

# Unwrapping the Names of Jesus: Everlasting Father

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[ 0 : 00 ] Welcome here for this Sunday, December 12th. All your Christmas shopping done yet? Not a chance, right? Not a chance. On each Sunday of the Advent season, we're going to recognize one of the four virtues, and we have been doing that, the virtues that Jesus brings to us.

They are hope, love, joy, and peace. And this morning, as we continue in the season of Advent, we're lighting our first and second candles again, which represent hope and love.

Are you wondering why the third candle is pink? Well, this is going to sound like a cheap answer, but it's because pink is the traditional liturgical color that represents joy.

So that's why joy, the third candle, is pink. The third Sunday of Advent is also sometimes known as Gaudete Sunday, G-A-U-D-E-T-E Sunday.

And it's meant to remind us of the joy that the world experienced at the birth of Jesus, as well as the joy that the faithful have reached, we've reached the midpoint of Advent.

[ 1 : 15 ] And that's what the joy candle represents partly. Today, we wish for the world to know the promise fulfilled in our King, the Prince of Peace, the wonderful Counselor, as we declare, reflecting the words of Psalm 40, verse 5, many are the wonders you have done, the things you have planned for us, too many to declare.

As we reflect on the wonder of the promise of Christmas, we thank God that all his promises to us are fulfilled in the birth, the life, and the death of Jesus and his resurrection.

And we rejoice in God's faithful love, which brings us immeasurable joy. Amen? So we recognize again, we're recognizing that we're in this season in the church calendar known as Advent.

And it's familiar to some of us, probably quite familiar, and not to all of us. And this season includes the four Sundays that lead up to Christmas. And we're at number three.

And not all Protestant churches recognize Advent in any specific way. Some don't even acknowledge it necessarily. And other traditions recognize it in more formal ways, like by lighting candles, which we have done this morning.

[ 2 : 44 ] So as we approach this Christmas this year, and reflect on all the season it means to us as Christians, beyond spending time with family and friends, beyond giving and receiving gifts, beyond holidays, vacation, carols, delicious food, I almost said calories.

There's a Freudian slip, eh? The calories of Christmas. I'll write a book. We recognize that Christmas, the Christmas season is a season of anticipation, right?

It's a season of waiting. And so we wait to give things to people. We wait to receive gifts. The anticipation of those things.

And in this season of Advent, we're anticipating Christmas, and the time that we recognize the birth of Jesus, the Word made flesh.

Our Advent sermon series this year is entitled, Unwrapping the Names of Jesus. And over the course of this series, we've been looking at the four specific names that the Old Testament prophet Isaiah uses to refer to the coming Messiah, the Son of God, who would be born as the baby, the man Jesus.

[ 4 : 07 ] And as we unpack or unwrap a different name each week, as we've done in the previous weeks, we're going to be looking at, first, a contemporary understanding of the name. What do these words mean to us right now with not much context?

Then what would the name have represented when it was originally declared by Isaiah in reference to the Messiah? And then we're going to, as we've been doing each week, look at how that name reflects Jesus to us personally, in the circumstances of our lives, in our relationship with him.

And our focus passage for this series has been, continues to be, Isaiah 9, verses 2 and 6. Go ahead and look it up, or you can, there it is, or you can hear me now.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned. 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.

[ 5 : 29 ] We're continuing in our series this week by considering the name, the third one, Everlasting Father. So first, let's begin with a contemporary understanding of the name, Everlasting Father.

Well, in the past, we've explored the characteristics of God together, right? We've done that many times. In fact, we did it in a series about, I don't know, 50 years ago or so.

Feels like a long time, but not that long. But I believe, in many ways, his eternal nature may be one of the most challenging things for us to wrap our heads around, isn't it?

Sure, in theory, we can understand when something is everlasting or eternal or something lasting for eternity, we can kind of get our heads around it.

It means they last forever. It means they last a long, long, long, long, long, long, long, long time. They'll exist forever, potentially.

[ 6 : 34 ] It may also mean they have existed forever in the past. It means they have always been there, potentially, everlasting.

But I think that while we understand this basic idea, we really, truly, ultimately, I don't think we can relate to it at all.

Can we? I mean, I believe that we have an eternal soul. We can recognize that, right? God ultimately created us for eternity.

That's why we were made. But in our reality, in our current circumstances, in our world, in our day-to-day understanding of things, we can't really relate to the idea of something being eternal.

But why is that? Well, if you think about it for a moment, I reflected on this this week. Everything in our world, everything and everyone we interact with, isn't eternal at all.

[ 7 : 42 ] In fact, I coined this word, and you can use it if you want. It's, we're eternal. We're not eternal, we're just eternal. So, no, it's not technically a word.

But we're temporary. We're fading. We're expiring, literally and figuratively. We're wearing down and we're wearing out. Can you recognize that?

Everything we relate to has an expiry date. I wear reading glasses for up close and half the time I will take something out of the fridge, stand there and point it at Michelle and say, what does that say?

I can see the black line. I got nothing else. But it's the expiry date, right? We know the expiry date of things. And while it's not stamped on you anywhere, trust me, I've checked, even you have an expiry date.

And as I've said before, the odds of death, the odds of your death, my death, what are the odds? 100%, exactly. If you're going to bet, bet on that.

[ 8 : 54 ] So, we're definitely not eternal right now, right? We recognize that, not right now. So, that can be hard for us to relate to that concept. Now, to move from eternal or everlasting to father.

We can recognize something that we all have in common here this morning. We all have or had fathers. Biological reality, right?

For some of us, our fathers are gone and we miss them dearly. For others, you may not miss your father at all. your father may still be around and you have no interest in, no relationship with him.

You may not have positive memories of a relationship with your father. I've talked about this on Father's Day every year. That makes it hard. It makes it hard for a lot of people.

I miss my dad very, very much. much. But many of you today, here are fathers yourselves as well, right? Or others may not have yet had that opportunity.

[ 10 : 06 ] So, positive or negative, you know, I didn't notice I didn't say a blessing or an honor because I don't want to imply that being a father is the ultimate goal. but it's certainly part of our identity for those of us who are fathers.

But positive or negative, we can relate to the name, to the word father. We have an instant connection of some kind to it. And we also have positive or negative associations with that word and memories or emotions that that word triggers for us.

I've had conversations with many of you about your parents, about your relationship with them, about your fond memories. I've also had conversations with people where those relationships were challenging.

But again, as we recognize with the word everlasting and the concept of eternity, our basic understanding of the word father, as simple as it seems on the surface, can be complicated, right? And that's what we just talked about. It can be, have a lot of baggage. Everlasting father. So second, this morning, what does the name everlasting father mean with a more complete understanding of what it might have meant to Isaiah or to the first century church who equated this prophetic name everlasting father and the identity of the Messiah with the man Jesus?

[ 11 : 44 ] We've talked about that chain of connection. So what does it mean to say that the Messiah prophesied by Isaiah in our central verses for this series is known as everlasting father?

Well, having recognized already that God himself is eternal and that he created humanity for eternity as well, let's look at a few verses this morning together that confirm the eternal nature of God and there's lots.

So we could be here all day, but I picked some highlights. Our friend, again, the prophet Isaiah, who wrote our focus passage for this series, says in Isaiah 40 verse 28, Do you not know?

Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary and his understanding no one can fathom.

The psalmist says in Psalm 90 verse 2, Before the mountains were born, or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

[ 13 : 07 ] We sing those words in that familiar song, but there it is, Psalm 90 verse 2, From everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

What a declaration. I love the sense here that the psalmist is essentially saying multiply infinity times infinity, from everlasting to everlasting.

And that's how long God has been here. Amen? So I want to identify a neat connection for us.

In Exodus 3, God is interacting with Moses, and Moses is instructed to go to the Israelite people and to tell them that God sent him as his messenger.

And Moses drags his feet, right? Moses can't wrap his head around how to do this. Well, I'm not the right guy, Lord, I don't really know what to say, I don't know what to do.

[ 14 : 10 ] So he basically says, no really, so who am I supposed to say that sent me so that they believe me? Because they're not just going to believe me. And in Exodus 3, 14, we read the response from God.

God said to Moses, I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites. I am has sent me to you.

So here's the neat connection. Let's go to John 8, verse 56. John 8, verse 56. Where Jesus is speaking with a group of Jewish people and he says, your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day.

He saw it and was glad. The immediate response in verse 57 is from the crowd. And I imagine scoffing here, so I'm going to put on scoffing for you.

You're not yet 50 years old, the Jews said to him, and you have seen Abraham. Continuing in verse 58, Jesus says, I tell you the truth, Jesus answered.

[ 15 : 25 ] Before Abraham was born, I am. Needless to say that, Jesus stating those words, that he is God, that wouldn't have been missed, that connection.

I am. Jesus was declaring he was God. God. And that was not popular. In Hebrews 13, verse 8, we also read that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Friends, scripture itself declares that Jesus is eternal. As we explored last week that name, Mighty God, I believe that it can be challenging, just as challenging to consider that everlasting father is being applied to the Messiah, to Jesus here, right?

Is that perhaps the case for you when you think about that? How do I make that connection? Have you perhaps been confused by the idea that Isaiah seems to be suggesting that the prophesied Messiah, we did this connection last week, is the man Jesus, the son of the trinity, is referred to as everlasting father?

Is that a hard connection? Well, I want to clarify it a bit. I dug into this myself because I thought, wait a minute. So I don't believe that Isaiah was suggesting that the Messiah, the son of the trinity, Jesus, and the father are the same person.

[ 17 : 08 ] he wasn't saying, yep, father, Messiah, son of God, yep, all the same. The idea that the father and the son are merely different manifestations of God and not distinct individuals is actually a heresy.

It's known as modalism, and that's to suggest that somehow God is not three individual people as we recognize and declare in the trinity, but somehow a blend of those three people, and that's not correct.

And there's a more modern version of this that's known as oneness theology, which again suggests that parts of God, we talked about the analogies last week of the trinity, talking about an egg.

Well, an egg doesn't accurately represent the trinity because shell is not egg, yolk is not egg, white is not egg, together they're egg, but father, son, and holy spirit are individually God.

So that's where those analogies fail. So oneness theology, modalism, suggests that the father, the son, and the holy spirit are not in fact three different persons, three different individuals, but three different representations of, or manifestations of, the same person.

[ 18 : 44 ] Do you see how that's a problem? That is not the trinity as we understand it. So that's where the early church went, hold on a second, that's not scriptural, that doesn't fit.

So I want to be clear this morning that not only is that incorrect, it's critical that we understand the concept of the trinity, it's tough, as I said last week, but critical that we seek to understand it as best we can.

And as I said in our last sermon on this series, the doctrine of the trinity is a core belief of our faith, and it's a belief that's best supported through scripture.

So it's a belief that we must declare. So why then does Isaiah refer to the Messiah, to the Son of God, to Jesus as the everlasting Father?

Does that still leave you scratching your head? Well, even though they're both God, aren't the Father and the Son two different people? Well, yes, that's absolutely correct.

[ 19 : 49 ] One commentary I read suggested something that may be helpful in clarifying this. We're not talking about the person Father here, everlasting Father, but the role of an ideal Father.

Is that helpful? Does that help to clarify things? And hopefully I haven't lost you there. As I said last week, I don't want to get into too heavy theology, but does that make sense?

That we're not talking about the literal capital F Father, Son, we're talking about the role of an ideal Father, and I'm going to unpack that a bit now. For people in the first century in the early church, they would have recognized the role of a father in the family context.

They would have recognized that that role would have been to provide for and protect the family. And the father would have been the sole, the primary provider and protector, the one who would mentor those under his care, who would pass on wisdom and knowledge, who would provide and protect.

Similarly, a king would have been seen as the father of a country, again, protecting, defending, providing, seeking to advance the kingdom and provide for his subjects.

[ 21 : 18 ] In addition, those early audiences would have also had the context of recognizing God himself as our heavenly father and all that would have meant to them as well.

So Isaiah was not suggesting that the Messiah, the son of God, that Jesus and his father were the same person. He was identifying the depth and breadth of the perfect role of father, father, the Messiah, that Jesus would ultimately fulfill that role, not just for a time or for a season, but for all time, for eternity.

So third, how does the name everlasting father then relate to Jesus in the circumstances of our lives or our relationship with him? everlasting father.

What does it mean for us that Jesus is everlasting, that he is eternal? Well, we recognize this morning that as humans, we're limited in some ways, in many ways, in fact.

We are confined in some ways and that without Jesus, our time will run out. can you recognize the hope that we have in Jesus?

[ 22 : 51 ] If we accept him as our savior and Lord and if we submit our lives to his will and the will of his father, our story can and will continue on into eternity as well.

Friends, God's plan was never to leave us with an expiry date. Place your hope for eternity in the hands of Jesus Christ.

Where earthly fathers may have fallen short or maybe been limited by their own humanity, Jesus is the best mentor and father figure we could ever have, we ever will have.

love. He's our protector and our guide. He loves us unconditionally. He stands with us in the circumstances of our lives and he will stand with us when we face our final judgment. As I've said previously in this series, I think we can so easily compartmentalize our understanding or our picture of Jesus, depending on the time of year.

[ 24 : 10 ] At Christmas, we lock in on the baby Jesus, right? We sing about away in a manger. We sing about the silent night on which Jesus was born. Crying baby, probably not that silent, but we'll let them have it.

And then for daily encouragement, we may connect more with Jesus in his adult ministry, right? And in the gospels, in his time when he was on earth, when he was with the disciples. And then close to the end of our lives, as I've said before, we may reflect more on the crucified and resurrected Jesus, the coming again one day Jesus.

Friends, the baby Jesus is the same man who washed feet, who laughed at weddings, who cried over Lazarus.

that same Jesus is also our risen Lord and our conquering king who will come again.

[ 25 : 15 ] That same Jesus is also our everlasting father and our eternal hope. May a deeper understanding of what it means that Jesus is your everlasting father be one of the amazing gifts that you personally unwrap this Christmas season.

Amen.