

Sermon Series: The Names of Our Savior

Sermon: Everlasting Father

Text: Isaiah 9:6

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Introduction: I noticed it first in the 60's and had to deal with it directly in the late 80's. A number of liberal churches that had been affected by the Feminist Movement started asking its members to recite the Lord's Prayer (as it is called) saying: "Our Mother which art in heaven." I refused on a number of grounds, but mostly because God is referred to almost exclusively in masculine terms. Even his angels who are mostly portrayed as feminine or female are never talked of in those ways in Scripture. The whole discussion is really quite silly in some ways because God is Spirit and has no specific gender. It is also obvious to most of us today that the Kingdom of God is a spiritual reality only expressed in physical ways. His rule is shown to others through our relationship with the *Everlasting Father*.

I do not think it should be at all confusing to think of our Savior, Jesus, who is called Son of God, also as our *Everlasting Father*. A little over four years ago my father died. About 35 years ago I became a father. Back then I became both a father and a son. I was still one person but I had different roles and relationships.

Because I know Isaiah had no feud with the feminists, let's talk about what I think he was trying to communicate about Our Savior and God, Jesus Christ. He was trying to relate to us the characteristics of the Christ (Messiah). I want to address two characteristics that might naturally come from the biblical concept of *Everlasting Father*.

Isaiah 9:6 (NIV) ⁶For 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.

Isaiah says that we all need a:

I. Permanent Father

The idea of an *Everlasting Father* is certainly different from our natural experiences. Many of us have already lost our earthly fathers. For others there is a limited amount of time remaining.

Growing up, my relationship with my dad was varied. He was sometimes the hero and example - while at other times I was afraid of him, especially when I misbehaved.

Dad worked at Hobart Corporation in Troy, Ohio probably about 10 miles from where we lived in Piqua. He was a timekeeper for years, and his shift began at 6:00 AM. He would eat breakfast at 5:00 AM, and I would, many mornings, join him for a bowl of Cheerios - just to have a little time with my dad. My relationship warmed over the years, but four years ago I had to say “see you later.”

I had my father for over 80 years. Not everyone is so blessed.

TEENS & TODDLERS: Children Without Fathers Statistics (internet article)

**63% of youth suicides are from fatherless homes (US Dept. Of Health/Census)
– 5 times the average.**

**90% of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes
– 32 times the average.**

**85% of all children who show behavior disorders come from fatherless homes
– 20 times the average. (Center for Disease Control)**

**80% of rapists with anger problems come from fatherless homes
—14 times the average. (Justice & Behavior, Vol 14, p. 403-26)**

**71% of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes
– 9 times the average. (National Principals Association Report)**

**75% of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers come from fatherless homes
– 10 times the average. (Rainbows for All God’s Children)**

**70% of youths in state-operated institutions come from fatherless homes
– 9 times the average. (U.S. Dept. of Justice, Sept. 1988)**

**85% of all youths in prison come from fatherless homes
– 20 times the average. (Fulton Co. Georgia, Texas Dept. of Correction)**

Clearly, fathers represent a lot more than just a paycheck to a child; they represent safety, protection, guidance, friendship, and someone to look up to.

The wonderful fact about my “Everlasting Father” is that he:

A. Is available always

The Israelites of Isaiah’s day saw judges replaced by the monarchy, but these kings were still temporal. They all died. God provides an everlasting parent - One who cares. Jesus is the perfect King for a perfect Kingdom.

Isaiah 26:4 (NIV) ⁴Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.

Isaiah 57:15 (NIV) ¹⁵ For this is what the high and lofty One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Jesus makes it clear to his disciples that he will not leave them as orphans (**John 14:18**) to fend for themselves. God established an eternal Kingdom at the advent of Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Messiah was, is, and is the “Coming One” (**Revelation 1:8**); He has always been.

Our *Everlasting Father* is always available.

Unlike our earthly fathers, our *Everlasting Father*:

B. Never dies

For all of us who will die, we need an undying Lord. We need an *Everlasting Father* who never dies. We need Jesus Christ who provides eternal life.

As Christians, and thus children of an Everlasting Father, we are promised life everlasting.

John 11:25-27 (NIV) ²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” ²⁷“Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”

Life is only worth living if God is present and available. This is unlike hell which is also eternal, yet where God is completely absent.

“As human beings we know time as a passing of unrepeatable events in the course of which everything passes away--including ourselves. As human beings, we also know occasions when we stand outside the passing of events and glimpse their meaning. Sometimes an event occurs in our lives (a birth, a death, a marriage--some event of unusual beauty, pain, joy) through which we catch a glimpse of what our lives are all about and maybe even what life itself is all about, and this glimpse of what ‘it’s all about’ involves not just the present but the past and future too.

Inhabitants of time that we are, we stand on such occasions with one foot in eternity. God, as Isaiah says (**57:15**), ‘inhabiteh eternity’ but stands with one foot in time. The part of time where he stands most particularly is Christ, and thus in Christ we catch a glimpse of what eternity is all about, what God is all about, and what we ourselves are all about too.” - Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking*, p. 27

Without our *Everlasting Father*, all of life is meaningless, pointless, and empty.

Everyone needs a:

II. Proper Father

Our *Everlasting Father* does not desert us and does everything for our good. He is the One on whom we can depend no matter what. Our *Everlasting Father* is always for us and with us.

Romans 8:35-39 (NIV) ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither 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.

Our “Proper Father” always:

A. Protects

My father was big and strong especially in his youth. He was just like his father who I was told could hold 100 lbs. bags on each arm straight out in front of him. But there are more important things than being physically strong. My earthly father also taught us about God. We had family devotions. We were always at church functions - and no I never resented or hated that time because it helped me to know my *Everlasting Father*. Dad showed me how to give to the church and those less fortunate. I got most of my clothes from Goodwill and the Salvation Army because we could not afford the best of things. Yet I saw my father, on more than one occasion, take sacks of food to people who were having a hard time.

Proverbs 2:6-8 (NIV) ⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. ⁷ He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, ⁸ for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.

For years my father protected me and our family physically *and* spiritually. While not perfect, my dad’s name was associated with integrity. While he was dying from complications that came up after colon-cancer surgery, he was completely unafraid. He had faith in God who always protects his own.

Jesus’ prayer for his 1st century disciples is no less true for us who dwell in the 21st century: **John 17:11 (NIV)** ¹¹I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one.

Our Everlasting Father is proper in his provision. He:

B. Provides

He provides for our needs...He certainly does not give us everything we desire because that would not be helpful. He does see that our needs are met. We know God takes care of the needs of birds and the lilies of the field (**Matthew 6:26ff.**). We also recognize he cares even more about us.

The *Everlasting Father* has given all his children gifts **for the needs of others.**

I Peter 4:10-11 (NIV) ¹⁰Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

The *Everlasting Father* provides:

discipline... This is an indication that he cares about us and how we might turn out. It is the uncaring parent that provides no boundaries for behavior, no consequences for wrong actions, and no good example of what the *Everlasting Father* wants and expects. These are the parents who send their children to church, but don't go themselves. These are the parents who say "do as I say, not as I do." A good parent does NOT deprive his children of opportunities to meet Jesus, by asking them what *they* want to do.

Hebrews 12:8-11 (NIV) ⁸If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. ⁹Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! ¹⁰Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Discipline shows you truly care for your children. It says they have:

worth... The *Everlasting Father* gave up his only Son to show us how much He thought we were worth. Even though growing up I may not have had all the best this world offers, I was rich. I had an earthly father who provided for me, and more importantly I had an *Everlasting Father* who provided everything I needed. He said I was worth everything to Him.

"When one sees that God's fatherhood is such that it does not impose itself upon its children but rather sacrifices itself for them, it becomes plain that 'everlasting fatherhood' must be of that sort." - Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, Vol. I, pp. 247-248

The Proper Father and *Everlasting Father*:

C. Loves always

Karl Barth's simple definition of God was "the One who loves."

It must have been difficult for my father to love some days when I did not obey, when I defied him, when I didn't try, when I tried to bargain or get out of doing the harder things.

It is also hard for me to understand how my *Everlasting Father* continues to love me some days, most days, really any days. All I know is: He does!

Christmas is coming! Toys deteriorate and many do not survive even December, but the gift of Jesus will be with us forever. Parents die -- usually before their children, although tragically not always, but everyone eventually dies. "Nothing lasts forever" so goes the saying. Relationships fade or fracture, health doesn't remain the same, even strength wains, but God, Jesus - the *Everlasting Father* is always there, always strong, always full of love for us. He alone perfectly defines the kind of love Paul describes to the Church!

[1 Corinthians 13:4-7 \(NIV\)](#) ⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

But make no mistake:

Conclusion: Not everyone has God as their Father. He is not into forced adoptions or coerced relationships. It is only when a person recognizes and accepts God's offer to father them that they can become children of God (i.e., his disciples). "God seeks people, not because he is their Father, but because he would become their Father." - George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 84

The Lord is willing to adopt anyone. Jesus is not an historical person, long-gone from the scene. He is still ever present, alive and waiting to have a relationship with you. He wants you back where you belong, in his care.

The past event of Calvary continues to have an impact on us because our God, Abba Father, raised Jesus from the dead and that is why we call him *Everlasting Father*. Jesus was, is, and is coming in the future to gather his family. I hope you will decide to be a part of that eternal family - even today.