

Everlasting Father
Isaiah 9:6
December 12, 2012
Advent Mid-week 3

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Grace, mercy, and peace from the Everlasting Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

There was once a father who had a young son who was very sick. After weeks of testing, the father was given the news that his nine-year-old son's condition was terminal. The father knew his son believed in Jesus and was safe for eternity, but he didn't know how his boy would react to something so frightful.

After much prayer, the father went to his son's room. There he prayed with the boy. When they finished praying, the father gently told his son that he had only a few days to live. He asked the boy, "Are you afraid to meet Jesus?" His son blinked back tears and answered, "Not if he's like you, Dad!"

To help us see Jesus as our Everlasting Father, we are going to look at a story that Jesus told about a father. It's a story I'm sure you're familiar with. It's usually called the story of "The Prodigal Son," but, in reality, it's the story of "The Everlasting Father."

Let's recap the beginning of the story so we will better understand the role Jesus fills as our Everlasting Father. The father in the story has two sons; the older obedient, the younger rebellious. The younger son asks for and receives his inheritance early. He promptly leaves home and squanders this entire fortune on wine, women, and song.

When he hits rock bottom, he takes a job tending pigs. When he finds he can't live like that, he decides to go home and ask his father to take him on as a hired hand. It's at this point that we join the story about the Everlasting Father. Here is how Jesus told the next part of the story from Luke 15:20-24:

So [the son] 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. The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." 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. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So they began to celebrate. (Lk 15:20-24 NIV)

In the story of The Everlasting Father, there are four truths about how Jesus, our Everlasting Father, deals with us.

We find the first truth in the phrase, “*but while he was still a long way off, his father saw him.*” That truth is that Jesus can’t wait to have us back. No matter how far you have strayed from the faith, no matter what your past was like, Jesus sees you and wants you back in his family. All you have to do is receive the faith offered by the Holy Spirit. The road of faith is the only road that leads to the Everlasting Father.

As the Everlasting Father, Jesus never stops wanting us back with him. Through Isaiah, we hear God announcing to all his wayward children: *All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations* (Is 65:2 NIV). Jesus knows who we are and he wants us in spite of ourselves.

That might raise the question, “If Jesus knows us that well, why does he want us?” The answer to that comes from the words, *he saw him*. The famous evangelist D. L. Moody said, “The prodigal’s father was looking through the telescope of his love.” That’s a good explanation of the way Jesus, in his role as Everlasting Father, looks at us – with the telescope of his love.

If you have ever visited an observatory, where scientists study the skies, you have seen the huge telescopes they use. When you look through one of those telescopes, you will see things you’ve never seen before. Things which other people can’t see with the naked eye become crystal clear to you.

That’s what happens when the Everlasting Father looks at us through his love. His love is so powerful that he sees what the world can’t see. He sees our deepest thoughts and our worst hurts. He knows when we are truly longing for him and when we are playing games with him. He sees our potential. He sees even the smallest bit of faith and, because of that faith, he showers us with his love.

The third truth about the Everlasting Father comes from the next phrase in that verse. Here we read, *[the father] was filled with compassion and ran to his son*. This truth can be called The Everlasting Father’s “compassionate immediacy.” To understand this truth, we must look at the words “compassionate immediacy” separately.

Webster defines compassion as “sorrow for the sufferings of another accompanied by an urge to help.” When we say that the Everlasting Father is compassionate, that means there is not one circumstance in your life that you go through alone. Because Jesus loves you with compassionate love, he is always at your side, not only feeling your pain, but wanting to shoulder your burdens, if you let him.

The other half of this truth talks about immediacy. In the story, the father of the prodigal son didn’t wait for the son to come to him. Jesus tells us the father, *ran to his son*. So it is with Jesus, our Everlasting Father. When he sees us longing for him, he doesn’t wait for us to come to him. Jesus comes running to us. Just like the father in the story, Jesus’ compassionate love for us moves him to take immediate action to come and rescue us from our pitiful circumstances.

Our last truth is that the Everlasting Father welcomes the prodigal back. There are five parts to this truth. They are all things our Everlasting Father will do to us or for us. These five things apply whether this is the first time you've met The Everlasting Father or whether you've strayed and are coming back to The Everlasting Father.

The text says the father kissed his son. Notice, the father didn't wait until the boy had changed his smelly pig clothes and taken a bath. The father just threw his arms around his son, pulled him close to his heart, and kissed him. A kiss is the sign of complete reconciliation.

This agrees with what Paul writes in the book of Romans, when he speaks about God welcoming back his lost children. Paul writes: *While we were still sinners, Christ died for us* (Ro 5:8 NIV). Jesus didn't wait for us to clean up our act. His love, as The Everlasting Father, caused him to take the first step in making a way for unholy people to become holy people.

Two verses after the kiss, we hear the father telling his servants: *Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him.* Like the story father, Jesus has covered us with the best robe there is. Jesus has covered us with the robe of his righteousness. The sinless life that Jesus led on earth is the righteous robe that covers our sinful lives. With our sins covered, we are deemed holy people and fit for eternity in heaven in the presence of a holy God.

The third part of this truth is the ring. The father had a ring put on the son's finger. The ring is a sign of completeness. Wedding rings are exchanged to show that two people now complete a new whole. Each person completes the other in the new "one" they have become.

Figuratively, we receive a spiritual ring from The Everlasting Father. When we enter a relationship with Jesus, a relationship where he is our redeemer and the leader of our life, then that relationship makes us the holy people we were created to be. It makes us complete. With that spiritual ring of forgiveness on our hand, we can stop living in search of acceptance, meaning, and joy, and start living a life of gratitude that becomes a witness to the world of Jesus' love.

The father also puts sandals on his son's feet. Picture the prodigal son limping down the road. All of his resources have been exhausted. He can't even afford shoes. His feet are bloodied by the road he's been walking. The jagged rocks on the road make every step a chapter in misery.

But the story father saw to it that his son had new shoes to make his walk easier. Our Everlasting Father does that for us. The shoes that he gives us aren't shoes made of leather. Jesus gives us shoes of confidence in his promises, shoes of security over knowing that no one can ever snatch us from his hand, and shoes of continual care

because he promised never to leave us or forsake us. The shoes our Everlasting Father gives us makes our walk though this life not only easier but also pleasurable.

Look at the last thing the father did for his prodigal son. *“Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”* So they began to celebrate. The return of the prodigal son became a reason for celebration.

The Bible tells us that there is rejoicing among the angels of God when one sinner repents and comes to faith. Rejoicing. Celebrating. You’ll never hear, “I told you so.” You’ll never hear, “Well, it’s about time.” Not from our Everlasting Father. He’s so happy to have us with him he doesn’t remember our past. In fact, our Everlasting Father, Jesus Christ died to erase our sinful pasts.

Jesus, as our Everlasting Father, loves us with a love that is beyond human comprehension. He loves us so much he can’t wait to have us with him. He loves us so much his love lets him see us as we can be and not how we really are. He loves us so much he doesn’t wait for us to come to him – he runs to us. He loves us so much he welcomes us with a kiss of reconciliation, a robe of righteousness, a ring of forgiveness, provision for the remainder of our journey here, and with a celebration that includes all the residents of heaven.

When you leave here tonight, do so with a smile on your face and a warm secure feeling in your heart and soul. You see, the baby in the manger is not only your Wonderful Counselor, and your Mighty God – he’s also your Everlasting Father.