

Everlasting Father

**Isaiah 9:6
Advent 2020**

This morning we are going to continue in our Advent series looking at the very important prophecy by Isaiah regarding the promised, coming Messiah in Isaiah 9:6...

Isaiah 9:6

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

This is the third week of Advent and so far this Advent season, we've looked at the titles of "Wonderful Counselor" and "Mighty God."

So this week our focus is on the title of "Everlasting Father," and what I want to do is first look at both descriptions on their own, that the coming Messiah is "everlasting" and that he can be described as "father" and then think through what putting those two terms together in this one amazing title means for us as God's people. We are going to be jumping around Scripture this morning so follow along with me...

"Everlasting"

But first, Isaiah prophesies that the coming Messiah is "everlasting."

Now, this description alone was of particular good news for the people of Israel. And to understand why you have to consider Israel's history concerning their leadership. So please try and follow me here for the next few minutes as we think about the history of Israel because this really sets the context for the good news of this particular title of Jesus...

Very briefly, after the Exodus and the covenant was made at Sinai, the wandering through the desert, all of which was under the leadership of Moses, Moses then dies, as all people do. Then Israel enters into the promised Land under the leadership of Joshua, and of course eventually, Joshua dies. Israel then sank into a really terrible pattern in the land of Canaan. It was a cycle of egregious sinning (idolatry, immorality, etc...), the Lord then bringing judgment on them through other nations, Israel then

repenting of their sin, and then the Lord raising up a “judge” to rescue them from the oppressing nation over them. But then once they were free and enjoying peace, the cycle started all over again: sin, judgment, repentance, and deliverance led by a new judge. You can read all about this in the book of Judges in the Old Testament. And so there were a number of judges some of them good, but progressively they became worse in character.

After the book of Judges and the small book of Ruth, is the book of 1 Samuel. And this records for us more of the history of Israel. The book is named after the great prophet Samuel and Samuel was a good guy. You can read his story at the beginning of 1 Samuel, but ultimately, Samuel was a godly, gifted prophet of God for Israel. He was faithful to the Lord and had integrity unlike so many other leaders before him, *but* his sons were terrible. And so this prompted the people of Israel to request something different for leadership...

1 Samuel 8:4-9

4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah **5** and said to him, “Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.” **6** But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the Lord. **7** And the Lord said to Samuel, “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. **8** According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. **9** Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.”

The people said, Samuel, you are great and all, but you are old. You, too, will die. You won't last forever, and your sons are terrible people, so we don't want them ruling over us, so we want you to do something different. Give us a king.

Samuel didn't love the idea, so he consulted with God and God said, they are rejecting me not you, but give them what they want. If they want a king, then they will get a king.

And the heart of the people of Israel was the desire to be like other nations, but surely within that, considering their history, there was a desire for stability and they thought having a king might bring that to them. Foolishly, they felt like having God as their ultimate leader wasn't stable enough.

So Samuel said ok, well if you want a king, you just need to be warned about what you are signing up for...

1 Samuel 8:11-18

11 He said, “These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. **12** And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. **13** He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. **14** He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. **15** He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. **16** He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. **17** He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. **18** And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.”

All in all, Samuel is saying, the kings you will get aren't going to be the kings you want. Here is a fair warning for you.

1 Samuel 8:19-22

19 But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, “No! But there shall be a king over us, **20** that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.” **21** And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord. **22** And the Lord said to Samuel, “Obey their voice and make them a king.”

So in their stubbornness they said, thanks for the heads up, but we want a king. This will be better for us as a nation.

And that leads into the part of Israel's history with human kings. So Saul is the first king in a line of kings to be anointed and overall, the kings are not what the people hoped they would be, just like Samuel warned them. They would not be the perfect, benevolent, brave, honorable men they needed. They would always fall short of that.

Saul would start out great but then fail and die. Then comes David who has great promise and does a great job but has his own season of moral failure and of course, he dies. Then comes Solomon who was incredibly wise and led Israel to great prosperity but he ends by leading the nation back to idolatry and then, he dies.

Then after Solomon the nation divides into two kingdoms, each with their own kings and capitals. Each kingdom having about 20 different kings and the Bible records for us that none of the kings in the northern kingdom were good and only a handful of the

kings in the southern kingdom were seen as good and faithful leaders. And, of course, Israel's history continues from there in reading the prophets.

Now, the point of doing this quick rundown of the history of leadership in Israel is to see the instability and imperfection of the nation's leadership. They all failed morally, some in more extreme ways than others, and of course, all die, needing to be replaced with another imperfect leader.

We can imagine the weariness that they would have felt. We, too, grow weary of the unreliability of leadership in every sphere of our lives. We certainly feel that politically. There is was certainly good reasons for setting term limits on our presidents when our nation was founded, but even so, it gets tiring of going through the tumultuous process every four years, knowing that no matter who we elect he or she just will not live up to everyone's hopes. We feel this failed leadership fatigue at work certainly and even in family. Leadership that is constantly changing, constantly failing, is discouraging and disheartening and can not lead to a thriving nation, workplace, or family.

However, the hope of Isaiah's prophecy is that King Jesus will change all of that. Isaiah says, the coming Messiah will be "everlasting." Every longing for a reliable, constant, good King will be fulfilled in Jesus.

That was the great hope of the covenant that God made with David when he was king.

2 Samuel 7:12-13, 16

12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever... **16** And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever."

2 weeks ago Kevin explained the idea of "double fulfillment" in biblical prophecy. That there was often a close fulfillment to a prophecy made in Scripture but would be fulfilled in an even greater way later in Christ. The Davidic Covenant is another example of that. Solomon would come from David, his father, and build a great house, or temple, for the Lord, but it isn't Solomon who would reign forever, that would be true of another King in the line of David: Jesus.

Again, the true king who would reign over God's people would reign forever. Jesus is be "everlasting." In fact, that is the emphasis of the very next verse in Isaiah 9. After the verse we've been looking at this advent season with the four titles of Jesus, Isaiah this...

Isaiah 9:7

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Isaiah is saying, this coming King will reign forever. Jesus' reign will be everlasting because Jesus is everlasting. As part of the eternal Godhead He has no beginning and no end. Unlike human kings, presidents, CEOs, prime ministers, and other leaders, Jesus will always be and will always lead with integrity, justice, holiness, and righteousness.

Think about it. There will never be a time in eternity when God's people will express disappointment in his reign. There will be no calls for new leadership. There will be no protests around his throne. There will be no questioning of his ability to lead. He will never have to step down due to impropriety or inadequacy. There will be no fear that his good reign will end one day and that someone else who could never fill his shoes would come to try and take his place.

Again, this Messiah, will be everlasting, and this is very good news.

“Father”

But the *focus* on this title in Isaiah 9:6 is not that Jesus is just a King, though he is that, he is called a “Father.”

I know that might be confusing when talking about Jesus to call him the Father. This poses some problems for our understanding of the Trinity, God is one, yet eternally exists as three distinct persons. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. Again, they are distinct, eternal persons but they are also one. So, I think we can look at this in the same terms as when Jesus would say, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). They are distinct but there is real unity that the language here can be overlapping.

But in holding this title as “Father,” it is signifying the King's relationship with his subjects. Not only will we have a King that will reign forever, but our relationship to that King has moved from mere subjects to His children. God is not just our King, He is our Father. Think about that...that means that our relationship is not only defined by authority and submission, it is also characterized by love, care, and commitment.

And the coming of Jesus is what truly initiates this massive change in relationship status with us and God. This is what Paul means later in the New Testament, specifically in the book of Galatians...

Gal. 4:4-5

4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, **5** to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Again, when the fullness of time had come. At just the right time in history, Jesus would come and his coming and his work would redeem his people from the slavery of the terrible masters of sin, death, and Satan and bring us into a new kingdom ruled over by God as King. But again, in salvation, through the gospel, the King has become our Father. We are more than set free from the slavery of sin, left to fend for ourselves, we are adopted into his family.

And this brings with it many important things.

Gal. 4:6-7

6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" **7** So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

In adoption we have a:

1. new identity (v. 6) - we are called sons and daughters, when we once were enemies of God.
- 2) new intimacy (v. 6b) - the Spirit of God's Son indwells in us. We can come to the Father who cares for us. We can bring our pain and our fear and our worries as well as our joys and our excitement to God and he cares about all of them.

"The only person who dares wake up a king at 3:00 AM for a glass of water is a child. We have that kind of access." - Tim Keller

Again, because of our new identity as children of God we have new intimacy with God.

- 3) new inheritance (v. 7) - before, the only thing we had to inherit was judgment, but now we have the full rights and privileges of sonship.

Because of the work of God in the gospel, he has become our Father.

"Everlasting Father"

But, this morning our hearts are not set on **just** the fact that God is everlasting, or **just** the fact that he is our Father, this morning we set our hearts on the great truth that he is an **"everlasting father."**

And I know that this truth might land differently on you depending on your relationship or perhaps *lack of* relationship with your earthly father. For example, if you have lost your father due to his passing, or if your father was never in the picture, you might not even know who your biological father is, or if your father left you and your family at some point, there is great comfort here for all Christians, but for you especially: not only is God your Father but He is an everlasting Father.

All of those things that we saw Paul bring out in Galatians 4 concerning our adoption as children of God will always remain. We will always retain the new identity we've been given. We will always have the same intimacy based on that identity, and we will always be heirs, we will always have the inheritance that is given to God's children in Christ. All of this because God will *always* be our Father.

My wife and I have three daughters and we are expecting our first son very, very soon (at least at the time of recording this he hasn't been born yet) and one of the things I've said to my girls as they've grown up is that no matter how old they get, they will always be my girls. I will always be their Dad. I want them to know that will never change. No matter what they do, no matter where they go, our relationship will never change. And this is true in an even greater way with us and God.

In fact, our advent theme this week is "love." And this is perfectly displayed in the title of "everlasting father." And the everlastingness of God's loving relationship to us as our Father is beautifully described by Paul in Romans 8, one of my favorite passages in all of the Bible...

Romans 8:35-39

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? **36** As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." **37** No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **38** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Again, the love of God in Christ Jesus for you, his child, will never and can never be broken. There will be no end to his love. Please understand, there is nothing that you will do or not do that will make him leave. There is nothing that will happen in this world that could pull him away from you. There is nothing in his heart that will change how he feels for you. There is nothing that would change him being your father for all eternity.

“On the whole, God’s love for us is a much safer subject to think about than our love for Him. Nobody can always have devout feelings...But the great thing to remember is that, though our feelings come and go, His love for us does not. It is not wearied by our sins, or our indifference; and, therefore, it is quite relentless in its determination that we shall be cured of those sins, at whatever cost to us, at whatever cost to Him.” - C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

In this week of the Advent season, remember the love of God that “has been poured out into hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given us,” as Romans 5:5 says, and remember the Holy Spirit is described as the “Spirit of adoption” in Romans 8:15. You have been adopted by God and His love for you will never fail.

GOSPEL

Of course, this great reality, that we are the sons and daughters of God, is only true because we are found in the One, true Son of God, Jesus Christ. At Christmas of course, we are celebrating the coming of the Son of God sent by the Father into the world to redeem God’s people from sin. It is only by the faithfulness of the true Son of God and his sacrifice on the cross for you and me, and our repentant faith in that great work that we can be adopted.

Through the gospel the love of God is shown and extended on all of his adopted sons and daughters.

1 John 3:1

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are...

Because of the gospel, we have an “everlasting Father.”

CONCLUSION

Advent is about waiting...waiting for the coming of Christ. But now on this side of his birth, death, and resurrection we wait again for his Second Coming. We wait for the realization of our adoption when Christ comes again and we, along with our brothers and sisters, live with our Father for all eternity. His rule and reign, and our enjoyment and blessedness of relationship with Him will be everlasting.

The Everlasting Father has come and will come again, so we wait. We wait with expectancy, joy, and hope.

VERSES

Isaiah 9:6
1 Samuel 8:4-9
1 Samuel 8:11-18
1 Samuel 8:19-22
2 Samuel 7:12-13, 16
Isaiah 9:7
Galatians 4:4-5
Galatians 4:6-7
Romans 8:35-39
1 John 3:1

SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

In our third week of Advent we are focusing on the third title given to the coming Messiah in Isaiah's prophecy, "Everlasting Father." By looking at each of those words individually and then the title as a whole we will be reminded of incredibly comforting truths regarding our Savior, Jesus.

1. Jesus is "Everlasting"

Explain why having Jesus as an "everlasting" king would be good news.

2. Jesus is "Father"?

Why would Jesus being called "Father" be confusing?

How might you best explain Jesus having that title?

Walk through Galatians 4:4-7 again and note what comes with our adoption by God in Christ.

3. Jesus is our "Everlasting Father"

How has your relationship or lack of relationship with your earthly father shaped your view of your Heavenly Father?

Reflect on the good news that God is your "Everlasting Father." How might this help you grow in appreciation and worship this Advent season?