

Everlasting Father

“And He Shall Be Called” Advent Series

12/18/22

Good morning, church! Everyone have their Christmas shopping done yet? All the ladies are like, “Yes,” and all the guys are like, “Christmas shopping? I need to go Christmas shopping?” Well, guys, you have one more week! But beware: most stores close at 5pm on Christmas Eve... or so I’ve heard.

For those of you that I haven’t had a chance to meet, my name is Mark Potter and I’m one of the associate pastors here. Before we get started, I want to welcome you all, as well as the OP campus and our online audience. Thank you for choosing to worship with us this morning.

Believe it or not, this is already our fourth Sunday of Advent. A few weeks ago, Pastor Tami kicked off our Advent series, “And He Shall Be Called,” with a sermon on the Wonderful Counselor. Then two weeks ago we heard from Pastor Ray from SAAT-7, one of our global missions partners, with a message titled, “Mighty God.” If you missed out on either of those sermons, I would highly encourage you to go back on our website and check them out.

Then last week, we were all blessed by the *Walk to the Manger* musical. Can we give all of them another hand real quick? Jeff Martin, Julie Fox, Jason Parr and the whole team did such an amazing job, didn’t they? The day after the service, my kids wanted to watch it again so we pulled it up on YouTube and started singing and dancing to their favorite songs, experiencing the joy of the birth of Jesus all over again.

Well, this morning, we are returning to Isaiah 9:6 to discuss the amazing Messianic prophecy of Jesus as our Everlasting Father, so if you are able please stand as we read this verse together.

“For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon^[a] his shoulder,
and his name shall be called^[b]
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”
Isaiah 9:6 ESV

Thank you, please be seated. Will you pray with me? (Pray)

My sermon today falls under three subheadings:

- I. Fatherly Messiah
 - II. Everlasting Messiah
 - III. Our Messiah
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- I. Fatherly Messiah

Several weeks ago, one of our staff members knocked on my door to inform me that there was a person in the lobby who had come up to the church looking to meet with a pastor, which isn’t all that unusual. But when I opened my office door, to my surprise, it was a young person wanting to meet which was odd

because it was the middle of the morning on a normal school day. She couldn't have been more than 12/13 years old. I introduced myself and asked her name. For the sake of confidentiality, let's say her name was, "Lacy." A few seconds into the conversation, I noticed that Lacy wasn't wearing any shoes. And there was a scratch on her cheek and bruising up and down her arm. She was visibly disoriented, timid, and afraid.

I also recognized very quickly that Lacy didn't feel very comfortable, so I invited a female staffer into my office to talk with her. And we found out through her sharing that her parents had divorced, and her dad had raped her repeatedly. And her mom would threaten her, saying that she would, "Make her go live with her dad," if she didn't shape up. Eventually, her mom was so fed up with her that she beat her up and told her to get out of her house. So, she ran away, and ran and ran until she found our church.

After she shared, I told her that there is absolutely nothing that she could have done or said to deserve the sexual, physical, emotional, and verbal abuse. And I told her that based on what she shared, we need to call the police and report what we know. So we called 9-1-1 together and then we took her to the police station so she they could make sure that she was safe.

While we were there at the police station, the female officer then asked her what her name was. And she told the officer that her name was the masculine version of the name that she had told us. She went on to explain to the officer that that name was her birth name, and she was born with XXY chromosomes. In other words, she had both female and male chromosomes.

Shortly thereafter, the other Colonial staffer and I were given permission to leave, so we prayed for her and left, and never found out what happened after that.

Let me ask you a question, church. How can Lacy relate to God being her everlasting Father when her own earthly father has caused so much trauma, and harm, and pain, to her life? It's a fair question, isn't it?

For some of you, just hearing Lacy's story brings tears to your eyes because God has given you the spiritual gifts of mercy and compassion. And if I had any encouragement for you, it's to pray. Pray for Lacy.

For others, Lacy's story is a trigger warning for you because your father was also abusive, or absent, or both. If that's you, I'm so, so sorry. I can't even imagine what you're feeling, or what you have had to overcome. But what I know with every single ounce of my being is that Jesus Christ, as our Fatherly Messiah, has come to offer His protection, provision, and healing for you, and for the Lacys of the world. And what I also know beyond a shadow of a doubt is that God NEVER uses or abuses His power or authority for evil. Instead, He takes hurting people and painful situations and redeems them for His eternal purposes.

See, this is what the prophet Isaiah was prophesying about in Isaiah 6:9. Our God, Yahweh, would deliver hurting people from evil situations and redeem them for His eternal purposes... and He would accomplish this through the coming Messiah, the anointed one, the Savior of the world.

According to our Scripture passage, one of the attributes of the Messiah is that He is fatherly. Not in an abusive or neglectful way, but in a loving, protective, redemptive way.

I know what you're all thinking: I'd love to learn more about the Hebrew word for "father." Well, this is your lucky day! Back when Pastor Jim preached through the gospels, he often referred to himself as the "geek with the Greek." But today there will be no geek with the Greek. Instead, you're hearing from the "yahoo with the Hebrew." Please hold your applause.

The Hebrew word for "father" in Isaiah 9:6 is *Ab*, which you may recognize as part of the Aramaic translation, *Abba*. *Ab* is often a prefix for names in the Old Testament, such as Abraham, which means, "father of the multitude," which of course was ironic because Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born!

Truthfully, there were many Old Testament names that began with the prefix "Ab." Dads, just be thankful that your parents didn't name you Abner (father is a lamp) or Abishur (father is a wall), or Abib (an ear of corn). That dad joke was corny... literally.

Interestingly, this word *Ab* occurs more than 1,200 times in the Hebrew Bible, the first being Gen 2:24, which says, "Therefore a man shall leave his *father* (*ab*) and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

How did ancient Jews understand the role of a father, you ask? Looking at an ancient Hebrew alphabet pictogram might provide further insight. (Show Hebrew pictogram).

Can any of you understand this? Me neither.

This is what *Ab* looks like in Hebrew:

ב א
Beyt Alef

It's the Hebrew letter *Alef* followed by the Hebrew letter *Beyt*. Note that when we read Hebrew, we read it from right to left, instead of English, which is read from left to right. Now let's look at the pictorial image that *Alef* is associated with:



Alef: Ox

Strength / Hard Working / Protector / Leader

Alef is the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet (alef-beyt), and the ancient Hebrew pictograph of this letter resembles that of an Ox. The Jewish image of an ox was a symbol of both strength and leadership. Oxen were strong animals used for plowing the fields and carrying heavy loads. Oxen also protected the herd from predators and kept the pastures safe. This brings us to our second letter, *Bet*.



Beyt: Tent

House / Household / Family

Beyt is the second letter in the Hebrew alphabet and its picture is that of a house, or tent. It could represent a nomadic meeting place like the tabernacle, or a house in a city, or the family that lives there, or all of the above.

Therefore, when you combine these two letters, *Alef Beyt*, it could be understood that an *Ab* is a strong, hardworking leader who protects a house, household, or family.

So, the Messiah, Isaiah's prophecy would suggest, will be a strong protector – or leader – of the family, or house, of God. His work would effectively rebuild or redeem God's people.

Now if you're not confused enough already, I want to throw one final curveball at you. And that is, *Ab* isn't just translated "father" as previously mentioned, but it can also be translated "originator," or "source."

When Abraham is translated, "Father of many nations," it doesn't literally mean he fathered many nations. It means he was the source, or originator, of the tribes of Israel. In a similar way, when Jesus refers to Satan as the father of lies (John 8:44), he's saying that Satan is the source, or originator, of all lies.

And this makes sense when referring to the coming Messiah because our theology won't allow us to think of Jesus as the Father in a literal sense. How can the Son be the father if the Father is the father? They are one God -- one is essence, or substance -- but each one is distinct in personhood – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

If you read Isaiah 9:6 and come to the conclusion that Jesus is the Father, you're reading it wrong and you're a heretic. Just kidding.... actually, I'm not. Truthfully, these issues involving trinitarian theology led to hundreds of years of debate, church councils, the rise of orthodox theology, excommunications and even deaths. Yikes.

So, Jesus is not *the* Father. But He is *fatherly* in the sense that He embodies the fatherly attributes of God – a strong, protective, rebuild and redeemer of God's family. He is also the source, or originator of something.

But what is He the source, or originator, of?

This brings me to my second subheading:

II. Everlasting Messiah

Returning to the “yahoo with the Hebrew” for a moment, the Hebrew word for *Everlasting Father* in Isaiah 9:6 is a compound word *Abiad* (or *Aviad*), which means, “father, or source, of eternity.”

This word carries a connotation of going on and on forever, similar to our concept of infinity. To quote the renowned theologian Buzz Lightyear, this Messiah would rule “to infinity and beyond.”

In other words, Isaiah is alluding to the fact that this Messiah will rule over an eternal kingdom that will go on and on forever and ever.

But why was this concept of an eternal kingdom so important to the Israelites?

To answer this question, we must consider the historical context of events leading up to Isaiah’s prophecy. In the eighth century BC, at the time Isaiah prophesied, the northern Kingdom of Israel had been overtaken by the oppressive Assyrians, and the southern Kingdom of Judah was in danger of falling as well.

Several centuries prior, the Israelites had prayed and advocated for a united monarchy in which they could finally feel protected and united under one king, *their* king. And they had experienced a taste of this unity for a while under King David and King Solomon. However, like during the time of the Judges, the nation of Israel fell into a pattern of religious and moral decline causing disunity, division, and eventually, exile.

The kingdom of Israel was divided north from south, and each king that ruled “did evil in the eyes of the Lord.” Over time, due to its own rebellion, God allowed the northern kingdom of Israel to be overtaken by the Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser III (2 Kings 15). Then, against Isaiah’s counsel, Ahaz the King of Judah asked for King Tiglath-Pileser’s hand in defending his own territory against the northern rulers, leading to Israelite exile from a number of northern cities including Damascus, along with several cities in the regions of Samaria, Gilead, and Galilee (2 Kings 16).

According to 2 Kings 17:7-8, 19-20:

“And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced.... Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced. And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until he had cast them out of his sight.”

What an incredibly terrifying possibility it is to consider the removal of God’s presence and grace. May we never, ever, ever offend God to the point where He chooses to allow us to be removed from His sight. May we never commit such “evil in the eyes of the Lord” that He decides to “give us into the hand of plunderers, until he casts us out of his sight.” What an extremely sobering, and frightening, and repentance-evoking statement.

See, the gloom, and anguish, and darkness, and yoke that Isaiah references at the beginning of chapter 9 is referring to the oppressive nature of the Assyrian rule that is only superseded by the removal of God’s countenance and grace.

By the way, on a side note, you can see why the benediction that God gave to Moses in Numbers 6 is so incredibly powerful when he says:

“The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.”

God’s blessing is not to remove you from His sight or withhold His grace from you, but instead to make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. Praise God!

See, their hope, according to Isaiah, was that although the days were dark, and although the nation was full of sin and injustice and oppression, there will be an age in the not-too-distant future when a Messiah, a God-man, will come and reign in righteousness and justice from David’s throne. And His name will be called *Immanuel*, which means God with us. And His monarchy will be everlasting, permanent, forever and ever and ever... for He is the everlasting father! That is, He is *Aviad*, the source of eternal life!

You see, when the Israelites approached Samuel in 1 Sam 8 with the request to grant them a king to lead them, they longed to replace the Judges with an everlasting King. And Isaiah was saying in no uncertain terms that the coming Messiah is the fulfillment of their longing.

According to Isaiah, when the King comes in his glory, there will be no more need for temporary judges, or temporary kings; no more divided kingdoms that are subject to enemy invasion, no more pharaohs or presidents or dictators. There will no longer be a need for law enforcement or security guards or militaries.

Why? Because this King would be all powerful and everlasting. And according to Isaiah, this King would not just inhabit the kingdom of Judah, or the kingdom of Israel. This King would “inhabit eternity” -Isaiah 57:15 ESV

See, if someone asked you, where do you live? You might say I live in a house in Overland Park or I live in Brookside or I live on the Kansas side or the Missouri side. Or you might say to a person from another country I live in the United States or in North America. Or if you encountered a Martian you might say you live on the planet earth.

But have you ever thought to ask God that same question? “God where do you live? What place do you inhabit?”

Does He live in an apartment? Or a house? Does He live on a farm or in a city? In the mountains or by the ocean? Does He live in the desert or in the rainforest or in the North Pole, with Santa?

See, God’s answer to the question, “Where do you live?” Is that God lives in *eternity*. He inhabits eternity. In other words, He is everlasting.

Psalm 90:2 says, “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”

There is this incredible quote from A.W. Tozer that I want to share with you regarding the eternal nature of God. It says:

“God dwells in eternity but time dwells in God. He has already lived all our tomorrows as He has lived all our yesterdays.” -A.W. Tozer

God dwells in eternity but time dwells in God. Wow. That’s a brain-buster.

In an attempt to help us grasp this, I’d like to offer a woefully inadequate although somewhat helpful analogy. Pretend with me, if you would, that this sanctuary represents God and this this tape measure represents time.

You’ve got creation and the fall and the flood and the Exodus and so on and so forth, then thousands of years pass, and you’ve got Jesus and then here we are on this tiny little mark in time.

But notice that nothing has existed in this timeline apart from God’s knowledge, His presence, His rule and His reign. Why? Because God dwells in eternity, but time dwells in God.

The fact that time dwells in God means that God is not surprised by anything that has ever occurred in the history of the universe. See God knew that on August 24th, 1983, at exactly 10:20 pm, I would be born at Research Medical Center. He knew that I would grow up to marry my high school sweetheart on Dec. 30th, 2005, right here at Colonial. He knew that we would have four sons... and five lost pregnancies. He knew that on July 16th, 2020, I would get diagnosed with cancer. And He knew that I would be standing here on this day at this exact time preaching this exact sermon to all of you.

We believe in a God that is everlasting. Time exists in God; nothing surprises him. He’s never caught off guard.

Every night we try our best to read books with our kids. Here’s a picture of me reading to my youngest son, Micah. One of the books that we read to him is a book about emotions. We’ll read about an emotion and then he’ll make a funny face that resembles that particular emotion, then we’ll turn the page and do it again. And one of the pages is about feeling surprised. And we’ll say, “Micah, can you make a surprised face?”

It dawned on me that God never makes that face because He is never surprised or startled or caught off guard! He is never unprepared or left scrambling. God is everlasting. He has lived all our tomorrows. Time exists in Him.

These leads me to my third and final subheading:

III. Our Messiah

Next Sunday is Christmas Day, which means we’ll get together to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. And the extremely holy ones will come to church.

But on that day, Dec. 25th, we’ll gather with friends and family to celebrate the birth of Christ Jesus, who is the father, or source, of our salvation. We’ll celebrate the fact that Jesus came to earth to fulfill the prophecies of the coming Messiah, thereby inaugurating His reign and rule over His eternal kingdom forever and ever. Praise God!

But the irony of Jesus' incarnation is that He came not in the manner of a mighty ox but as a humble babe born to a teenage virgin. He was not born into power and privilege but into poverty. He was not delivered into a royal palace but rather into an animal food trough. He was, in fact, a Jewish exile. And while He tabernacled among us, He never truly felt at home, for He had no place to lay His head.

Shockingly, this Jewish Messiah would not only serve as the King of the Jews, but also the King of the Gentiles. He not only inhabits eternity, He inhabits the hearts and minds of all believers through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

See, this Messiah is not just someone else's king. He is our King!

For because of His sacrifice, He has adopted us as His sons and daughters into His everlasting family. Because of His sacrifice, we are invited to sit and feast at His everlasting table. Because of His sacrifice, we have been written into His everlasting story and our names are inscribed in His book of life. And because of His sacrifice, we will now inherit His promise of everlasting life!

Praise God that Jesus is the source of eternal life!

John says in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

He says in John 17:3: "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

John then says in 1 John 5:13: "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

And then in 1 John 5:11: "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

Are you listening, church? Our Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the source of eternal life. If you're listening and your heart is convicted, you'll commit to follow Him.

In fact, Jesus himself says in John 10:27-28: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."

Some of you are sitting here asking yourself, what can I do to receive this eternal life the Bible speaks of?

And the answer is that there is nothing you can do that Christ hasn't already accomplished for you, and in your place. The truth is, apart from God's grace, we are no better than those corrupt kings who "did evil in the eyes of the Lord." If I'm being honest, we all deserve God's judgment and wrath.

The only thing we can do, therefore, is repent of our sins and ask Jesus to be the Lord of our life. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23 ESV

Praise God that Jesus is our Messiah, and the source of everlasting life.

Let's pray.