

Everlasting Father

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Preacher: Alistair Chalmers

[0 : 00] It would be great if you could keep that passage open in front of you as we look at it this morning, but before we do that, let us pray together. Father, as we turn now to your word, we ask that the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts would be pleasing to you, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Now to say that 2020 has been a difficult year is probably the biggest understatement in the world. We've all had tough times. Many of us have felt lonely.

It has been hard for every single person for different reasons. And speaking with many people in our church, the physical darkness of our lovely Scottish winters doesn't seem to help much either. As the days get darker and darker, the difficulties of 2020 seem to get harder and harder. But celebrating Christmas in the middle of this darkness is actually incredibly fitting because it is in the context of darkness that this wonderful prophecy of Isaiah was first heard.

This prophecy that is read out in churches across all of our world in the run up to Christmas. Isaiah was a prophet, a man sent by God with a message to his people.

[1 : 24] And Isaiah was speaking in one of the darkest times in Israel's history. That's why it begins in verse 2 with the people were walking in darkness.

Because as Isaiah spoke these words, there was a looming army en route to destroy the nation of Israel and to carry them off into exile. Imagine the darkness that they felt in their hearts, knowing that in just a few months, weeks, maybe even days, their lives would never be the same again. Torn from their homes and scattered across the known world. This passage isn't about doom and gloom, but it is in this context of utter darkness and despair that a wonderful message of hope is proclaimed.

Continue reading with me in verse 2. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a land of deep darkness, a light has dawned.

So it is in this moment of darkness that a great light can be seen. And as we read on to verse 6, we see that this wonderful light, this wonderful message of hope, comes in the form of a baby.

[2 : 42] So put yourself in Israel's position at this point in history, hearing this. Enemies crouching at the door. An army on a destruction path that will cut through the heart of your home.

And your promise of deliverance and hope is a baby. Now we have had eight babies born into the church family this year.

And if you speak to every single one of those parents, I guarantee you, they will testify to the fact that their babies are utterly dependent on them for everything. A baby can do nothing for itself or by itself.

So what on earth can this baby do for us? Maybe that's what they were thinking. How can this baby be a source of great light and hope to a nation that is plunged in darkness?

Well, the key is found in the four descriptions that we read in verse 6. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given and the government will be on his shoulders.

[3 : 50] He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Now as we look back, we know this baby is Jesus.

And this prophecy was written some 700 years before his birth. And yet these four descriptions are just as powerful now to us in our times of darkness as they were to the nation of Israel back then.

So let's take a look at each of these descriptions of this little baby that we gather to celebrate at Christmas time. The first description we see is that Jesus is a wonderful counselor.

So the majority of people in our world today understand the idea of a counselor. Someone who helps you think through and work through some of the good and some of the bad experiences that you've been through in life.

And they use a bunch of different methods all with the purpose in mind of helping you be as healthy as you can be. But often the focus in counseling sessions can be that you have the power within yourself to be well.

[4 : 59] That you are able in and of yourself to be fixed. But Jesus is not a counselor who comes alongside us and tells us to try harder, to do better.

He isn't a counselor who tells us that we have the power within ourselves to be sorted. No. Jesus comes alongside us and he guides us to the way that we should live.

And he draws alongside us in our pain and kneels with us in it. Often people can think of Jesus like some mean fitness instructor who shouts from the sidelines that you need to do more, be better, work harder, and stop complaining.

But that is warped. The message of Jesus is completely the opposite. Jesus draws alongside us in our times of darkness. He draws near.

He literally takes on flesh to dwell with a sinful humanity to guide us to the truth that hope is not found in ourselves, but true hope is only found in him.

[6 : 09] Friends, in your darkest times, in those moments where you feel like breaking down and crying, in those moments when you are at your wit's end, Jesus is the wonderful counselor who draws near, who comes alongside and sympathizes with us.

Why? Because he knows pain. He knows suffering. He knows what it means to walk in darkness. But even more than that, he draws alongside and he points us to the place of deliverance.

He doesn't pat us on the back and say it will all be fine. But he comes and gives us truths that will carry us through the storms of life. He comes and gives us deliverance from our sins.

He offers light in our darkness. He offers life to the spiritually dead. Jesus is a wonderful counselor who will walk with us through the storms of life.

And friends, from my own experience of the few years that I've had on this earth, I can tell you that there is no better place to be than in the arms of a wonderful counselor in whom deliverance can be found.

[7 : 23] So Jesus, this baby that we celebrate at Christmas is described as a wonderful counselor. But secondly, he's described as mighty God.

Now we might be tempted to look at the typical nativity scene and see a defenseless baby, a crying infant with no power, a child who's done nothing and can do nothing by themselves.

But oh how wrong we would be. Because as we look at the person of Jesus Christ, we are seeing the very image of the invisible God. Here's what Colossians 1 has to say about Jesus.

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in Him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.

Whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together.

[8 : 30] But God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him. This little baby is the one who flung the stars in their place.

This little baby is the eternal Son through whom and for whom all things were created. And this is the eternal Son who has supremacy over everything.

Meaning that Jesus is the Son of God. The one who rules and reigns over the entire universe. The one who is in absolute control.

And the one whose power is beyond comprehension. The one whose glory, majesty and wonderful nature could not be described even with every single word in every single language on this world.

His glory is unfathomable. Friends, if you want to know what God is like you only need to look at Jesus Christ. The person of Jesus.

[9 : 37] The one in whom the fullness of God dwells. Now what a wonderful message of hope and light in the darkness that is. As the darkness looms, as times of despair and pain come your way, look to Jesus.

The eternal Son of the Father, God in the flesh, the mighty God who humbled himself, took on flesh, left his place of glory and came into a sinful world.

Why? So that those who walk in darkness can say that they have seen a great light and that they can have deliverance from their darkness and walk in his light because he is mighty God.

Wonderful counselor, mighty God. And the third description we see is that Jesus is everlasting father. Now maybe it's strange to think of a baby as being our everlasting father.

It's a bit of an odd phrase that maybe takes us a while to get our heads around. But it means that Jesus is our father forever. And this conveys two wonderful truths.

[10:51] Firstly, Jesus is everlasting. He has no beginning. He has no end. The life of Jesus Christ did not begin at that first Christmas about 2,000 years ago.

but there has never been a time where Jesus did not exist. That's where what we read about in John chapter 1, that wonderful passage that teaches us so much about the Godhead.

John 1 says this, in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning and the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

So Jesus is everlasting but secondly he is described as our Father. And the Bible normally speaks about God the Father when it uses the word Father.

So why is Isaiah using the description here of Jesus? Well the overarching feeling that a good father has towards his children is love, isn't it?

[12:00] Sadly we live in a sinful world where that isn't always the case. but fathers are called and are supposed to love their children. And there are countless stories out there of fathers doing wonderful things out of a sacrificial love for their children.

Just one that I read about yesterday. In 2019 Rick Buckley from Michigan underwent surgery to give his eight-year-old daughter Charlie his kidney.

And if he wouldn't have gone through that surgery she would have died. And when he was asked about it he said that he was a match. So he didn't have to even think about it.

It was the easiest decision he's ever made in his life because he loves his daughter. And any parent would do that for a child.

Good fathers love their children. And as we look at the life of Jesus there can be no doubt in our minds that he loved people. He sat with those on the fringes of society.

[13:04] He went towards those who were deemed unfit and called broken. He healed those who were sick. He taught people about their need to be made right with God and ultimately he laid down his life in the greatest act of love known to mankind so that sinners like you and me can be reconciled to God, brought into his family.

There is no greater love than the love of God for his people. That's why Jesus is described as our everlasting father because he has always been and he will always be and his love has no end.

Is it not an immense privilege to be counted as sons and daughters of the living God? To have Jesus described as our heavenly father whose love goes beyond words and beyond boundaries. it is a love that we cannot escape and it is a love that never runs out. So this baby that we celebrate at Christmas is a wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father and the fourth description is that Jesus is the prince of peace.

Think back to the nation of Israel. Sitting in one of their darkest periods in history, spiritually nowhere, rejecting God and living as they please, refusing to acknowledge the God who has saved them countless times from their enemies, refusing the God who out of love calls them to repent and to come back to him.

[14:45] What do you think they would want as they look over the hills and see an army coming to attack them? They want peace. peace. Well, what wonderful and comforting news it is to hear that Jesus is described as the prince of peace.

Friends, this is the message of hope that should carry us through our times of darkness. As we walk through the valleys, as we feel abandoned and alone, as we feel the pain and darkness creeping in at every second, remember, Jesus is your prince of peace.

Peace in two ways. First of all, it means peace with God because Jesus is the perfect lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

He lived the life that we never could in complete obedience to the Father's will and yet he died the death that each and every single one of us deserves.

Bearing all the weight of sin and all the wrath of God in our place, he took our punishment. He took our sin so that we could be gifted his righteousness, his right standing with God so that we could be forgiven.

[16:05] Or as Romans 5 verse 1 puts it, therefore, since you have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Friends, if you are a Christian this morning, you are no longer a stranger to God.

You are no longer an object of his wrath, but peace has been made between you and the Almighty God through the death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ.

And if you're not a Christian this morning, come to this Prince of Peace. Come to the only one who can give you peace with God and the only one who can forgive you and give you hope and light in your darkness.

So it means, first of all, that we have peace with God, but secondly, it points to a future day where God and man will dwell together in perfect harmony in the new creation.

That wonderful place where there will be no more pain, where there will be no more suffering, no more tears, and no more death, for the old order of things has gone and the new has come.

[17:16] God's dwelling place will be with his people. Now that is true peace. That is a peace that will endure forever and it has been bought and secured through the blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ shed on the cross.

And as verse 7 goes on to say, there is no end to this kingdom. His reign, the reign of this prince of peace will last forever. He will rule with justice and righteousness and that is a promise that is not wishful thinking because this peace has been bought with the blood of Jesus.

Friends, this is the wonderful person that we remember this time of year. Not a defenseless baby, but Jesus, wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father and prince of peace.

This is our king Jesus, the God and God is the one who accomplished all of this. So if you are in darkness, friends, remember that you have seen a great light.

He has revealed himself to you in the person of Jesus Christ this Christmas. Remember that hope that can only be found in him and run to him.

[18:39] Hope can be found nowhere else. Do not stay in your darkness because the light has been revealed to you. Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, we thank you so much that you sent your son Jesus Christ to reveal you to us. Jesus, we thank you so much that you willingly left your place of glory and came into our sinful world to be light in our darkness.

But not only that, Father, we thank you that you sent your son Jesus Christ to be the solution to our greatest problem. That through his death and resurrection we are now counted or can be counted as children of you, the great, awesome, almighty, wonderful Father.

What a privilege that is. And Father, would you, would that be the focus of our Christmas this year? Would we remember that Jesus is the reason for the season?

In his name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.