

Msg. #3
God is With Us

“EVERLASTING FATHER”
—The supernatural love of Jesus Christ—
Isaiah 9:6

Introduction:

We’re in week three of our Christmas/Advent series, “God is with us” where we have been challenged by God’s Word to understand the power of Jesus’ name as described through the titles given him 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” (Isa. 9:6).**

These four amazing titles describe who Jesus is and what he can mean in our lives: He is called, *Wonderful Counselor* because He is our wondrous, mysterious, incomprehensible, divine strategist who not only devises a plan to save us from death and hell—but who alone offers supernatural guidance. He is called, *Mighty God* because as God in human flesh, He possesses supernatural power and offers this power to all who belong to Him by faith! Today...we learn what it means that He is called, *Everlasting Father*. We’re going to see how this title lends to experiencing His supernatural love in our lives—something all of us need so very much!

Talking about fatherhood can be emotional. The emotion may be positive—reflecting over the good experiences you have had with your earthly father—or it may be negative—as you think about the pain that your father *has*, or *is* presently inflicting on your life. Most of us have some kind of father-wound to deal with—and that’s because no human father is perfect. Whatever your initial response to the concept of fatherhood, I believe that before we are finished today, you are going to savor this title of Jesus more often and in more situations than you ever have before. So let’s get

started. We need to begin by quickly clarifying a major tenant of Christian doctrine and theology. We are going to wade in a little deeper today at the start of the message—so right now ask God to give you understanding as we begin to unfold what this title means! The first thing I want us to consider is this...

I. Calling Jesus, “Everlasting Father” can be confusing.

A.It’s confusing because it appears to be a contradiction.

This title begs the question of how Jesus can be called both the Son of God *and* Everlasting Father? Is there a contradiction here?

I’ve met many people who are confused by this title given to Jesus simply because they recognize Jesus only as the Son of God, ***not as Father***. Is Isaiah 9:6 teaching us that the Son and the Father are actually the same persons within the Godhead? If they are, how can this be reconciled with orthodox Christian belief that states that within the Godhead, there are *three* distinct persons: *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*?

The belief that Jesus is the *same person* as the Father, is a heresy known as ***modalism***—introduced around (190 AD) and was circulated in theological debate in the late second and early third centuries by a Libyan priest named Sabellius—whose teachings were eventually condemned by bishop Dionysius in AD 263.

Sabellius’ heresy suggested that there was only one God who appeared to humanity in *different modes* throughout history. He believed that the Father was revealed in *creation*, the Son was revealed in *redemption* and the Spirit was revealed in *regeneration*. Sabellianism (what this teaching became known at the time) taught that these progressive modes do not coexist at any time *together*. In other words, the Father at some point *becomes* the Son, who then later *becomes* the Spirit. This, of course, is NOT Biblical and therefore must be rejected as heresy.

But what about the title that Isaiah gives to this child who would be born of a virgin? Are we to believe that Jesus is the Son of God—but also view him as, *Everlasting Father*? This reminds me, at least in part of the dilemma Jesus framed to the teachers of the law in Luke 20:41ff when pointing out that King David had spoken of the coming of the Messiah by calling Him LORD—when, in reality, the Messiah would be David’s future descendent—meaning, his Son!

In Luke 20:41-44 Jesus asks some disgruntled religious leaders, “*Why is it said that the Messiah is the son of David?*” Jesus then quotes from Psalm 110: “*The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’*” (vv.42-43), after which he declares, “*David calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?*” (v.44)? This is essentially the same predicament we find here in Isaiah 9:6 with the prophet calling the Son, “Everlasting Father.”

Because we know that Isaiah 9:6 is a prophetic announcement of the coming Christ, we can safely conclude that indeed, the Bible is allowing the title, “*Everlasting Father*” to be ascribed to the Son, Jesus Christ. *So how do we explain what’s going on here?* Here’s one really important thing to understand: The four titles which the prophet Isaiah has chosen to help us understand who this child will be, simply define Jesus’ relationship *to us*—not Jesus’ relationship to the Godhead! **These titles are for OUR benefit.** They help us understand who Messiah is—and how His life brings meaning to our own.

The Bible teaches there is only one God who manifests himself in three distinct persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—coequal in substance and essence. We call this the Holy Trinity—or the tri-unity of God. I love how the triune God is expressed in various portions of Scripture—each showing the distinct persons of the Godhead—but at the same time, affirming the oneness of God. One example would include a paragraph in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians: “*There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith,*

one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:4-6). Did you notice that Spirit, Lord (Jesus) and Father are all mentioned here with a definite oneness as well? This is just one example of many. I’m simply showing you that the three persons of the Godhead who exist as co-equal and as one are found in several places in Scripture. If time allowed, we could look at more of them. So there’s no contradiction here...merely a way for us to see Jesus’ character and power in a deeper way.

B. But it’s also confusing because of a common, yet misleading belief.

Most people believe that all religious systems share the same teaching about God. It’s not uncommon to find people who view Judaism, Islam and Christianity (the big three) as essentially the same because they all share a *monotheistic* belief in God. Monotheism asserts that there is only one true God. And while it is true that the aforementioned religious systems are monotheistic, holding to the belief in one divine being, it isn’t true that these systems all believe essentially the same things about who God really is.

I’ve met professing Christians albeit untrained in doctrine who seem open to accept the notion that “God” is essentially the same Being in each of these systems—but just goes by different *names*—and who somehow accepts different ways of worshipping Him. But if this were true, then everything Jesus taught about himself—and everything that the Bible presents about the nature of God isn’t accurate! If you didn’t know, each world religious system—even the monotheistic ones, really don’t share a common belief about God’s nature. And of course, if all three have a different view of who this one true God really is, they can’t all be valid...right?

All I’m wanting you to see quickly here is that in all of these titles found here in Isaiah 9:6, the deity of Christ is recognized and proclaimed. *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting*

Father and Prince of Peace all identify Jesus as God—but each one also offers insight into his relationship *with us*. These titles cause us to look upward in exaltation and worship for who He is within the Godhead—and at the same time, they offer us insight so that we might experience Him more intimately.

Okay...so we've seen that this title, "Everlasting Father" can be confusing because of what looks like a contradiction and also because of a common but misleading belief that when we use the name God, we're all talking about the same Being. But here's what I want you to also see...

II. Calling Jesus, "Everlasting Father," can be rewarding.

Here's what I mean...

A. When we call Jesus, Everlasting Father, we are declaring powerful truth:

1. We are declaring Jesus is equal to the Father.

Being *equal* to the Father doesn't mean he is the *same* as the Father. This is an important distinction and one that is very powerful!

We find several places in the gospels where Jesus was confronted by the religious leaders who would have NEVER called Jesus, Father, much less, Everlasting Father. Why? Because in doing so, they would be acknowledging Jesus' equality with the Father. Let's go to the gospel of John and walk through a few examples of this. Let's start in chapter 5. ()

After Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, the Jews came after Him. We find Jesus' response in the middle of John 5: ***"Jesus said to them, 'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.' For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with***

God" (John 5:17-18). When we see Jesus identify Himself with the Father like he does here in John 5, it reveals that He wants us to see the connection.

We see this in John 10 where once again we find the interrogation of the Jews escalating. Pick it up in verse 24: ***"The Jews gathered around him, saying, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.' 25 Jesus answered, 'I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, 26 but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. 27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and the father are one" (John 10:24-30).***

I've heard individuals who are in various cults say in response to John 10:30 that Jesus was just saying that he was sharing in God's work—that he was on the same page with his heavenly father—but not claiming deity. But it had to have been more than this, for once again, in John 10:31 the narrative continues, ***"Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, 32 But Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?' 33 'We are not stoning you for any of these,' replied the Jews, 'but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.'"***

The Jews were clear that Jesus claimed to be God otherwise they wouldn't have wanted to stone Him for blasphemy. Those who believe in a diminished view of Jesus limiting him to some glorified man cannot explain why the Jews were vehement in wanting to put Jesus to death over his claim of being "one with the Father." In reality, their sole reason for wanting to kill him was because of his radical claim of being God.

One final example of this comes in John 14 when Philip, one of Jesus' disciples can hardly contain himself any longer and comes

to Jesus asking him to show them the Father. Philip asks, **“Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”** Jesus answered, **“Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work”** (John 14:8-10).

I honestly can’t see how anyone can deny that in these passages we’ve looked at briefly, Jesus is claiming equality with God—the Father. He’s *equal* to the Father but not the *same* as the Father. But not only are we declaring the powerful truth that Jesus is equal to the Father...

2. We are declaring Jesus reveals the Father.

Again we look to the gospels and are reminded that only Jesus can reveal who the Father is. **“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him”** (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22).

Stop here for a moment. Do you know why Jesus must do His work of revealing the Father to us? Because our sinful state doesn’t allow us to see the Father as we ought. Our sin has altered and tainted our view of God. Our sin limits our understanding. Sure, we know God exists (sinners already know this—see Rom. 1:19-21; even demonic spirits know this as in James 2:19) but we really can’t see God the way he NEEDS to be seen. We don’t see him as loving, compassionate, grace filled, benevolent...we see him as judge, creator, sovereign—but Jesus...Jesus reveals the Father fully. John the Apostle writes, **“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth...No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known”** (John 1:14, 18).

The writer of Hebrews speaks to this also: **“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word”** (Hebrews 1:1-3a).

Jesus reveals God the Father. And that’s why the prophet declares his name, Everlasting Father.

But there’s something even more compelling here in what we are declaring behind the title, Everlasting Father...

3. We are declaring Jesus brings us to the Father.

Turn to John 14. In this passage, Jesus offers a clear picture of how we get to our heavenly home. Anybody here interested in knowing how to go to heaven? (read verses 1-4) Thomas, the realist, is having a hard time with Jesus’ teaching. **“Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”** (John 14:5). If you are confused like Thomas, be encouraged. Jesus has some great news for you: **“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’”** (John 14:6).

Here is a defining statement for anyone wanting to be sure they are going to heaven—for anyone who wants to spend eternity with the God: We can only go to heaven—to our Father in Heaven *through Jesus*.

You simply won’t come to Jesus to bring you to the Father if you believe that there are *many ways* to Heaven. You won’t come to Jesus to bring you to the Father if you believe our good works, our generous giving, our church attendance or sacrificial service or anything else that might seem meritorious will bring you there instead. But the truth is that you can *only* go to heaven through Jesus! He invites us—all of us—today. If you believe Jesus alone

can take you to the Father then it is easy to recognize his title as, Everlasting Father. Father of Eternity. And think about this...if he takes you there, you will be there forever because he is everlasting Father.

(A. We are declaring powerful truth)

B. When we call Jesus, Everlasting Father, we are demonstrating a practical understanding of our faith.

Let me show you two very simple things about this practical understanding...

1. We understand that Jesus gives us new birth.

The general principle of fatherhood is that of producing new life. Every baby born into the world has a father. (and a mom!)

In the spiritual realm, we realize that because we are all descendants of Adam—the curse of death is upon us. But through faith in Christ, the curse is lifted and we can be made alive! I love how Paul states this in his letter to the Corinthians: *“For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:21-22)*. Paul continues... *“The first man Adam became a living being” ; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45)*. Through Adam we are *generated*. But through the second-Adam, Jesus Christ, we are *regenerated*. If you are still in your sins and have not yet come to trust in Jesus, I would like to invite you to repent of your unbelief and trust in Jesus Christ alone in order to receive new life! And in doing so, you demonstrate the first step in a practical understanding of saving faith.

Every week we give people the opportunity to become born-again. To admit to being a sinner and asking Jesus to forgive and cleanse ...and then we simply remind people that the prayer of faith—in calling on the person of Jesus will save one from his sins. For all

who call on the name of the Lord will be saved! (Rom. 10:13). Perhaps that will be you today! Or the person sitting next to you. Look around today—it could be anyone to whom the Lord chooses to reveal Himself.

2. We understand that Jesus loves us unconditionally.

It may not be true in every human instance, but the general rule is that fathers *love their kids*. Of course moms do too. The portrait of Jesus being “like a father” to us is one that portrays the love of a parent. Any parent that hasn’t flipped out has a committed love for his/her child. It doesn’t matter what that child does—no matter how rebellious he may become, a loving parent will stay the course and keep loving his or her child—even if it means allowing this child we love to go in a direction with which we disagree! But—a **parent cannot STOP loving his child**.

The story in the Bible that illustrates this better than any other is the prodigal Son—found in **Luke 15:11-31**. The father never stopped loving his wayward kid. Even when he was far off in a distant country—His father was loving him. And when that wayward son decided that his father’s hired servants had a better life than he was having, he decides to come home—and the Father celebrates his return. If you are a parent, you know about this kind of love!

Your kids sometimes drive you crazy or you disagree with what they are doing—they go through the teenage years and you age exponentially as you worry about what they might fall into—the choices they might make the people who may pull them away—how vulnerable their heart is at these young ages—but even as they grow older, you don’t stop thinking about them and loving them still! You always want to care for, love, protect and meet the needs of your kids. I meet people all the time who are still standing on the porch (so to speak) like the father in Luke 15, waiting for their child to come to his senses so he can once again experience the blessing of a parent’s love. The pain in so many lives is so very deep!

Here is great news. If we truly belong to Jesus—then he is not only Father—who loves us deeply—but He is *EVERLASTING FATHER*—one who loves us this way *forever*. I think this is what Paul had in mind when he wrote those amazing words in Romans 8:35, “***Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*** Answer: Nothing can. “***Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord***” (Romans 8:38-39).

I’m sure there is someone here today who suspects that Jesus has changed His mind on them—that while you have once believed He loved you, you are nearly sure he doesn’t anymore. **Well, I’ve got news again, He can’t stop loving you.** He can’t because he is Everlasting Father. Have you experienced the beauty and power of that kind of love? Many Christ followers are content with only knowing about this love—only hearing about it. But if you abide, marinate your life in the words and presence of Jesus and you follow Him with all your heart—you will *experience* this love.

I can remember times in my life when I’ve gone for a walk or drive or went to the top of a mountain and just worshipped the Lord—telling Him what He means to me—or, at times asking for his forgiveness—and as I cry out from the depths of my heart, I experience deep calling to deep. The powerful, palpable love of Jesus comes rushing in. It is overwhelming! It may make me weep—or make me laugh. It may give me a peace that is indescribable. It feels like when, as a child, the big strong arms of your father picks you up when you fall off your bike and he holds you tight until that initial pain is gone.

My earthly parents are gone now. But Jesus is and will always be my Everlasting Father—and His love for me is a constant—and it will never go away. Praise God!

I like how Jude reminds us to, “***keep ourselves in the love of God.***” (Jude 21) The reason for this reminder is because it isn’t

God who moves when we feel out of touch with God’s love. We are the ones who move! So Jude reminds us to remain in his love. Don’t go anywhere or do anything that in any way damages the precious knowledge and experience of Christ’s everlasting love for you! And here is some extra motivation to remain in his love...

a)His loves carries and protects us.

Check this out in Moses’ words to the Israleites: “***The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.***” Deut. 1:30-31

b)His love disciplines us.

See what the writer of Hebrews says about this: “***Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father! If you are not disciplined, then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.***” (Hebrews 12:7-8)

c)His love provides for us.

The Psalmist writes, “***He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.***” Ps. 111:5

d)His love completes us.

The apostle John writes, “***This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.***” 1 John 4:10

God wants to bring a sense of completion in your own life today. He wants you to discover or rediscover that He’s been loving you and thinking of you before you even belonged to Him. He loves

us like a good Father...and remember, He' *Everlasting Father!*
That means all these things we've discovered today are forever! If
we are his child—we are his child forever! It also means if He
ever loved us, he loved us forever. If he carries us—he carries us
forever. If he disciplines us, he does so with eternal purposes in
mind. If he provides for us, he will provide for us forever! That's
what's behind this title, Everlasting Father! He is equal to the
Father. He reveals the Father. And He brings us to the Father.
And He loves us. How he loves us! His love is constant—it's
complete. It carries us and completes us. It disciplines us and
providing for us forever. This Advent, celebrate that God has
come to be With us—his supernatural love—for all who turn to
Jesus.

Will you come to him now?

Invitation and prayer