

Everlasting Father

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Preacher: Alistair Chalmers

[0 : 00] Good evening everyone. I wish I could say it was great to see you here this evening because I can't see anyone. You are out there. I hope you haven't fallen asleep in this light. One of the things I love about Christmas is the carols that we sing and the amazing scriptures that we read and the amazing truths that we get to hear from churches at this time of the year.

But as Christmas is just around the corner, we would expect to see pictures of what Christmas is all about, wouldn't we? That's kind of the way things work. But sadly, in shop windows today, the things that we see most are signs like this, which say Christmas sale now on. Or you see displays of tons and tons of toys under Christmas trees.

And so you can imagine the shock on Thursday as my wife Sabina was walking past a shop in Cameron Toll and was taken aback because this particular shop didn't have any of these signs, but instead it had a nativity scene.

And there was a text box on that nativity scene which said this. We wish each of you a happy Christmas. Pictured here is the first nativity.

We remember the reason for the season, the birth of Jesus. Now nativity scenes, these are the pictures that we should be seeing around Christmas time, aren't they?

[1 : 20] Now you know what they look like. They look something similar to this. You have Mary and Joseph, baby Jesus who never actually seems to be crying, so I'm not sure how realistic that is. You see shepherds, you see wise men, animals hanging around in the background.

And they're all looking at this little baby in awe. And so naturally, when we think of the Christmas story, we think about the little baby, Jesus. But for the next few moments this evening, I want us to think about Jesus, but I don't want us to think of him as this little baby in a manger.

Instead, I want us to think about Jesus as our everlasting father. Now don't worry, I'm not going to play the game everlasting father versus Father Christmas, as tempting as that may be.

But in the book of Isaiah, in the Bible, in chapter 9, we see that Jesus is described as an everlasting father. This verse which is read out every Christmas time.

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.

[2 : 32] And this evening, I want us to think very briefly about the idea that Jesus is an everlasting father. Now the question that's probably running through your mind is, how can Jesus, this baby, be an everlasting father?

And secondly, what does everlasting father even mean? Because it's a bit of a strange phrase, we don't use it in everyday language, or at least I don't use it in everyday language. But the description that Isaiah is bringing out is that Jesus is our father forever.

Jesus is our father forever. Isaiah uses the word everlasting to show that Jesus is the son of God.

Jesus was with God in the beginning, as was read from John's gospel in chapter 1.

Jesus has no beginning. Jesus has no end. Jesus is everlasting. He has always been, and he will always be.

When the Bible speaks about father, it's usually referring to God, but not in this case. Instead, Isaiah is saying that Jesus is our father because he's showing us who Jesus is.

[3 : 47] It's not a name, but it's a description of what Jesus has done. So instead of using the term everlasting father, because it's a bit clunky maybe, I'm going to use the phrase that Jesus is our father forever.

But still, how can this little baby lying in a manger be described as our father forever? What did he do to be given that description? Well, just think for a few moments with me.

What are the two characteristics that we expect most from fathers today? I think to when a father brings up a small child, you'd expect him to love that child dearly, wouldn't you?

You'd expect him to forgive that child every time they disobey what he says. And I think those are the two most important characteristics in fathers, love and forgiveness.

But as many of you probably already know, this isn't a given in today's world. Maybe some of you didn't know your father. Maybe some of you didn't have a good father.

[4 : 53] Or maybe on the other hand, you had a great dad. And at this time of year, you're reminded just how much you miss him. But I think all of us can say that earthly fathers aren't perfect.

They all do things wrong. They show love, they show forgiveness, but it is tarnished by sin, by wrongdoings. But in Jesus, our father forever, we see perfect love and we see perfect forgiveness. So let's look at those two points. How do we see perfect love in Jesus? Well, I think we see true and perfect love in Jesus because his love is sacrificial.

Now, how many of you recognize this man? I would say a show of hands, but I can't actually see. So this man, for those of you who don't know, is Rick Moranis. Now, I was reading about him this week.

And he was an actor who was at the height of his career in the 90s. Some of the movies that he's in, just to name two of them, is Ghostbusters, the old Ghostbusters, the real good Ghostbusters.

[5 : 54] And Honey, I Shrank the Kids. So they're great movies. Go watch them this Christmas if you haven't seen them yet. But in 1997, sadly, Rick's wife passed away at a very young age.

And they had two small children. And Rick decided that he was going to walk away from his passion. He was going to walk away from his vastly growing, successful career so that he could be a stay-at-home dad.

Rick saw that his children needed him. And out of a sacrificial love for them, he walked away from Hollywood to be a dad. But the love that we see in Jesus is far more sacrificial than that.

See, we see true and sacrificial love in Jesus because he came down from heaven and was born in a manger. The very event that we have gathered here to celebrate this evening.

The Bible states that Jesus is the Son of God. That Jesus was in heaven with God in a place of glory and a place of honor. And out of perfect, sacrificial, unending love, he humbled himself and left that behind so that one day we could be exalted.

[7 : 10] He came and was born in an animal feeding trough to a poor family in an occupied land to save a people who would ultimately cry, crucify him and nail him to a cross.

That is true sacrificial love. And whilst Jesus was on earth, he loved people so much that he healed them. He taught them about their need to be forgiven by God.

He told them how they needed to be made right with God. And when they didn't listen, when they scoffed and they turned their back on him, he wept for them. As a father weeps for their child when they see them going down the wrong path in life.

So Jesus wept for mankind because they were rejecting their Savior. That is true and perfect love of a father forever.

He gave up his place in heaven to be humbled so that one day people could be exalted. That is true love. Jesus has compassion on his children, on those who fear him.

[8 : 18] And secondly, we see true and perfect forgiveness in Jesus. Now as many of you probably already know, my wife and I go to Vienna for Christmas.

That is where my wife is from. And we have some really, really good friends in Vienna. And we often go to their house for Christmas. And in their apartment, you sit on their couch and you can see in the corner, in the corner of their living room, they have this really nice, beautiful tree.

And it's so beautiful because it's decorated so elegantly. It's got lovely decorations. And some of those decorations are glass Christmas baubles. And the problem is, not the problem, the blessing is that they also have a two-year-old.

Yeah, the laugh says you know what's coming. So a few years ago, we were sitting on their couch and our little goddaughter, who was two at that time, she knew, and she was told many, many times, that she was not allowed to touch the Christmas tree, or even go near the Christmas tree, because of these glass Christmas baubles.

What would you expect a two-year-old to do when they hear that they're not allowed to do something? Exactly. So we were sitting on the couch, and the room is probably a little bit bigger

than this stage. So we're sitting here, and you see her going from there.

[9 : 34] And she starts inching her way over the room. And she gets closer and closer and closer. And her mother is sitting there going, Charlotte, no, no, no. But with every no, she gets closer.

With every no, she gets even closer. Until she's at the point where she knows she can touch the tree. And staring her parents down, she reaches out her little arm. And then she reaches out her little finger, and she touches her bobble.

Now what do you think her parents do? Well, of course, they take her, they explain the rule again, that you're not allowed to touch the tree. They tell her off, and as she cries, they comfort her, and they forgive her. And, as you know with any toddler, that wasn't the last time they had to do it.

I think three to five more times that evening. But they showed forgiveness. Now, if earthly, imperfect parents, like our friends, can show forgiveness time and time again, how much more can our Father forever?

As many of you, well, as all of you know, the nativity scene, the nativity story isn't the whole of Jesus' life. He didn't stay a baby.

[10 : 40] He grew up, taught people about the truths of God. He taught people about who they really were at their core. And he told people of their need to be forgiven of their wrongdoing, so that they could be made right with God.

See, the Bible teaches that mankind, every single one of us, is naturally sinful. Each and every one of us naturally rebels against God. We choose to reject God and live for ourselves.

We do things wrong, but Jesus, like our Father forever, Jesus offers us forgiveness so that we can be made right with God. And Jesus is the only one who can offer us true forgiveness, because only him, being the very Son of God, could take God's punishment for the sins of the world on the cross. Jesus shows true and perfect forgiveness because he died on the cross. Taking the punishment and wrath of God so that people can be offered the greatest gift in the world, the right to be called children of God.

In Jesus, our Father forever, we see true and perfect love, and true and perfect forgiveness that never, ever goes away. But in light of these truths, we have a question to ask.

[11 : 59] What does that make us? If Jesus is described as a Father forever, the one who shows true love, true forgiveness, then who are we? See, Isaiah doesn't give this description of Jesus with a question mark at the end.

He's not asking us if Jesus is a Father forever, but he's stating the fact. But that means that we have a decision to make. We choose, we get to choose whether or not we want Jesus to be our Father forever.

This Christmas, when you see the typical pictures of Jesus as a baby, which aren't wrong, they're great pictures to see, but I want you to think about Jesus as a Father forever.

And then ask yourself the question, well, if he's a Father forever, then who am I? And the decision that Christmas and Jesus offers us is this. Will you accept Jesus as your Father?

Receive his love and his forgiveness and believe in him? Or will you reject his offer to become a child of God? That's the decision that Jesus puts before us.

[13 : 08] When you think about a child and how they relate to their parents, what are the first two things you think of? Well, I think the two most obvious, or one most obvious and one maybe later on in life, is trust, which is the obvious one, and obedience, which comes later on in life.

And that's why when a child is crying, when a child is upset, they want to hold their parents' hand. There is nowhere safer in a child's mind than in the arms of a loving parent.

When a child's upset, when a child is scared, even hearing the voice of one of their parents can make them feel at ease. They have unfaltering trust in their parents.

Now, the obedience might take a wee while, especially if they're in their twos, threes, fours, five, six, seven, eight. We'll keep going with that. But as children get older, they find out that their parents have given them rules for a reason.

It's for their own good. And so they obey, obey eventually. And that is what it means to have Jesus as our father forever. That is what it means to be a child of God, to live a life in obedience to God's will, to live a life in utter surrender, submission and trust to our father, the one who knows us, the one who loves us, and the one who has given up everything so that we can be forgiven.

[14 : 40] As we think about the person of Jesus this year at Christmas, as we think, as we see the nativity scenes and the, these pictures of a manger, as we sing amazing carols with amazing lyrics,

remember who Jesus is.

Remember that he is our everlasting father who shows true and perfect love and true and perfect forgiveness. Jesus is the one who has given us the right to be called children of God.

Will you accept that invitation of Jesus? A modern version of the carol that we've already sung this evening, O Holy Night, says this. Come then to him who lies within the manger.

With joyful shepherds proclaim him as Lord. Let not the promised son remain a stranger. In reverent worship make Christ your adored.

Eternal life is theirs who would receive him. With grace and peace their lives he will adorn. Fall on your knees. Receive the gift of heaven.

[15 : 47] O night divine, O night when Christ was born. O night, O holy night when Christ was born. Let's not just remember Jesus once a year at Christmas.

But instead let's see him as he truly is. The son of God who came into the world to give us life. And life in its fullness. Let's pray together as we close.

Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for your son, Jesus Christ. We thank you that you sent him into this world so that mankind can have the greatest gift that is ever and will ever exist.

That we can have the forgiveness of our sins. And that we can be reconciled to you. Jesus, we pray that you would receive all of the glory this year.

Because you alone are worthy. Lord, we thank you that you humbled yourself and were born in Bethlehem. So that we, one day, will be exalted and live for an eternity with you, our Father, forever.

[16 : 57] Lord, we ask that you would bless us this Christmas time. And remind us of who it is that we are celebrating this year. Help us remember your son, Jesus Christ.

And it is in his mighty and powerful name that we pray. Amen.