

**ADVENT - Week 4**  
**Christmas Gathering**  
**Everlasting Father**  
**12/19/21**

### Introduction

**Tim. Pastor. Merry Christmas!! New - Connect Cards. Luke 15. Pray.**

**Meaning in Names.** I didn't realize until Lindsay and I found out we were expecting our first child how much goes into deciding on a name for a child. That's one of the things we don't cover in our pre-marital counseling meetings - the difficulty of choosing a name for your kids.

There are all these rules no one ever tells you about.

- For example, if either of you have ever dated someone with a certain name, throw that out the window.
- If a name reminds you of someone your wife didn't get along with in middle school, also out the window.

Then there are all these other questions you have to wrestle through:

- Do we name them after a family member or not?
- Can we name them after our favorite Star Wars character? That allowed?
- A Bible character or not? (My parents became Christians right before I was born, which is very much reflected in my name - Timothy John. You don't get much more Christian than Timothy John. I had to be a pastor, no other option for me.)

Then you have to consider how the first name is going to sound with the last name....I stumbled upon an article this week that had a list of unfortunate first and last name combinations. Actual people:

- **Christopher Peter Bacon. (Chris P. Bacon)**
- **Eileen Wright**
- **Helen Back**

→ **Names are important and they can reveal a lot about us.**

**So, when God promises His people in the book of Isaiah that He would send a Messiah, a Savior, what we're celebrating in this season of Advent and Christmas, He describes Him by 4 very important, very powerful names that reveal a lot about who He is and who He will be.**

**Isaiah 9:6 - And His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

**4 names that, as we've seen these past few weeks, directly address the problems we're facing and bring us lasting and true hope.**

**Jesus is....**

1. **Wonderful Counselor** - He brings peace between us and ourselves. He brings healing and redemption to our souls.
2. **Mighty God** - He's bringing peace between God and creation. He's redeeming the physical stuff of our bodies and our world.
3. **Prince of Peace** - He's bringing peace between us and each other. Shalom - rightness. He's redeeming, saving, forgiving, welcoming the oppressed and oppressor. He's tearing down the chains of injustice and restoring our relationships as humans.

Hope has a Name. His name is Jesus. Our Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Prince of Peace.

This week, our final week, Christmas Gathering → **Everlasting Father.**

A great paradox of Christmas - a baby will be born in Bethlehem, and He will be an everlasting Father to all who call on Him.

### Everlasting Father

There's two promises wrapped up in this name of Jesus. One in the title itself - "Father". And one in the adjective - "Everlasting."

**Father** - Isaiah wasn't getting confused about the Trinity (Jesus, the Son of God, is not God the Father); he was saying something about Jesus' relationship to us. In his compassion and tenderness toward us, Jesus would be like a good father.

Kind, gentle, just the right amount of discipline and force, caring, affectionate, strong, protective. Everything we long for in a good father, Jesus is towards His children.

**Everlasting** - But not just temporarily. Not just occasionally. Not with an expiration date. He is the everlasting father. The eternal father. Right after this, in Isaiah 9:7 it says that Christ will reign forever. This welcome, affection, protection, invitation into the family - goes on forever. It's promised into eternity.

This is our hope this advent season. This season of waiting and longing:

**That Christ, our everlasting Father has come and is coming again.**

### Our Earthly Fathers

**Now here's the problem....for some of us, if we were to give hope a name, it would have nothing to do with being a father.**

Because the moment I say that Jesus has come to be an everlasting Father, chances are you are instantly drawn to start thinking about your earthly father.

- Study after study after study throughout the past 75 years have confirmed what we know to be true - **Our relationships to our earthly fathers have drastic implications for our views of God.**
- In fact, studies have shown that a person's relationship to their father is the single-most important factor of whether or not that child adopts the faith of their parents. Why?

**Because we often create a lens for the everlasting father, based on the characteristics and actions of our earthly father. We view God, based on how we view our dads.**

With all of the good, bad, and ugly.

Now we can definitely take this too far, we can turn dads into the scapegoat of our problems. We can ignore just how difficult being a father can be.... we can forget that there's a whole spectrum of good and bad, the majority of dads falling somewhere with a little bit of both.

**But even still, I think there are specific ways our earthly fathers can succeed or fail that have implications for how we view the everlasting father.**

#### **Never-satisfied Father:**

So for some of us, we grew up well aware of our dad's love for us. He told us all the time how proud he was, how delighted he was in us. You had a deep sense, maybe even now - that your dad was glad with you.

But for others of us, we lived with a **never-satisfied father**. Always pushing, always seems like he was dissatisfied with you. It never seemed to be good enough - even if you got all A's, or made the team, or accomplished the task. You learned to crave just one simple phrase that you never heard → "I'm proud of you." That's what your soul longs for. You just want to hear him say he's proud of you and that you did a good job. But it never seemed like enough.

**So we carry that onto God** - *He's never happy with me. He's always frustrated, always disappointed, always waiting for me to mess up so I can prove Him right.*

#### **Time-Bomb Father:**

For some of us, our dad was patient. Kind. Slow to anger. Gentle.

For others, our dads were a **ticking time-bomb**. It seemed like he was always upset, always ready to explode. If he had a hard day at work, the smallest thing would set him off. Maybe for some of you that turned abusive - verbally, physically, emotionally. You learned to live in fear of the next outburst, next tirade.

**So we carry that onto God** - *He's ready to lash out, ready to pour out all of his wrath and judgment and anger on me.*

#### **Emotionally-Distant Father:**

For some - our dads engaged with us emotionally. Asked us questions, pressed in on our hearts, our feelings, our emotions.

For others, we had an **emotionally-distant dad**. Maybe he was physically around, stable, consistent - he showed up to your games, your recitals, whatever. He was there physically, but he was never there emotionally. Emotionally unengaged and distant - to what you were feeling, how you were doing. Maybe he never hugged you, never said "I love you", never opened his heart to you.

**So we carry that onto God** - *He is cold and unavailable. The best he's got for us is a slow golf clap. He doesn't delight in us, doesn't take joy in us. He's there, but in a half-hearted aloof sort of way.*

#### **Absent Father:**

For some - our dads are still present in our lives. We're excited to see them in just a few days, spend time with them.

And yet still for some of us we had an absent father. For some, he was absent by choice. Maybe you were adopted or in a single-mother home. Maybe he left when you were little. For others, he was absent not by choice. He passed away and there were some pivotal moments when you really needed him, and he wasn't there.

**So we carry that onto God** - *He also isn't or won't be there. He will also abandon me when I need him the most.*

**And then we sit here on Christmas and we hear about Jesus, the hope of the world, descended into humanity 2,000 years ago to be an everlasting father for His people - an always present, never leaving, caring**

defender....and there's a longing in our hearts, because all we've experienced is never-satisfied, ticking time-bomb, emotionally distant and physically absent dad.

So we have a longing. A longing for the hope offered to us in Christmas. In the arrival of a Messiah. In Jesus as an everlasting father.

### Luke 15 - Prodigal God

But to see and receive this hope, we must look to the Scriptures and we must see and believe what it says about our ***Everlasting Father***.

And I would argue nowhere in Scripture is this name of Jesus more clear than in the story He tells of the Prodigal Sons in **Luke 15**. Let's look at it briefly together.

[Brief running commentary throughout, helping narrate what's happening in the story]

#### Luke 15:11-32 - Walkthrough

11 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. 13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. 14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' 20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

25 "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' 28 But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, 29 but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' 31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

## Jesus as the Everlasting Father - Gospel Presentation

Now, basically every time growing up I heard this story preached or taught in church, and really every time I read it for myself, the focus was on the two sons and how foolish they are.

And this is not a bad emphasis - for certainly the whole storyline of the Bible is trying to show us that we as humans are guilty of being one of these two sons. We are the prodigals in the story.

### ***For some of us, apart from God, we are the younger son:***

- We want the things of God without God.
- We rebel and run away from God.
- We try to run our own lives and wind up beat up, beat down, and destitute.
- We are lost in our sin and our shame.

### ***For some of us, apart from God, we are the older son:***

- We also reject God, stuck in our pride and arrogance.
- Stuck in what we think are our "good works", our ticket to heaven - all of the good things we've done.
- We too want the things of God without God, for we think our lives are just fine without Him.

Or maybe you see parts of yourself, like I do, in both sons.

**But what I want you to do tonight is to look past the sons, and look at the Father.**

**In case you missed it, the father is Jesus!**

Jesus is being accused, at the beginning of Luke 15, by self-righteous religious leaders mocking Him because He spends all his time with "sinners". He gets approached by older brothers accusing him of spending so much time hanging out with younger brothers.

And His response is to tell a story that shows his incredible heart, both for the people he's getting accused of being around, and his heart for the ones accusing.

**Jesus is the incredible, hard to fathom, running after and pursuing His kids, type of Father.**

### **To the younger son, the one who is outwardly rebellious, actively running away from Him:**

- He runs to greet him. He throws His arms around him and welcomes him home.
- He's not going to be a servant, he's in the family!
- He has the fattened calf killed, he throws a celebration!
- He thought his son was dead, but now he's back, he was lost but now he's found - there is a celebration to be had. There is rejoicing and celebrating that must take place.

### **To the older son, the one who is inwardly rebellious. The one who with his good deeds thinks he can earn favor, approval, and reward:**

- He leaves the party to go plead with Him.
- He loves him the same - "All that is mine is yours."
- He pleads with him to come and celebrate and feast as a son.

**This is the gospel of Jesus Christ on display. This is our everlasting Father!**

**This is the message of Christmas! This is what we are celebrating!**

God, in His great love for us, 2,000 years ago sent His Son Jesus on a rescue mission. To chase after the prodigals.

- The non-religious and outwardly rebellious younger brothers. Those of us running around looking to everything and everyone except for God to satisfy us. Being our own kings. Being our own rulers. Living life however we want in search of fulfillment, belonging, satisfaction, meaning - **Jesus came to save us.**
- The religious and inwardly rebellious older brothers. Those who think we earn right standing with God by how good we are, how religious we are, how often we go to church, how many good things we do to help others. Who think God welcomes us in because of our merit and our track record - **Jesus came to save us.**

To save both of those groups - from our sin and ourselves - Jesus comes. 2,000 years ago as a baby in a manger, to live a perfect life that we cannot, and die the death we deserve, and rise again 3 days later to welcome us as children into his family.

Christ has come....and Christ will come again, and all who trust in Him will spend eternity with Him as His children.

Jesus, in His grace and mercy and forgiveness and kindness - to wandering sons and daughters pleads with us → **come home! Come home.**

And do you know what all who trust in Jesus find, the hope of Christmas. The hope of the world → **An everlasting father.**

**Church, hear and believe this good news this Christmas. For all who have received Christ, He is an everlasting father:**

- Not a **never-satisfied dad**, but an everlasting father who in Christ is satisfied with you. Who, because of the sacrifice on the cross, says to you - "You are my beloved son (or daughter), with whom I am well pleased." Who declares over you that you are welcomed, forgiven, righteous.
- Not a **time-bomb dad**, but an everlasting father who Exodus 34 says is slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. Who is patient with you, and whose mercy and grace is new every morning. Who is not sitting there with his arms crossed waiting for you to mess up, but loves you with a forgiveness you cannot fathom.
- Not an **emotionally-distant dad**, but an everlasting father who according to Zephaniah 3:17 *delights over you with gladness and rejoices over you with loud singing*. Who longs to throw His arms around you and welcome you home.
- Not an **absent dad**, but an everlasting father who according to Hebrews 13:5 will never leave you or forsake you.

This is what is offered to all who trust in Jesus this Christmas. Adoption, welcome into the family of God.

**1 John 3:1-2 - See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.**

This is the offer to all who would or who have trusted in Christ → **We are in the family. We are sealed. We are adopted. We are welcomed forever.**

**Disney World + Conclusion**

Here's where I want to close:

**Disney World.** I remember a few years ago hearing a pastor tell a story about his adopted son that has just stuck with me ever since. Before they had adopted this little boy, the guy said that his son had been in one particular foster home. And this foster home was not a good living situation at all.

One of the things that would happen in this foster home, is that the family would be planning for a family vacation, and in order to get this boy they were fostering to behave and follow the rules they would tell him - if you don't behave, you're not coming with us on the vacation. It was a threatening technique.

And so the guy said that about 6 months after they had adopted their son, brought him into their family, they were planning a trip to Disney World. The whole family. Mom, dad, their biological son and daughter and their newly adopted son. And they were so excited, had been planning the trip for months, looking forward to it. Once in a lifetime memory making ordeal.

About two days before the trip, their son disobeys his mom, breaks a rule, gets in trouble, the whole nine-yards. The pastor really didn't think twice about it. Kids disobey, this happens, he was disciplined, learned the lesson, move on.

Fast forward, the morning of the trip. Everyone's all packed up and ready to go, the man goes to his son's room and the boy is sitting on the bed, empty bag on the floor, hasn't even started packing. Gotta leave for the airport in like an hour, what is happening?

And the guy said he went over, sat down on the bed, next to the boy, and said - "hey buddy, what's up, why aren't you packed, we're going to Disney, you've been so excited, (we're spending so much money!), what's going on?" And he said the kid started to cry. And he looked up at him, and through tears said, "I disobeyed, I broke the rules, I don't get to go on vacation anymore."

And he said he wrapped the boy up into his arms, looked down at him and said, "Look me in my eyes and listen to me. I'm your father, and you're my son and you're a part of this family. Everything that is ours, is yours. Where we go, you go. And that's never going to change."

Listen, I don't know what your dad did or didn't do.

I don't know who he was as a man or a father.

I don't know what he spoke over you or didn't speak over you.

I don't know how you're feeling about seeing him or not getting to see him this Christmas.

But here's what I know, you have a heavenly Father who delights in you, who loves you, who through Christ Jesus longs to call you His own. Who wants to be to you what your heart longs for - a perfect everlasting father. Would you trust in Him? Would you believe in Him? Would you let Him scoop you up in His arms and call you His own?

Would you let Him speak over you - **"I'm your father, and you're my child and you're a part of this family. Everything that is mine, is yours. And that is never going to change."**

That is the hope offered to us in Christmas.

Hope has a name....Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Prince of Peace. Everlasting Father.

Jesus the Messiah.

**Pray.**