

*“Home for Christmas”*  
*Series on Isaiah 9:6 ~ “Everlasting Father”*  
*Third Sunday of Advent ~ December 16, 2007*

We’ve been studying the names for Messiah that are given in **Isaiah 9:6** during this Advent season. Isaiah says that the One who is to come – the child to be born, the son who is given, the Messiah who will save them – is Wonderful Counselor and He is Mighty God. We’ve said that because Jesus is **‘Wonderful Counselor’** He has the solution to any problem you may be facing. He **knows what is best to do**, He has an amazing purpose and plan for your life and He knows how to make it a reality. And because He is **‘Mighty God’** He is able to make it a reality. No matter how impossible your situation may seem to you, no matter how hopeless your circumstances may look to you, **Mighty God is able**.

But not only does He know what to do and is He able to do it. Because He is **‘Everlasting Father’** He *desires* to do it. Like any good and loving father, Father God loves His children and He wants what is best for them. He desires to help and bless them. He is wise. He is powerful. But more than that – He is a loving Father. **Everlasting Father**. This is the one name of these four that describes a close, personal relationship. ‘Father’ is a very personal term. I’m sure that for every one of us, ‘father’ immediately conjures up an image or images.

Your image of ‘father’ may be of a person whom you love very much, someone who loved you and provided for you, protected you and taught you. On the other hand, your image of ‘father’ may not be so positive. Maybe the one you call ‘father’ was abusive or absent. Maybe for you the word ‘father’ brings to mind only pain, sadness, fear, or punishment. Maybe for you the word ‘father’ brings little or nothing to mind. Or perhaps it’s some mixture of the two. Human fathers are like that, usually: some mixture of good and bad, positive and negative.

In the Old Testament, God is not referred to as ‘Father’ very often. But when He *is* called “Father” in the Old Testament, it is very often in connection with intimacy and compassion for His children. The verses we heard from **Psalms 145:13-21**, while they don’t use the word ‘father,’ they do give us a beautiful picture of God the Father. The psalm says God is “faithful to all His promises.” You can depend on God to keep His promises. It is powerful to study the promises of God to you in the Bible and know that He will be faithful to those promises. Twice in these few verses, the psalmist says that God is “loving toward all He has made.” God made you, so that means He loves you. He loves you and He acts in loving ways toward you. Now, it may not *feel* like that to you, but that’s what the Word says, so it’s true. If you don’t think God is loving toward you, the problem is you, not God.

It says God gives His people food, satisfies their desires, and watches over them. It says He holds up the ones who are sinking down under the burdens of life and lifts up the ones who fall. It says He is near to the one who calls out to Him, He hears them and saves them. Listen: You may not have had a human father who kept his promises and showed you his love and provided for and protected you. But if you are a believer in Jesus, you have a heavenly Father who does.

Now, if God is your Father, that makes you a child of God. It means you acknowledge that God is the One who gives you life and from whom you draw your **identity**. Now this is key, because,

as one writer has said, “You will never really understand your true identity unless you can forever settle in your heart that you are a true son or daughter of God.” Listen to that again...

**John 1:12.** If you have received Jesus, if you believe He is who He says He is – the Son of God – then you *are* a child of God. And again, John says: **1 John 3:1.** That is what believers are. Children of God. And you know, you don’t have to take my word for it.

Now, children are supposed to be obedient to their fathers, so as a child of God, you should acknowledge God’s **authority** over your life. Like any good and loving father, God has rules and sets boundaries for His children. Not because He is some kind of cosmic killjoy, but because He loves us and wants to protect us. He knows that there are dangerous people and dangerous places we will encounter, and dangerous choices we can make that can harm us. And being the loving Father that He is, He wants to protect us. Isn’t that what we do for our own children? They don’t always understand that we are doing it for their own good, but we are. And so is Father God. Also like a good father, when we *don’t* obey Him, God **disciplines** us. **Proverbs 3:11.**

But Father God is not only authority figure and discipline-imposer. He is loving. The term ‘Abba’ that Jesus uses for God is a familiar term, similar to ‘daddy.’ I’ve told this story before. Some of you know that we have a family vacation every year with the Busch family, and each night before dinner, Paul’s dad, Jack, selects someone to say the blessing before we eat. One night, he called on our niece, Nikki, who was about 20 at that time. So we all joined hands around the kitchen and dining room, bowed our heads, and Nikki began: “Daddy....” She was speaking to God. And that’s biblical.

Now, some people have trouble with calling God ‘Father’ because of what that word means to them in their own experience. If your father abused you or abandoned you or was emotionally distant, the image of God as Father may be a difficult one for you. Maybe that’s why God gave us this image of Messiah as ‘Everlasting Father.’ I was thinking about how this refers to Jesus, because I don’t really think of Jesus as Father. And yet, Jesus Himself said that to see, hear, know, or honor Him is to encounter the Father: **John 14:8-9.** In Jesus, we see the Father whose heart breaks for those who are harassed and helpless. In Jesus, we see the Father who feeds and protects and provides for His children. The Father who heals and teaches and just wants to be with His kids.

He wanted so much to be with you that He left the glories of heaven and took on humanity and suffered a horrible death so that He could be **with you**, through the Holy Spirit. Here and now, and forever. And **to have you with Him.** Here and now, and forever. He gave it all so that you could have it all. Isn’t that what a good father does?

‘God-with-us’ is not only ‘Father,’ He is ‘**Everlasting** Father.’ He is the Father who will *never* abandon you. He is the Father who will *never* let you down, *never* disappoint you, *never* stop caring for you. ‘**Everlasting** Father’ means He is with you as Father *always* – even when you are *not* good, even when you *do not* obey Him. He is Father forever, eternally, continuously. His Fatherhood is unchanging, because God does not change. **Hebrews 13:8.** You see, Christ’s **character** does not change: He is forever faithful, forever merciful, always loving, always ready to forgive. *Always has been, always will be.* Christ’s **compassion** does not change: He loves

and cares for you always, forever, continuously. *Always has, always will.* And His **commitment** to you does not change. He will never leave you. He will never abandon you or reject you. Jesus said, “I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” He is always with you. *Always has been. Always will be.*

At our 8:30 service today, we welcomed a new member into our church. Jeane Bryson had been received by the session at their meeting in November, but Jeane was not able to be here when we welcomed the others in November. When we were emailing back and forth about this this week, Jeane wrote this to me: “I feel like I’m being adopted.” She is. You know, we often use the metaphor of ‘the body of Christ’ to describe the church. But another metaphor for the church is ‘family.’ We are a family, sisters and brothers – because we are children of the same Father – with all the blessings and challenges that families experience. Today, Jeane was adopted into this church. She has found a home here in this branch of the Father’s family. She is home for Christmas.

“You will never really understand your true identity unless you can forever settle in your heart that you are a true son or daughter of God.”

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are.”

He is Everlasting Father. He is the Father who stands and watches – searching the horizon for any sign that His wayward son has come home. All you prodigal sons and prodigal daughters out there – come home for Christmas. Settle once and for all in your heart who you really are: a child of God. A beloved son or a daughter of the Everlasting Father. He will never let you down. He will never abandon you. If you come to Him, He will never reject you. He will always love you. He is Everlasting Father.