

Everlasting Father

Series: Unto Us

Isaiah 9:6

Pastor Jarrett Stephens

I have loved sitting in on our Christmas Spectacular this week...and I just want to say right up front here THANK YOU to our entire church for the way that you rally and support the Christmas Spectacular.

You know our worship team does such a great job leading this event and for over 700 of you to volunteer, support, serve – it’s just an amazing opportunity to come together and share the love of Jesus...tell the story of Jesus in a fun, creative and BIG way – and I as well as our leadership just sit back with gratitude that we GET to do this.

For MOST of the performances, I will just stand in the back and watch people as they experience Christmas and what I love seeing is the sheer joy on people’s faces. I asked our COMM team to capture some pics of joy and you’ll see some of them here – families taking pictures, kids smiling, **(SHOW PICS)**

You walk in and you can sense it...you can see it...there is joy everywhere!

Our Christmas series is called “UNTO US” based out of Isaiah 9, where the coming Christ-child is prophesied and given a four-fold name. We read it in:

Isaiah 9:6 – “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.”

What we have been doing in this series is taking a name given...and marrying it up with something the child brings with him upon his arrival. Because look, when Jesus comes, he doesn’t come empty-handed! It reminds me of you grandparents!

Illus. Grandparents – My girls love when their grandparents come to Houston. You know why? Yes, they love seeing them, but it’s also because it seems that Gammy and Papa NEVER come empty-handed! They ALWAYS have something with them! You grandparents out there know what I’m talking about!

Well, it’s the same with Jesus. When he came as a baby born in a manger, he didn’t come empty-handed! As we studied in the first week, Jesus, our Wonderful Counselor brought with him, HOPE. Last week we talked about how Jesus, our Mighty God brought with him, LIGHT.

This week, we are studying and emphasizing Jesus (and this is the title of today’s message) as: **Everlasting Father**

And what does he bring with him? Just what we were talking about earlier: JOY.

Now, I want to remind us of context this morning because it makes this prophecy and these names given to Jesus that much more special and impactful.

Remember, the Assyrian Empire is on the rise. They are on an aggressive expansion campaign and Isaiah has prophesied that because Israel and Judah (the divided Kingdom at the time) are not listening to God, judgment is coming...and the future is not one that is going to be favorable to them.

- There will be darkness and gloom...
- There will be wars and distress...
- There will be a sense of fear and terrible unknowns...

BUT, then Isaiah says, “It won’t ALWAYS be this way! He says, “there is a child coming (human)...a son that will be given (divine) and his birth is going to change everything!” And I want to pick up in:

Isaiah 9:1-7 – “But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. (This is where we see hope first being prophesied) ²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. (Here comes light exposing the darkness, and now we are going to see the birth of this child brings joy) ³You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. ⁴For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. ⁵For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. ⁶For 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. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.”

(v. 3) emphasizes that joy is coming. It speaks of an abundance of joy and gladness. (v. 4-6) which all starts with the word “FOR” is going to emphasize WHY we can have this joy and WHERE this joy is going to come from.

Let’s look first at WHY there will be such joy, and we’ll see in these reasons both a spiritual and literal reality to them.

Isaiah 9:4 – For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken on the day of Midian.”

Israel's history at the time in which this is written – around 730 years before the birth of Christ is one of hardship and trial. Just think of the 400 years of being in Egyptian slavery. Add to that the wilderness journey and the battles against people groups like the Ammonites, Canaanites and the people of Midian as mentioned in this verse.

At this point when Isaiah is prophesying you have Assyrian domination, it's only a matter of time before there will be Babylonian occupation and domination. At the time of Christ, it will be the Romans heavy hand ruling over the people of Israel.

All these people have ever known is a yoke of burden...the discipline that comes from a staff on the shoulders of these rulers...the rod of the oppressors.

And yet, here Isaiah speaks and says, "There is joy coming because God is going to break the yoke, the staff and do away with the rod of the oppressor one day" JUST as he did in the days of Midian.

Now, stay with me on this because the picture Isaiah is drawing us is pretty remarkable. You remember the Midianites, don't you? Just saying the name is causing the people of Isaiah's day to recall in their mind what happened during the time of the Judges.

Judges 6:1-6 – “The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. ² And the hand of Midian overpowered Israel, and because of Midian the people of Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. ³ For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. ⁴ They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land, as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey. ⁵ For they would come up with their livestock and their tents; they would come like locusts in number—both they and their camels could not be counted—so that they laid waste the land as they came in. ⁶ And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the Lord.”

So just in bringing up the word “Midian” the people of Israel can feel and identify with the misery of oppression.

But Isaiah says, just as their heavy and oppressive hand was broken, so too will it happen again. And do you remember how it was broken?

A man by the name of Gideon...and if you do your research, he was a man who was the least in his father's house! He was the runt of the litter if you will...the most unlikely of people to lead Israel to victory against Midian.

And yet, God called him and if you remember the story – go back and read (Joshua 6-7) sometime, Gideon takes three hundred people and by smashing lanterns in jars, blowing trumpets to screaming – the Midianites freak out, turn on themselves and God secures through Gideon an unlikely victory.

THIS is the picture and prophecy Isaiah is making here! That the birth of this child...this son given...this Messiah figure, he is going to bring about a victory in a very unlikely way.

Now, the context and wording regarding Midian is one of the reason that caused the people of Jesus's day to believe that the Messiah figure was going to have an earthly rule and reign.

It's one of the reasons the Jewish people rejected the messiah throughout history...they thought because of this prophecy and others like them that the one that was to come would be a military conqueror – THAT is how he is going to crush the yoke, break the staff and overcome the rod of the oppressors!

But instead, like Gideon at Midian, the victory is going to come through an unlikely man in an unlikely way!

It's going to come through the child NOT fighting a physical war and establishing a physical kingdom, but instead fighting a spiritual battle, and inaugurating spiritual kingdom! Victory will come in an unlikely way – by this Christ-child growing up and dying on a cross, and the rod that will be broken, the yoke that will be crushed – will be the yoke of slavery to sin and darkness.

- No more burden of obeying the law to be in a right relationship with God!
- No more oppression due to the oppression sin causes and brings!

It would have been impossible to see it then, but AFTER Christ comes, it jumps of the page. This is ONE of the “WHYS” behind the joy and gladness – this child that is born, this son that is given (the God-man) will deliver us to victory through the unlikely means of the cross!

THIS brings joy! We see another reason for joy and gladness...it's a second “for” in:

Isaiah 9:5 – “For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.”

While the first “for” (v. 4) deals more with the spiritual conquest and victory that this child will deliver the second “for” (v. 5) deals with a future more literal conquest and victory this child will deliver.

The first “for” has to do with the first advent...the second “for” has to do with the second advent.

Jesus came the first time, humble fighting a spiritual battle over sin and death. He is coming a second time as a ruling king, and this will be a physical battle that he will win over the nations of this world.

This is what Isaiah is prophesying. He puts his ear to the ground so to speak, and he hears all these battles that have taken place throughout the history of Israel and Judah. He can hear the Assyrian army coming...and he hears the conquering nations throughout time. He sees the bloodstained garments of the battlefield, even today as Israel is in a war with Hamas.

Isaiah sees it...and says, “One day it’s going to come to an end...there’s an incinerator if you will and the wars will cease and be fuel for the fire!

What does our Bible teach us about the second advent of Christ? When he returns what is he going to do?

2 Peter 3:10-13 – “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. ¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

Jesus at his return will have a decisive victory and all the wars against the people of God will come to an end – literally and spiritually. He will do away with this earth as we know it...it will burn...it will “pass away” and he will create a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21) where we will live with him forever and ever!

THIS is another cause for joy and gladness.

Illus. I’ll Be Home For Christmas – I love Christmas music of all kinds but especially the classics. One of my favorites is *I’ll Be Home for Christmas*.

It was originally recorded in 1943. It was Christmas time and thousands of American G.I.’s...both men and women were far, far from home.

World War II was raging in Europe and the South Pacific and rather than drinking cider and singing carols, soldiers were half-way around the world engaging our enemy.

One of America’s most popular singers at the time, Big Crosby, as a special gift to the servicemen and servicewomen that year, recorded this song and it immediately sold over a million copies.

These lyrics were broadcast over radios all over the world:

“I’ll be home for Christmas, you can count on me. Please have snow and mistletoe and presents under the tree. Christmas Eve will find me where the love-light gleams. I’ll be home for Christmas if only in my dreams.”

This song pointed people’s hearts...specifically those in the military serving in faraway lands, to a time when war had ended and they are safe at home with family and friends. It was to be a song that when listened to it, it would prompt joy:

- The joy of a war being over...

- The joy of being with loved ones...
- The joy of celebrating Christmas...

In the same way, Isaiah knew this picture of this future day of wars ceasing would bring joy and gladness. We'll talk about this next weekend, but when the Prince of Peace comes, that's the final gift he brings with him – PEACE!

The final “For”...the final “WHY” that brings joy also shares “WHERE” this joy will come from. It's laid out in (v. 6).

Isaiah 9:6 – “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.”

We can have joy this Christmas season because the child that is born...this son that is given – he is our “Everlasting Father”.

There's a lot in this word, “everlasting”. This speaks of his: **ETERNALITY**

In Christ there is no beginning or end. He always has been and always will be.

You say, “Jarrett, explain that one!” I can't! John explains the eternality of Jesus this way:

John 1:1-3 – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

The miracle of the incarnation is that God entered time and space in the person of Jesus. That baby that was laying in the manger was God! There from the VERY beginning!

Col. 1:16-17 – “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Jesus speaking of himself in **Rev. 1:8 – “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”**

The everlasting one...the one through whom the world was created. The one who exists outside of time, wrapped himself in flesh and came to earth – THIS is the child that was born and the son that was given.

“Everlasting” speaks of his: **CONSISTENCY**

Jesus, the scripture says in **Heb. 13:8 – “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”**

Do you know how incredible it is to rely on...to be able to say that we have faith in SOMEONE who is constant?! He doesn't change.

EVERYTHING in life changes!

Illus. Change – the one constant in life IS change! We get older...there are life transitions (daughter graduating). Change is a part of life. But the God we serve is everlasting! He is the one who never changes.

Talk about bringing joy! In the ups and downs of life, I can go to...stand on the one who is described in the Psalms as a rock...a rock that will never...can never be moved!

To be “everlasting” speaks of this eternity. It speaks of his consistency. It speaks of his: **AUTHORITY**

In Christ, we have one that is our ultimate authority. Just think about it.

- If he exists outside of time...
- If he is the creator and sustainer of the world...
- If he is the one who died for our sin, in our place...

That means he is WORTHY of our whole lives. What he says goes. We are but dust! We're going to speak back, reject, stiff-arm the one who is “everlasting”? We...mere human beings whom HE has given life to!

Listen to the psalmist contrast man and God! This the prayer of Moses!

Psalm 90:2-3 – “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. ³ You return man to dust and say, “Return, O children of man!”

We are weak...a vapor! Here today and gone tomorrow. He is the everlasting God! Are we going to live life on our own terms and in our own ways doing what we want to do?!

He is the ultimate authority of our lives – He IS the “everlasting one” and therefore wherever he leads, we go! No matter the call...no matter the cost!

Illus. View of Call – I get sentimental this time of the year! Last weekend represented three years since I preached here in view of a call. And as I look back at that time and the war that was going on within...I had been in Dallas for 20 years (tell story)

I'd go run and I had a play list! And one of the songs that spoke to me...I remember listening to it and the words just broke me! Here are the lyrics to *Wherever He Leads I'll Go*:

**Take up thy cross and follow me
I heard my Master say**

**"I gave my life to ransom thee
Surrender your all today"**

**Wherever He leads, I'll go
Wherever He leads, I'll go
I'll follow my Christ who loves me so
Wherever He leads, I'll go**

When the everlasting Father speaks because of his innate authority, our only response to him is to say with this hymnist here, "Wherever you lead, I'll go."

He is everlasting, but also...he is Father. Now, for those that have been in church for a while, we hear "Father", and our mind immediately goes to this idea of the Trinitarian God we serve.

We serve one God in three distinct persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I did an entire message on the Trinity back in our Doctrine series last spring...you can go online to listen to it to learn more.

When Jesus is given this name here, Everlasting Father, it's less of a reference to the Trinity and MORE of a reference to the traits this Christ-child, this God-man will display.

Think about it in the context of the people of the day. Just about every King that was serving them was evil to the core!

They kings of their day were not doing their kingly duty of looking out for the best and serving the people entrusted in their care. As kings over the people, they were NOT a caring father in ANY sense of the word.

Jesus though...he'd be different. And like any good father, he will care for, provide, help, and protect.

I realize just in saying "father" as it relates to Jesus could be a turn off to some because of the relationship you have with your earthly father. But don't let that be the case! Jesus is altogether different!

He loves you and is interested in you...and is here for you! Always present in your life...always engaged. He is the perfect father image!

His word promises: **Heb. 13:5** – "... **"I will never leave you nor forsake you."**

We're talking about an eternal One that cares...that is gentle...that is loving...that is tender...that has your best interests at heart!

Illus. Von Erichs – "The Iron Claw" – I'm so grateful the Lord gave me a great dad! That's the picture of the God we serve! In our corner, on our side!

When you think of God in this way, it can't help but produce joy. JOY! This is what this child that is born, this son that is given brings.

The Christmas story, read it with fresh eyes this Christmas. It's surrounded with joy! The angel proclaimed this message of joy to the shepherds in the field the evening that Jesus was born.

The Bible tells us in: **Luke 2:10** – “**And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”**

Illus. Joy to the World!

We sing this at the end of each Christmas Spectacular! “Joy to the world! The Lord has come, Let Earth receive her King!”

When the wise men from the East saw the star in Bethlehem resting over the place where Jesus was the Bible tells us in: **Matt. 2:10** – “**When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.**”

I wonder today, do you feel it...do you sense it? Are you walking in joy?

Illus. Christmas movies – Like you, I have been watching a lot of Christmas movies these days. It's one of my favorite things to do with my girls.

Like you, we have a lot of favorites, but one of our “go-to's” is *Elf*. Can you believe that's been out 20 years this year! That does NOT produce joy!

If you remember in that movie one of the reasons that Santa's sleigh is not flying is because the “Clauseometer” – it's the instrument that measures the “Spirit of Christmas” amongst the people is very low. And so, Buddy is tasked with helping to fix this problem.

I wonder if we had a “joy-meter” with us today...an instrument that could measure our joy this morning - I wonder what it would read?

No doubt some would measure low on joy today...your circumstances are such that your joy is just a little low this season.

- Perhaps it's the first Christmas without your loved one. And the emotions of loss and loneliness are almost overwhelming in this hour...
- Or maybe it's the break-up of a relationship...the separation you feel between yourself and a member of the family this Christmas...
- It could be your health is declining...financially it's a tough time or maybe some kind of injustice has occurred in your life or in the life of someone you know and love...

Whatever it may be, you could be here this morning and your “joy-meter” is a little low.

You know it could be your joy-meter is low due to sin in your life. Sin certainly robs us of joy. It sure promises joy but ALWAYS falls short and delivers regret and pain...always brings sorrow and brokenness.

We may appear to be getting away with something on the outside, but on the inside if we're honest with ourselves, we know the truth...there is very little, if any joy.

And so where do we turn? How do we get our joy back? How do we "fill up" on joy?

Well, we can't just turn to people...because people will inevitably let us down! Sometimes it's people that are the very ones that empty us and drain us!

We can't turn to a substance or some other unhealthy outlet. We know this is not the answer! The world is not going to give us joy...good grief, just look at what is taking place in our world:

- Instability on the rise...
- Hatred and greed and selfishness everywhere we turn...

The world does not give joy...the world is looking for joy and so where do we turn? What do we do?

Listen to me: We TURN to the baby in the manger! We turn to the one who is constant...consistent...eternal...we turn to the Everlasting Father. And when we do, I promise you, he brings with him joy. Will you pray with me?

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.