

Isaiah 9:1-7 - Everlasting Father

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Amen. I love that song. I love the fact that it talks about that old, old story, right? It's the one we told to the kids sitting around on the stairs. It's the same one we're going to keep talking about. We tend to talk about it every time we're together. The power of death undone by an infant born of glory. Son of God, Son of Man.

That's the glory, the beauty of Christmas, of the story that surrounds what God has done. And it's the beauty of that. It talks about the identity of that baby who came at Christmas, right?

We call Him Jesus. We've been saying, who was Jesus? Who is Jesus? What child is this? What's the identity of the baby that we celebrate at Christmas?

[1 : 02] We're using these four titles that Jesus was given in Isaiah chapter 9. We've seen Him as wonderful counselor. The one who unfolds God's wise plans for His people.

Who is the light shining on the path there to take to the Father. Who actually is Himself that light, that way to the Father.

Last week we saw Jesus as mighty God. Fully God. God Himself. For whom nothing is too hard. And this morning we'll focus on the third title.

Everlasting Father. So we get to save Prince of Peace for Christmas Eve. I'm really excited about that. But let's turn to Isaiah chapter 9 and read the context of these remarkable titles given to this promised child.

Isaiah 9 at verse 1. Hear the word of the Lord. Verse 1.

[2 : 24] As with joy at the harvest. As they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of His burden and the staff for His shoulder. The rod of His oppressor you have broken as on the day of Midian.

For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult. And every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born. To us a son is given.

And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace.

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. Will you pray with me? Father, we have opened Your Word this morning because we believe it is there that we find what we need.

[3 : 28] Where we find truth. Where we find something that we can completely depend on. Where we find direction that will never mislead us.

And so we ask that by Your Spirit You would speak to us. We know that men can deceive us and mislead us. We know that we can be confused and our hearts can be led astray.

Today we ask that You would speak to us clearly. That we would hear from You. That we would know what You would have us know. That we would know Jesus in a new and deeper way this morning.

That we would see Him for who He truly is. Father, would You do that work by Your Spirit. For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. There are all sorts of crazy videos out there on YouTube these days if you've never noticed that.

I'm going to show you one that unfortunately has absolutely nothing to do with Jesus or with Christmas. Which is a great risk on a day like today.

[4 : 38] This is a compilation video of a few clips called Greatest Dad Wins Ever. Moments where Dad saves the day.

Check these out. Take care. Bye-bye. We'll be back next time. Italians know what happened, but remember how Shane Leeiewski is. Our wife has absolutely strike me very soon. Let him know what happened. This is a little bit if we were to convey properly, it's a guy with this guy in the Ciao. He's struggling if they can do any Twrestrial and whoever cannot claim the Orchestras here. Don't call me. Come on is a beautiful thing. And we've got plenty of people on vacation. We'll keep this discussion together for me and have a couple more days of time given by the restoration level that needs. Tell me something that we would have to come up in the future. That you'd definitely want that. Not a lie and I'll just reallyamat father.

You might want that season intoWins ever. A Mor Wind Dallas mont Kung He caught them. They're all dad wins. Nobody gets hurt. Catches them every time. There are many, many more like that, with children hurtling toward danger and pain of various kinds, until dad swoops in to save them, to protect them at the last minute, right?

To be honest, though, I thought about as I watched that, do we really have any evidence that any of these men are actually the fathers of the children that they save? Do you know that, having watched the video? You don't. Not really. You don't know that that's a dad save. You just know that there was someone there who protected the child. The point is, the reason we can label a video like that is not because we've established the paternity of every child in the video.

[6 : 13] But because the men saving them are acting as a father should, right? They're protecting children, right? As they're about to smash their heads on concrete or run into a burning grill, all of a sudden they swoop in and protect them. That's really the point here when Jesus is called everlasting father. It's not a statement about his role in the Trinity, his position in a family, in this Old Testament context. To be a father speaks to being a kind protector, one who has people entrusted to his care. Job describes it this way in his book, chapter 29.

Job says, I was a father to the needy, and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know. Job's not saying, I was biologically the father of all of these people, is he? No, when he says, I was a father to the needy, what I did was, I went and took care of them. I looked after their needs. I came to the defense of someone who was in need. That's what a father is, right? That's what a father is supposed to do. And not everyone has had that experience. But that's actually why those of us who have fathers who harm us or neglect us are so deeply hurt by that. Because they were supposed to protect us, and instead they did the opposite. In fact, in the context of this passage, a father will protect his children, not just from harm, but will actually conquer his enemies, will defend him from those who are attacking them. He will fight for them against oppression and injustice. Look at verse 4. The yoke of his burden, the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor you have broken as on the day of Midian. Do you hear what's happening? The Israelites in captivity, right? That's where they're headed. And the one oppressing them and mistreating them with the yoke on his back, the rod of the oppressor beating them is going to be broken. You feel like you're stuck in captivity forever. God says to his people, you may begin to feel like it's hopeless, like there's a dead end here, but it won't last forever. You have a mighty God who will fight for you as your father. The rod of the oppressor will be broken. The one who's taken you captive, who is overpowering and mistreating you will face justice from your father. He won't leave you alone. I won't show another video this morning, but this aspect of being a father reminds me of a silly movie that many of us watch this time of year. It's a movie called Elf. Yeah, some of you have seen Elf. In Elf, there's a young boy, Michael, and Michael is being mistreated by the bigger kids. He's being bullied to the point that he's getting to be fearful. He wants to run away when he sees them. And one time, these bullies are waiting and hiding, and they ambush him as he's walking along with a bunch of snowballs. And they begin to hit Michael with snowballs, but this time Michael happens to be walking with his friend, Buddy the elf, played by Will Ferrell, who's bigger and stronger and who has some incredible snowball skills from the North Pole. He's just come from there. And Buddy, in no time flat, whips up about 50 snowballs.

[10 : 02] And then he starts to fire them. And they go really, really fast, and they are very, very accurate. And so Buddy sends the bullies running. He all of a sudden sees them running away. And even when they're running, he hits them again, and they get knocked down. He comes to Michael's aid. He stands up for him. He defeated his enemies and offered him protection. That's what it means to say that Jesus is to be a father. That he will protect us, come to our defense, conquer our

enemies.

Then, of course, we must also notice that he's called everlasting father. He will continue to be our protector through all ages. He will never stop protecting us. Notice verse 7.

Of the increase of his government and of peace, there will be what? 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. This one who's coming is going to have a righteous rule, a just defense, particularly of those who've been oppressed and unjustly treated, taken advantage of. And that rule will never end. It will be forevermore. Jeremiah tells us that God loves his people with an everlasting love. He has called us with unfailing kindness. Will never let us down. A love that won't fail. A father who will never stop caring for us. Who will always be there for us. Isn't that what we all long for?

So again, we see here the uniqueness of Jesus. Much more than a mortal, right? No mere human father or ruler can be there in every case at all times as much as we would even like to be. And he's our everlasting father. If you've listened to any presidential candidate recently, you've heard them talk about being tough. They talk about it a lot. Being tough on terror. One thing they all seem to agree on is that the president of the United States should have as a top priority protecting Americans. They're talking about it quite a bit. And they're saying, if I'm the president, I will protect you. All these things you're afraid of, if I'm president, they won't happen. You'll be safe and secure. You may wonder, as I do sometimes, I don't know, but can they really guarantee that?

Like, even if they want that to happen, let's just say they could. What if he really is, he does have the answers. What if during his presidency he has a perfect track record and makes all the right decisions and the things we're afraid of don't happen and we're completely safe and secure. Even if a president was perfect, he would offer that for four years, maybe eight years. Kind of like Israel's kings.

[13:16] A few good years, leading the people in peace and then they get defeated. Strong enough to defeat one enemy but overtaken then by the next. Never able to offer God's people long-term security.

And Jesus is to be quite different. He's the everlasting father. How is Jesus like a father in his life on earth? When he comes and walks among us, where is it that he shows himself to be a father? Where does he protect and defend his people?

I thought about the story in Mark chapter 4 where Jesus and his disciples get in a boat and they're going to go across the Sea of Galilee to the other side and Jesus gets in the boat and does what? He goes to sleep. And so this fierce storm comes up and the disciples get very fearful and what do they do? They go and they, Jesus, Jesus, don't you even care? Wake up.

Look what Jesus does. Mark 4 verse 39. Jesus awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

He said to them, Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?

[14:45] Jesus wakes up and just says, Peace, be still. And the storm stops. He displays great power, certainly. He intervenes powerfully in the world.

He is indeed the mighty God who created it all, who rules over all, for whom nothing is too hard, right? He shows himself as that. But the disciples understand that the bigger issue is not just, can he do some neat things. Was this a nice event that happened in our lives?

But they understand, as Jesus helps them too with his questions, that the real issue is, Who then is this? This won't be the last time the disciples are in a boat, will it?

These men spend a lot of time in boats. This won't be the last storm they face. Probably won't be the last time they feel like they've got no way out. They need to know, Who is this?

Not just someone who happened to be able to help this once, but someone who can protect them all the time, in every situation. So there are occasions like this story where Jesus reveals his power and his desire to protect his people from danger.

[16:02] Of course he loves them and loves to do that. It's like Jesus catching them right before they hit the cement. I love that one of the kid who is going down, face planting, and right at the last second, the dad catches him, protects him from being hurt.

Jesus does that here. But mostly, he's got other things in mind. He tells the Jewish people living under Roman oppression, anxious to get out from under that rule, My kingdom is not of this world.

John 18. Even after Jesus dies and rises from the dead, his followers come around him and they're anxious for him to restore the kingdom to Israel, right?

Acts 1. They're saying, Conquer our enemies. Be our father. That's what they're saying when they ask him that. But Jesus seems to have bigger plans in mind, doesn't he?

Do you remember what Jesus says? They say, Are you about to restore the kingdom to Israel? And Jesus says, Let me expand your horizons a little bit. It's not for you to know the times when I'm going to do things.

[17 : 10] But my spirit will come and you'll be my witnesses to the end of the earth. A huge vision. Not perhaps exactly what they thought they were asking. But Jesus says, Here's what I'm going to do.

Something much bigger than you ever had in mind. You see, the story of Christmas is not merely that Jesus came to protect us from bonking our heads on the cement a few times.

Or to protect us from bullies with snowballs. It's much more than that. It's that he came to die in our place and to rise again victorious over all his and our enemies.

Over our greatest enemies. And so it's in his resurrection that we see Jesus as the everlasting father, right? In his ascension to heaven. His active reign at the right hand of God Almighty.

Jesus is there actively today ruling and interceding for us. He conquers sin and death and the grave.

[18 : 15] He defeats Satan himself. And so he reigns triumphant for us. The baby comes at Christmas not merely to rescue us from one storm on the sea.

Not merely to protect us from one serious injury. No, much, much more. Ultimately to provide for us unending love and eternal protection from our greatest enemies forever.

Right? That's what it's about. He's come to crush the head of the serpent once and for all. To wage war in that cosmic battle that he's a part of.

To bring the kingdom of God with a rule of justice and peace and hope that will never end. That will be everlasting just like its king.

That's what he's come to do. Think of it like this. Imagine a child made a list of what it meant for his father to be a good father.

[19 : 20] Can you imagine one of your children doing that? Here's what I want you to do, dad, to be a good father. I'm going to tell you what I need. Always do these things. I need these things every day and at every meal.

And never make me do these things or eat these things or go to these places or endure these meetings or whatever it would happen to be.

Spare me from those hard things. Do all of that and you'll be a good father. Imagine the father being wiser.

Imagine. Imagine the father knowing better. Imagine the father knowing what his child most needs. We chuckle because we've lived it or we are living it and we think, yeah, he does.

He does know better. Is it just possible that Jesus knows better than we do? That we bring all of the things we think are so important and that we're convinced if he would just do this and keep us away from that, that would be what it means to be a good father.

[20 : 32] Is it possible he sees deeper needs? That he sees greater hopes? That he sees bigger enemies than we realize for ourselves?

Jesus is a father who looks out for our needs and comes to our defense. He certainly is that. But he's a father who knows our deepest and truest needs even better than we do.

Who's committed to being an everlasting father who never stops loving us. Never stops protecting us from what truly ails us. I hope as we talk about this that you're beginning to feel, to taste as it were, what it would mean for Jesus to be your everlasting father.

That's what I want us to think about now as we have each week. Not can you merely identify Jesus as an eternally loving protector and say, that sounds nice.

But are you personally experiencing him as your everlasting father? You may not have had any bullies throw snowballs at you lately.

[21 : 41] I haven't. So let me help a little bit. When is it that we particularly need to experience Jesus as our everlasting father?

Isaiah prophesied to God's people here in this passage that they're going to be oppressed. They're going to be vulnerable and weak. They're going to be attacked.

They're going to become fearful. And we know that in the midst of those situations, under the authority of an unjust king, under the influence of a godless society, that God's people often felt hopeless.

That they were tempted to despair altogether. Say that there's nothing good ever going to happen. Sometimes situations in our lives are not merely difficult.

Not merely unjust. But sometimes they seem to be dead ends completely, don't they? There seems to be no light. No hope at all.

[22 : 41] Sometimes we run into those situations. Perhaps it's when your child grows up and he wanders astray in all the ways you've warned him against.

And it feels like your heart is just being ripped out of you watching it happen. Perhaps it's when you lose a spouse or a parent or a loved one all too soon.

And the sadness begins to creep in and seems overwhelming. And you feel like you will never lift your head again. You'll never sing again. There will never be joy again.

Perhaps it's when the spouse who was supposed to love you, cherish you, and protect you, breaks your trust.

And wounds you really deeply. And you begin to wonder, am I ever going to love or trust again?

Next time I'm making up ones that are not real.

[23 : 49] But you're dealing with these things. You're facing these. What about maybe when people are beginning to attack you about your faith? And in the midst of it, you get so discouraged that you begin to doubt too.

Your friends are saying, there's no reason to trust God. Look at your life. Look around you. And you begin to say, man, I look and they're right. He's not good.

I can't trust him. Maybe it's when you get the terminal diagnosis. And death in that moment seems to have the upper hand.

When have you been so discouraged? So unjustly treated? So fearful that there seemed to be no way out? You may not be there this morning, but we all go through those situations in our lives and we don't see any hope.

Listen, if Jesus is your everlasting father, you can cry out to him. You can pray to him. You can plead for his help.

[24 : 56] He is the mighty God who still intervenes powerfully today. He supernaturally works in your life today. He still does that. He's your loving father who delights to give good gifts to his children, who has compassion on you as a father has compassion on his child.

Do you cry out to him? Do you plead before him in those dead-end moments when you can't even get any words out? Is he the one you look to for protection?

Have you tasted what it's like to run or to fall into his strong and gentle arms? Do you know that?

Have you been there and have you run to him and collapsed into him?

He's a good father. He loves and protects and defends. But can we be honest this morning?

Sometimes it doesn't feel like that. Sometimes you cry out on your way down to the cement and you fall flat on your face and it hurts.

[26 : 10] You're expecting him to swoop in and protect you and bam! Life hurts. So even more deeply and even more importantly, if Jesus is your everlasting father, you can have hope despite the hopelessness of life.

That's actually the message of Christmas, isn't it? That no matter what hopeless mess we're in, Jesus doesn't leave us alone in it. He enters in, doesn't he? To protect us, to defend us, to rescue us ultimately, if not immediately.

Because that mess may hang around. That temporary oppression may well persist. Think even of death. Perhaps our greatest enemy that we celebrate that Jesus has conquered for us.

Do we avoid experiencing it altogether? Brother, almost all of God's children have not escaped by avoiding death entirely, but by being protected in the midst of it, right?

They found Jesus to be even there and to be protecting them even there. That's what it means to have an everlasting father.

[27 : 29] Hope even in the face of death and hell because Jesus has entered in with us to those places and he's conquered for us there. The serpent whose head Jesus came to crush bruises heels, doesn't he?

He's been bruising heels since the fall of mankind. And while Jesus sometimes protects us by guarding us from the pain and distress of that bruise, while he sometimes scoops us up before our face hits the cement, often he protects us in the midst of the pain and distress.

Temporary justice is unpredictable and unreliable. Eternal justice is certain. The judge of all the earth will do right.

He will right every wrong. There is hope in the midst of your unjust treatment. Temporary protection is not guaranteed either.

Eternal protection is promised by your everlasting father, the one who will never stop caring for you. We will suffer as our Lord and King did.

[28 : 44] But we will find healing and safety in him forever. That's the kind of eternal perspective that Christmas offers us in our lives right now. It's hope in the midst of hopelessness.

God rest ye merry gentlemen. Let nothing you dismay. Don't despair. There's reason for joy, right? Why? Remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day to save us all from Satan's power when we were gone astray. Oh, tidings of comfort and joy.

Tidings of comfort and joy because of what the child has come to do. Fear not then, said the angel. Let nothing you affright.

Why? Why? Why? Everything when I look around me tells me I should be afraid. I don't see him caring for me. Why should I not be afraid in the midst of this?

[29 : 47] This day is born a Savior of a pure virgin bright to free all those who trust in him from Satan's power and might. Oh, tidings of comfort and joy.

The comfort and joy coming maybe in a place you didn't expect it. Tidings of comfort and joy. What feels like a death blow to you in your life is a bruise of the heel.

There's one who's come to save us from Satan's power and might. Therein is comfort and joy and hope.

Comfort and joy and hope that doesn't disappear when things go bad. Comfort and joy and hope that is actually there when the walls have closed in and there's no hope and no light in life.

Comfort and joy and hope because we have a risen and exalted Savior who's alive, who's at work, who lives forever and who loves forever as our everlasting Father.

[30 : 55] Where do you look for hope when life is a dead end? Do you believe in eternal life but keep it on the shelf for after this life ends?

It'll matter then. Does having an everlasting Father never impact your pain? What do you do when the walls of life are closing in?

I say to you this morning, cry out. Pray that the mighty God would intervene. Plead the desires of your heart before Him. Your Father loves to hear it. He loves to help.

But find your hope. Not in the immediate removal of pain, distress, but in the everlasting Father whose commitment is always unchanging, whose protection is absolutely unailing, and whose love is amazingly unending.

Let's pray to Him. Father, we don't know love like that. It's hard for us to imagine someone who would never let us down.

[32 : 07] In our pride, it's hard for us to imagine someone who would allow us to hurt and actually know what's best for us. Who would let us down, but in that moment actually know what's best for us and be caring for us.

Father, would you humble our hearts? Might we trust you, Jesus, to be a Father who cares for us, not just in the big moments, in every moment of life and forever, who will never, ever stop loving us. Give us great joy and comfort because of that this Christmas. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.

Program. Thank you. Thanksgiving.