

"NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES: EVERLASTING FATHER."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden

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Text for the Sermon: Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 63:16; Psalm 90:2-4; 103:13

Introduction.

Remember when you were a child and you got really scared. What did you want or need most? Your dad and mom. They were your source of security and safety.

In a dark and scary world filled with evil and tragedy and death, what do we need most? Not some ancient philosophy, not some bronze statue, not some man-made religion. What we need most is a personal God who cares and who shows He cares by coming to us, by entering our broken world, by telling us the truth and pointing the way out of the disaster created by our sin and rebellion.

We need a God with skin on. We need a God in whom we can be truly safe and secure in the face of all of lives harms and dangers.

Newtown, CT is exactly why Jesus came down from heaven to earth.

Newtown, CT is a picture of the sinfulness of sin and of how desperately we all need a Savior from the power and destruction and bondage of our sin.

And not just a Savior, but a suffering Savior who knows exactly what it's like to be us and go through what we go through. We need a Savior who knows the horror of murderous acts, who knows the hatred of hearts turned against Him, who knows the pain of death.

Politicians will not solve our problem, more police will not solve our problem, better gun control laws will not solve our problem, better education will not solve our problem. This sinful world cannot provide us with any solutions. That has to come from somewhere else outside this world. The only remedy for sin and evil is a suffering and crucified and risen Savior.

A lot of people are going to say a lot of foolish things in the next days and weeks. But mark my words, if they go on and on and never use the words sin and evil and wickedness and repentance and Savior and Jesus Christ, then their words are worthless.

No one else on earth can help us the way Jesus can help. No one else on earth can love us the way He loves us. No one else on earth has promised what He has promised and backed it up with His power over sin and death and Satan. Nothing but the blood of Jesus can save us. Nothing.

We should grieve with those who grieve. Like Rachel weeping for her children. But the King Herods of the world don't have the last word. God has the last word. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth.

We must all humble ourselves before a very personal God who cares and is intimately involved in all that happens in our lives. Our title for this morning reveals to us the personal side of God.

Last week's title, Mighty God, stirred up quite a bit of controversy. This week's title, Everlasting Father, stirs up a bit of confusion. Calling this child God was scandalous unless He really was divine. Calling this Son who is given, Father, creates more misunderstanding. How can the Son be the Father?

Everlasting Father

Our text easily divides into three parts, Everlasting, Father, and Everlasting Father.

Everlasting

This strikes us as a confusing contradiction. How can an infant be infinite?

But this title must naturally follow from the last. What is divine is eternal. That is the definition of divinity, of being God. God is that being that has been around before all other beings. If this child is divine, then this child is also eternal.

Psalm 90 captures two aspects of God's eternal nature, that He is without limit or boundaries; and that He can see all of time equally clearly all the time.

Psalm 90:2, 4 Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
4 For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past,
or as a watch in the night.

God is without limit. He is far greater than anything He has made. The vastness of the universe is not to reveal to us our smallness and insignificance. The vastness of the universe is meant to reveal to us the magnificent, unbounded, greatness of God. He holds the entire universe in the palm of His hand.

Billions of light years of expanse filled with hundreds of billions of galaxies is no more than a Lego set to God, or a 2000 piece puzzle.

God has no beginning, no end, and no succession of moments in time. Because our finite minds are bound by time we cannot comprehend what it is even like for God to be above and beyond time and yet still see time and the events that unfold in our human history. God has a kind of existence and experience things totally differently from ours.

We will always experience reality as a succession of moments. Even eternity for us will be a succession of moments and years and millennia. God sees all time equally vividly all the time. He sees the beginning and the end and everything in between all at once.

God never learns something new and God never forgets something old. His knowledge of everything is perfect and complete.

For us over time our memories fade, some things are forgotten entirely. Not so with God. God remembers all the events of the past thousand years with the same clarity that we remember what we had for breakfast this morning.

God is the eternal I Am, and Jesus said the same thing about Himself. “Before Abraham, I am” (John 8:58).

Colossians 1:15-17 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Jesus is everlasting. You never hear someone refer to Jesus as the late Jesus Christ, or the deceased Jesus Christ. He lives. He lives today. He lives forever. He is forever the foundation of our hope and of our comfort and of our life.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

He is everlastingly the same. He cannot change, He can never leave us or forsake us. He can no more do that than He can cease to exist.

As an everlasting king, Jesus’ kingdom and reign is an everlasting reign.

We know from history that no nation and no government on earth is permanent. They rise and fall, some of them with a great suddenness. All over the earth today we hear news of how fragile governments are and how quickly leaders can fall from power.

Only one government, only one authority will stand. Only the power of God is invincible and eternal.

We must not fall prey to hopeless thinking, to looking at the present and concluding that the Church of Jesus Christ is impotent or that the Word of God is powerless in the face of an encroaching secular culture. Appearances are not reality. And in weakness there is great power.

In the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary:

Luke 1:32-33 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

Not only is He everlasting and eternal, He is the father of eternity, the author of eternity.

Father.

This strikes us as a another confusing contradiction. First, how can an infant be infinite and second, how can a son be a father? Let’s beware of confusion and of worse, of heresy. As our creeds and confessions are very clear to point out, in the Trinity, Jesus is the Son of God, the Son of the Father. The Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father. Though they are always and eternally One, yet they are distinct persons.

Our text is not talking about positions and titles within the Trinitarian relationship. It’s not talking about Jesus’ relationship to the Father. Rather our text is talking about the relationship of the Son to us.

This Son who is born to be King functions like a father to his children. He acts like a father.

The word father is meant to communicate a quality about Jesus and it's meant to describe the nature of His relationship to His people. This is why I added that extra Isaiah and Psalm text.

Psalm 103:13 As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

He is that eternally existing being who is also a tender, loving, caring, compassionate, wise counselor, guide, guardian, teacher, trainer, provider and protector.

He feels affection and compassion for his children and He uses His divine power as Mighty God for all eternity to do good to His people, to His children.

For those of us who struggle for a positive father image here is one who is worthy of the name. You can have perfect security in a love relationship with your heavenly Father.

All of us are handicapped in some way because none of us had perfect fathers. All temporal fatherhood is tainted by sin. All of us carry father wounds from our sinful human fathers. Some of us are much more deeply wounded than others, some of us have been abused or neglected or abandoned by our earthly fathers. Some of us have been deeply hurt by that person who gave us life and should have loved us more than anyone else.

It's hard for some of us to relate to the idea of a loving heaven father.

Remember when Scripture records the words of God the Father to Jesus at His baptism and again on the Mount of Transfiguration, "You are my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased."

That is the kind of father God is. He is present, He is not silent, He verbally expresses not just His love, but His delight in His Son. Jesus says the same thing to us. He expresses His love and delight toward us in both His words and actions.

Do you fathom how much God loves His children? Do you have any clue what it means to know and love a God who has revealed to us that He relates to us as a Father?

Everlasting Father.

So the two terms taken together mean that the Messiah is a father to us and He is eternally a father to us. Now and forever He views us as His children, He loves us and cares for us, He provides for us and supplies all our needs, He takes the initiative toward us and leads us and guides us like a good shepherd with His sheep.

From before the foundations of the earth He has known us and loved us and planned good purposes for us.

The first title reveals the Messiah's wisdom, the second title reveals the Messiah's power. This title reveals the Messiah's heart, His heart of compassion, comfort, tenderness and love. He is a personal God, a Father to His people.

Application and conclusion.

Allow me a few applications by way of conclusion.

Christianity is not like all the other religions of the world. You can't lump them all together with Christianity. No other religion in the world has a God who is both infinite and personal.

The gods of ancient Greek and Roman mythology were definitely personal, often interacting with humans, but they were not infinite. They had weaknesses and flaws and moral failures, and would rise and fall from heaven.

Deism and pantheism portray God as infinite, but impersonal, uncaring, too far removed from our world to be personally involved in it.

Islam's god is believed to be infinite, but he would never dare to touch earth or come down to us. That is a sacrilege and an abomination to the Muslims. Their god is nothing like a father, he is distant and angry, full of wrath.

Jesus is the Father of Christianity. Jesus is the founder of our faith. He is the author and finisher of our faith, the foundation and building block. He is the father of our redemption, of our salvation and of our glorification.

Jesus is the author of everlasting life. Eternal life is found only through relationship with Jesus.

Through Adam this planet has been populated. Through Christ heaven is populated.

Without Jesus we have no eternal life in heaven, and without Jesus we are not children of the Father. No man comes to the Father except through Jesus.

What is the value of a long life without Christ? No matter how good it is, it is too fleeting and too short to count for anything. He who does not consider eternal things is a fool. People talk about being relevant and being authentic. The only truly relevant things and the only truly authentic things are eternal.

Do you have Jesus as your everlasting father?

The Jews boast that they have Abraham as their father, but it does them no good if they don't have God as their Father. You can be related to godly people, you can have a saint for a mother and an apostle for a father, but it won't matter one bit.

As the old saying goes, God has no grandchildren, only children. Is God your Father and are you His child? Do you have the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption?

Jesus said we must be born again. Nicodemus was confused by that. How can we reenter our mother's womb? But Jesus said:

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Have you simply and humbly submitted and surrendered your life to Jesus and asked Him to forgive your sins and to give you faith in Him to be your Lord and Savior.

John 1:12 To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Are you trusting in Jesus who is the Father of Eternity? Are you trusting Him for plans and purposes, are you trusting Him for the plans and purposes and life of your spouse and children and grandchildren? As I ask at baptism, are you ready to accept God's will for your life and your spouse's life and your children's life, whatever that will may be?

He is the Everlasting Father, do you know that as a believer you are eternally secure in Him? No one can take you out of His hand. He provides for you in the temporal and in the eternal.

He has given us life, He sustains our life and provides for us, He care about us and all these things will be true forever.

Psalms 103:13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.