

December 18, 2019 + Midweek Advent 3 + Pastor Curt S. Backhaus
St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church (WELS), Tomah WI

Isaiah 9:6 | EHV

For to us a child is born.

To us a son is given.

The authority to rule will rest on his shoulders.

He will be named:

Wonderful Counselor,

Mighty God,

Everlasting Father,

Prince of Peace

“Jesus” —Name above All Names
Everlasting Father

Even Jesus’ enemies understood that Jesus claimed to be Mighty God.

When Jesus said, “Before Abraham was, I Am!” (invoking the name of Jehovah given to Moses at Mt. Sinai) and when he claimed, “I and the Father are one” the Jews picked up stones so they could put him to death.

When Phillip asked Jesus, “Show us the Father,” what Jesus said would have shocked his listeners –unless they were longing and looking for the fulfillment of Isaiah, chapter 9. “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” And then Jesus went to explain what that means, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Later that same night, Jesus was arrested and put on trial for blasphemy. They condemned Jesus for speaking the truth and saying he was “the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Then they crucified him. But 3 days later Jesus rose from the dead and proved once and for all that he is true God from eternity.

That’s what Isaiah emphasizes in this name for our Savior: “Eternal Father.” And I’ll admit, that one probably leaves you scratching your head. How can the child, the Son, be given the name “Father”?

The doctrine of the Trinity, the teaching that the Only True God is Triune, is concealed in the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament. We know that when you lay out everything God reveals about himself in the Scriptures side by side, God is 3 distinct Persons –“Father, Son and Holy Spirit”-- but One Divine Being or Essence.

“What the Father is, the Son is, and the Holy Spirit is” –each Person is Divine, holy, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, immutable, righteous and gracious (and the list goes on...). That’s why we have no trouble saying that this Holy Child born in Bethlehem, is God’s Son, our Savior, Mighty God, Eternal –but “Father”?

We’re not supposed to confuse the Persons? Right? “The Son is begotten of the Father alone and the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son.” But the Father isn’t

the Son, the Son isn't the Holy Spirit –so how in the world can Isaiah call Jesus “Everlasting Father”?

You might think it's just semantics, but you won't understand that name “Father” if you insist on being able to comprehend the Triune God with our limited, human reason. “There comes a time,” Luther said, “when we have to give the Holy Spirit credit for being smarter than we are.”

But then also consider this. The name “Father” can mean something other by definition and by use than just “the parent of a child.” We use the title that way in English even. We call George Washington the “Father of our Nation” –and he and Martha didn't have any children, so that title doesn't mean we're his descendants. Some call Chuck Berry the “Father of Rock ‘n’ Roll.” We can refer to our mayor and town council members as the “city fathers.”

And that idea of a Father as “leader, ruler, or founder” certainly fits the context of Isaiah 9. Jesus is our “Everlasting Father” because “the authority to rule rests on his shoulders,” because he's the “Prince of Peace,” and, as we learn in the following verse, because “There will be no limit to his authority and no end to the peace he brings. He rules on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishes it and upholds it with justice and righteousness from now on, into eternity.” In that context and in that Biblical sense, Jesus is our “Father of Eternity.” (And if you still can't understand it that way, I dare you to challenge your own father and ask him if you really need to follow “his rules when you're under his roof;” or if you should consider him “the head of the family”).

It's OK to give Jesus that title –after all, the Bible does. Just like the name, “Good Shepherd” –we can use that for him, even though by occupation he was a carpenter, right?

And like the Father we always need, we can trust Jesus to give us good gifts, to care for us. He's loving and tender, as a father should be. What's more, he's eternal, as only God can be. His provision, his love, his protection, his guidance. –all of those blessings are ours forever and ever. Amen.

Dear Jesus, we thank and praise you for all your blessings. But most of all we thank you for descending to our world to save us and make us your own, Help us to treasure more dearly the gifts that you won for us with your life and death, And give us the confidence to know that the treasures you give us are ours into eternity. Amen.