for us. He will never forsake or harm us; He will always lift us up. The Bible says in I Peter 5:7:

“Let him have all your worries and cares, for he is always thinking about you and watching everything that concerns you.” (1 Peter 5:7, tlb)

That is one of the great acts of love of any good father, to care for his children in their times of anxiety, uncertainty, or fear.

Jesus, our Messiah, is our Everlasting Father. Some of you may question, “Mike I thought this Name applies to God the Father, not God the Son.” But remember Jesus' own personal testimony in John 10:30, when he said:

“I and the Father are one.” (John 10:30, niv)

“Everlasting Father” is just one of the 363 Divine Names or Titles given to Jesus in the Bible. It is a declaration of how much He loves and protects us as His children, His flock.

When it says that Jesus will be called “Everlasting Father,” it means something very powerful. When we hear the word “Everlasting,” we think it has to do with quantity of time, as in forever; we know that God is eternal, no beginning and no ending. And it does have something to do with quantity, but that's only a smaller part of it. What

it really means is about “quality,” as in never-ending. As in, he loves us so much that there is no container that is big enough to fit it all in. The length and breadth of time isn’t even enough to contain his love for you. His fatherliness toward us – his loving, attentive, caring, providing, teaching, leading, wisdom, disciplining, LOVING-ness toward us – far greater and better than any father we could ever imagine could have –cannot be contained. It is a fatherly, parental love that is of never ending quality and quantity.

It is always a declaration of His faithfulness, His trustworthiness, His goodness, His love and His mercy. The Prophet Jeremiah testifies to this in Lamentations 3:22-26. Jerusalem has fallen into the hands of the Babylonians, the Temple has been looted and destroyed, and the people are grieving in captivity, but their Everlasting Father has neither forgotten nor deserted them.

Jeremiah praises our Everlasting Father for His faithfulness to us no matter what our trials, tribulations, or hardships may be:

“Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him. The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.” (Lamentations 3:22-26, niv)

Jesus is the Everlasting Father. He and the Father are one, so the same love we see that the Father has for us, we see in the Son, and the same love the Son has for us is what the Father has for us. But you must know that He only becomes our Father when we enter into that relationship to him.

Sometimes, when our boys were little, one of them would slip up or, for fun, call me by my first name: “Mike,” they’d say. Of course, they did it being funny, not with disrespect. But I’d still correct them just the same. They’d ask me, “Why is it such a big deal to call you by your first name?” And I’d say something like, “Well, it’s not. It’s just that you don’t want me to start treating you as though you only know me as Mike. You want me – you need me – to be *dad* or *father*, not *Mike*. Friends call me Mike. The people I work with call me Mike. But I would *not* die for most of my friends. I *would* die for you. So you – you call me *dad* or *father*.”

Here’s the deal: All of us know him as *God*. But none of us has a right to call God our Father. Only one person has that right: Jesus Christ. In fact, only through Jesus do we learn to call God “Father”; only through Jesus *can* we call God our Father.² You can’t have the Fatherhood of God without embracing the Son – Jesus; without accepting what Jesus, the baby of Christmas, has done for you as the adult on the cross, dying in your place, and rising from the dead, alive forever.

² Todd Wilson, “The Gift of the Son: Everlasting Father,” sermon at PreachingToday.com