

FIVE FORKS BRETHERN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 9:6; Psalm 103:8-17

DATE: 2019-12-15

Place: Auditorium

SUBJECT: Names of Jesus

Series: Advent

THEME: The Father Heart of God

SERMON: “Everlasting Father”

Introduction (Credit Jim Nicodem)

There is a term that has become popular recently called “branding.” People and companies ‘brand’ themselves so that when their name is heard certain characteristics come to mind. You may not agree with these, but this is what the company wants you to think. For example:

Starbucks – high quality coffee and an experience

IBM – problem-solving on a global scale

Walmart – convenient and low-priced etc.

Lebron James – quality and drive

So, in Isaiah 9, as Isaiah speaks to a nation, a people, once proud and secure and prosperous, but now defeated, broken, lost, and confused – a people to whom it seemed at one time, experienced nothing but blessing and good things from their God – but now their God seemed absent and silent, Isaiah offers hope. He offers the hope of a new deliverer, or Savior, a Messiah, an Anointed One, whom they believed would restore them and their nation to its previous status and prosperity.

To do this he uses **names (series title slide)** that invoke certain images of this deliverer. These are the names we are considering this advent season. These names refer to baby Jesus. So far we have looked at “Wonderful Counselor,” “Mighty God” and today we consider “Everlasting Father”.

The name “Everlasting Father” invokes the characteristic of **‘relationship’** – a parent-child relationship. We will consider that in a moment but first let’s consider the word:

Everlasting

I'm not sure what image 'everlasting' brings to your mind but as a child for me, it was not an exciting image. When I heard 'everlasting' I thought of:

Church services that seemed to last forever, particularly the sermon
I thought of the **school semester**, when I couldn't wait till term break
I thought of how long it took to **wash the dishes**, when I wanted to go out and play with my friends. Everlasting – was not a very positive image for me.

I also thought of **eternity**, a rather obscure and confusing idea in my mind. It was something never ended. It just kept going and going, like the road trip to get to vacation. So for me as a child, everlasting did not invoke many positive images.

But that has changed as I've come to understand and experience more of life. When I was young, and I think I had a great, fun, exciting childhood, without a care in the world. I thought this is how life would always be. My family and friends were always there, always together and always would be, or so I thought.

Then as I began to **lose loved ones** and friends, either through moving away and then some by death, I began to recognize that some precious things in life were not as permanent as I had once thought. I began to experience the pain and hurt of those lost relationships. And I longed for a time when I would not have to experience the loss or feel that pain. **You** may have felt this pain or are feeling right now, because of losing someone in your life. Endings and loss hurt.

I also came to discover that in fact we were created, as human beings in God's image, we were created for commitment and permanence and faithfulness that did not end. We were created for everlasting relationships. And something that lasted a long time, became a more precious idea to me.

You may know I love to buy tools. One of the major factors I look at when researching a tool is the length of the warranty. If this **power saw** offers me a three year warranty and the other power saw only offers a one-year warranty, I will almost always choose the tool with a longer warranty. Why?

The length of warranty is meant to convey the perception, that this tool is reliable. It can be trusted. It will last. The people who created it believe in their work. They did not cut corners. They used quality parts. They are willing to stake their reputation on it. They will stand behind it. When I find a tool that is stamped – lifetime warranty – now we're really talking.

All of these speak to **permanence, longevity, trustworthiness, and value**. These are characteristics that you and I long for and in fact need in our lives, particularly in our relationships.

So as God reveals God's plan for the Israelites, at a time when they felt separated from God, God uses the word, 'everlasting.' In the context of Isaiah 9, everlasting describes the duration of the relationship God has with people through the coming Messiah, Jesus.

Jesus' name is **Everlasting**. It refers to his **eternal nature**, the very nature of God. That is, we are to understand that this Jesus, who will come as a new born baby, has in fact existed for all time, and will continue to exist and in fact rule for all time – this baby is God.

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, (referring to Jesus) and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Baby Jesus has always existed. Then in:

Revelation 11:15

**“The kingdom of the world has become
the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah,
and he will reign for ever and ever.”**

Baby Jesus will always exist and be sovereign. He will always rule and be in control. That is his nature.

Everlasting also speaks to the **permanence of his relationship with people**. Commitment and permanent relationship is part of God's and Jesus' nature. And God has placed that same desire for commitment and permanence in us.

The Bible expresses this idea with the term **covenants** – agreements – between God and people.

Genesis 17:7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God...

Deuteronomy 7:9 Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.

So when Isaiah says His name shall be called '**Everlasting** Father', he is speaking about a permanent relationship Jesus desires to have with every one of us. This is a relationship that he will not break or leave or discontinue. He is committed to it.

In a world that is inundated with relationships that do not last for one reason or another, where commitment is a fleeting dream rather than a reality, Isaiah is introducing us to someone, Jesus, who will be there forever. You can count on it. He will not abandon you, or leave you, or betray you. This is the baby – Eternal God - who came, was born and grew up and lived among us and wants to be in a relationship with you. Is that good news or what?

Jesus told a parable to illustrate the everlasting commitment of God to God's people. You may be familiar with the story commonly called:

The Prodigal Son from Luke 15

A son leaves home and takes his inheritance and squanders it all and becomes a complete embarrassment to the family, by all cultural standards. At rock bottom he finally comes to his senses and decides to return home, but will ask to be just a servant, no longer feeling worthy to be considered a son. We will pick up the story at verse 20.

²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

You notice that although the son does not consider himself worthy of continuing the same relationship with his father, the Father, never even considers that the young man is no longer a son. This is the everlasting nature of the relationship Jesus desires with each one of us. When we don’t expect to be welcomed by God, God gives his love extravagantly. Are you longing for a welcome home like that?

Now let’s say more about the second part of the name Isaiah gives Jesus. Isaiah uses the parent/child relationship term **“Father.”** Everlasting **Father.**

Let me acknowledge that for some among us, the term father is not an endearing term. It may bring back thoughts of abandonment, tempers, rage, abuse of all kinds, hatred. If that has been your experience, let me say to you, I am so sorry. I grieve with you. I wish it could have been different. I wish I could provide some answers, some understanding, some comfort, some justice. Something to ease the pain.

But I want to talk to you about someone who is not like that. Perhaps the person I am going to describe is more like who your mother was, or the aunt or uncle or grandparent who raised you. If it will help you to use a term other than ‘father’ in your mind, feel free to do so.

To help us understand the Father nature of Jesus towards us, let me take us to:

Psalm 103 A psalm of David.

Vs 13 connects the term “Father” and how God treats us.

**¹³ As a father has compassion on his children,
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;**

Then David describes the **Father heart** of God.

⁸ The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
⁹ He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
¹² as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

When it comes to God's love for sinful people, God has a **long fuse**, a **short memory**, a **thick skin**, and a **big heart**. Let's take a look at each of these.

Vs 8 describes God's patience with us: "The Lord is **slow to anger**..." He's got a **long fuse**. This is actually a quotation of something Moses had written some 500 years earlier.

While Moses was at the top of Mount Sinai talking with Almighty God, the people were having a party. These were people God had just delivered from slavery in Egypt. They were expressing their gratitude to God by worshiping an idol of a golden calf made from discarded jewelry. On top of that there were drunkenness and immorality, all things God does not like.

The Scripture says that when God saw this he was really angry. God told Moses to step aside so God could destroy the people." God said, "I'll start a new nation with you, Moses."

Moses fell on his face and asked God to change His mind. God agrees with Moses and changes his mind. He doesn't destroy them but he says, "I'm through with them. I won't destroy them, but I won't go with you any farther, Moses. You're on your own."

Again Moses pleads with God to reconsider. Once again, amazingly, God agrees.

Yes, God gets angry. But God puts up with a great deal before reaching his boiling point. God often puts up with hundreds of years of rebellion and disobedience before He has

had enough. And over and over again, the Bible tells us the reason God exercises great patience is that he's hoping we'll take advantage of this extension of his grace and turn from our sin, seek his forgiveness, and begin to obey him.

When I think of how patient Jesus was with his disciples when they didn't get it, I realize Jesus really does have a long fuse.

Yet most of us make the mistaken assumption that God's patience really means that he isn't that concerned about our disobedience. And so, we often abuse his patience. Thank God he's got a **long fuse**.

(short memory)

In verse 9 it says, "**He will not harbor his anger forever.**"

A man complained to his buddy that whenever he argued with his wife, she got 'historical.' His friend said, "You mean hysterical." He said, "No, historical. She always dredges up the past and reminds me of every time I've failed her. So I remind her of all the times she has failed me." That does not help resolve anything.

We do that with people sometimes, don't we? Remind them or ourselves of their past wrongs. We use phrases like, "You always..." or, "You never..." bringing up the past. What's the phrase? "I'll forgive but I won't forget." Somehow thinking that is justifiable. We all seem to have a long memory when it can be used to our advantage in an argument.

Father God, on the other hand, will not harbor his anger forever. God chooses to have a **short memory**. **Psalm 130:3** tells us that if God kept a detailed record of our sins, none of us would ever be able to stand before him. **In Isaiah 57:16**, God says, "**If I kept throwing up in your face, your past failures, your spirit would grow faint before me. You would wither up and die.**"

Can you imagine this scenario? I go to God for forgiveness because I've unleashed another torrent of harsh words on one of my kids. I say, "I did it again, God. Oh, please forgive this sin and give me the strength to manage my mouth." And God says, "You did it again?"

That's putting it mildly. This is the tenth time you've done it this week. And, I stop forgiving after five. Sorry, you've already used up your quota." Is that how God operates with us? No!!

Thank goodness, when I seek his forgiveness, he doesn't keep on accusing. He doesn't keep on harboring his anger toward me. He chooses to have a short memory where forgiven sins are concerned.

You may remember the story of a sinful woman, likely a prostitute, who came and anointed Jesus' feet with perfume. Everyone else in the room chose to remember her past life and hold it against her. But Jesus granted her forgiveness, choosing not to hold her past sin against her. Jesus chose to have a short memory. Lets continue.

Verse 10 says, "**He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.**"

If God punished us every time we deserved it, we would constantly be receiving deserved punishment. Every time we turned around, God could be punishing us for a selfish attitude or hurtful words or prideful spirit or materialism or indifference to the needs of others or something. The Bible word for this **thick skin** of God's is **forbearance**. – that is **God's restraint and tolerance of our bad behavior**. The Bible says, "**Love covers a multitude of sins.**"

There are a lot of things that God never brings up to us because he's chosen to not see them. They are hidden in Christ. This is what I mean by "Love covers a multitude of sins."

Suppose there was a standing rule at your house – "No cool-aide in living room," - because of the new carpet. Then your child spills their juice on the carpet again, even after you have warned them and cautioned them. And you choose to just clean it up without punishing them. You have shown the forbearance of God. In this case, love is covering a multitude of sins. I know, you are probably thinking, "Are you just going to let them get away with disobedience? Yes. I am. Because God does that for me and you – lots of times every day. God has a thick skin.

I think of how Jesus responded to Peter, just a few days after Peter had denied even knowing Jesus. And Jesus had warned Peter that he would. By the lake, Jesus reinstates Peter with no apparent reprimand or consequence. Jesus has a thick skin.

If God doesn't give you what you think you deserve, be grateful. God's got a long fuse, a short memory and a thick skin.

He also has a big **big heart**.

Verses 11 and 12 say, "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

The psalmist tells us that when we ask God to forgive our sins, he removes them as far as the east is from the west. Do you know how far that is? Truth is, it can't even be measured.

If you ever wondered how serious God is about dealing with your sin because God loves you, he has all sorts of metaphors in Scripture to describe what he desires to do with your sin – not you, your sin.

Micah 7:19 says, "He will trample it under foot and throw it into the deepest part of the sea."

Isaiah 38:17 says he'll put it behind his back where he can't see it.

Isaiah 43:25 says he'll blot it out. (Like you wipe the dirt out of a bowl when cleaning it)

Isaiah 44:22 says he'll sweep it away just like a morning mist that gets burned off by the sun.

Jeremiah 31:34 says God will refuse to remember it; he'll just block it out of his memory.

I am reminded of Jesus going to the cross without resisting. Forgiving those who were mocking him and killing him, even while they were in the process – because he loved his enemies. What a big heart!

Have you ever experienced that sort of forgiveness? How big of a heart does the

Heavenly Father have? It can't even be measured.

In ten days we will celebrate the birth of a child. This child is 'Everlasting Father.'

This morning God wants you to bask in the grace of his forgiveness. He wants you to come to him, confess your sin, turn to him and trust in Jesus Christ. Allow the work that Christ did on the cross to be applied to your account. You can be forgiven, cleansed, and filled with his Spirit.

Jesus really is an Everlasting Father – with a long fuse, a short memory, thick skin, and a big big heart. And he wants an unending relationship with you. While I pray, you talk to God and ask God to forgive your sin and restore a Father/child relationship with you. If you want to speak with me more about this, please contact me this week.

PRAY

This week, may you pursue a deepening relationship with Jesus, the Christ, knowing that he is pursuing a deeper relationship with you.