



## DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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### **Everlasting Father – the Word:**

*Sermon by Matt Hook*

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*6 For 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.*

[Introduction: Video Street Interviews pertaining to Christmas and the names for Jesus: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.]

Influences: drugs, parents, myself. God.

Decisions: drugs, consequences, parents, God

Peace & Conflict: “I’m at peace, that’s all I care about.” “I go to my basement to my Xbox.” (Escape).

This month we’ve been looking at the names of Jesus and how he meets your deepest needs and we’ve noticed that God uses a descriptive name for Himself that matches every one of your deepest needs.

Your understanding of God will affect every area of your life. If you have misconceptions about God, what he’s really like- you’re going to tend to worry about things you shouldn’t be worrying about. You’re going to tend to feel guilty over things God has no intention of you feeling guilty about. You’re going to carry unnecessary burdens and fears and doubts and depressions all through life that God never intended for you to have. Your understanding of God determines your happiness in life. When you get a false conception about God from the movies, from religion, from your parents, from the schoolyard or anybody, if you get a misconception about what God is really like, you will have unnecessary problems or emptiness and misery in your life that you weren’t intended to have.

That’s the problem, isn’t it? We live isolated and detached from others, including God. We live without greater perspective on life.

- We go through life waiting for God to make his move in our lives. “If you would just send something to me special delivery, God, I’ll believe in you and live for you.” Just write me a note – I’ll get it! (Until then, we just go through life in futility, wondering...)
- We go through life thinking we don’t know and can’t know about God. Life seems too big to understand, let alone God. (So we don’t think about the hard questions until they smack us in the face.)
- We go through life totally blinded by our problems. God is just irrelevant to how I live my life. If God exists, even as “Everlasting Father” we put him on the other side of the “generation gap,” ignorant and irrelevant from how I live my life today, more like the “Everlasting, out of touch, Old Grandpa.”

Many of us want to believe, but we become tired of a God who doesn't seem to get his message to us, who seems unknowable, and who seems small compared to our problems.

Much of what we experience today is really nothing new! Remember the setting of our text for this morning. Isaiah spoke during the 700s BC, a time of darkness: the darkness of sin, oppression, hunger, and ignorance, just in the limbo of waiting. His message was a special delivery from God. He spoke to a people who had given up hope, a people filled with despair, a people who had forgotten God. Isaiah told them about a light – the light of the Messiah – that would chase away the darkness. He reminded them that the Messiah is the perfect King of a perfect Kingdom. To some of the people it was too far-fetched. No one could be all that Isaiah prophesied. To some it was interesting to think about, but highly unlikely. And to some, it gave real hope...

The Messiah. If he is true, what a contrast He is to the kings and rulers of this earth. I think of a Saddam Hussein who butchered his own people – the Kurds in the North, the Shiites in the South. I think of a Josef Stalin who, after World War II, killed every Russian soldier that spent time in a German concentration camp – on the theory that they should have fought to the death rather than allowed themselves to be captured. I think of the Somalian Warlords who hijacked relief supplies and sold food to the highest bidder outside of the country while 5,000 of their own people starved to death every single day. I think of the Taliban in Afghanistan who had women beaten and killed for not covering every square inch of skin. The Israelites knew something of terror and despair too.

They must have asked too, “Why will the Messiah succeed where all other rulers have failed? Why will His rule and Kingdom be perfect?” Isaiah tells us today that the Messiah will succeed because His name is Everlasting Father.

And God said I am sending you the Messiah to be your Everlasting Father, full of wisdom, provision, and forgiveness. Not just to free the Israelites from the Romans, but to free you from yourselves. Not just to liberate you from foreign occupation, but to liberate you from sin. Not just to release you from slavery, but to release you from your fears and doubts, so that you may live the life you were meant to live!

John the gospel writer calls him “the Logos,” or “the Word,” meaning the one who is God, who also expresses God. The idea, the concept behind the object. Jesus, as God's Word to us. Jesus, who came and lived among us, born in a manger, teaching, preaching, and healing, dying on a cross, and rising from the dead, God's Word, is the Everlasting Father! The Redeemer is the Creator! *“I and the Father are one”* Jesus said. *“If you have seen me, you have seen my Father.”*

Realize that Jesus has already personally delivered everything you will ever need.

Once I worked for a very large church that had a change in pastoral leadership. The new leader was a brilliant preacher who also liked his privacy. As the senior pastor of thousands, he was very busy and didn't mingle much with the very large staff, chat in the office, or wander the hallways. Some of the staff joked with each other that he didn't really exist. “The silhouette you see through his window at night is just a mannequin.” I'd say “Come on, you guys. He's real, and a great guy.” And they'd say “Dorothy thought the Wizard of Oz was real too.”

When he first came on board, there was a line up a hundred people long just to get an appointment with him, both church members and staff persons. I decided he was busy enough I wasn't going to get in line. (“He knew where to find me. I'll be waiting for him.”) I have to admit though, it did get a little frustrating. After all, I was an important guy with hundreds of people in my ministry!

Finally my big break came. His secretary called me to set up an appointment – not just an appointment, a lunch – at the country club! I remember it well. The phone call came in August. I thought “At last! He wants the real scoop, and to tell me how great I'm doing. He's finally realized he needs the scoop from the real McCoy. He knows how important I am. He's comin' to me.” I remember it well, because when I said (as

calmly as I could) “I’ll take the earliest date he’s got.” She said, “Great! I’ll put you down for October 31<sup>st</sup>.” (Drop jaw). Now remember this was late August. Ouch!

My “let him come to me special delivery” attitude affected many areas of my life. How much of my attitude toward that senior pastor is our attitude toward God? We sit around and think “If I’m really *that* important to him, he’ll call me in special. He’ll make a special appointment with me.” But if that is you, if you are sitting in the office of your life, waiting by the phone, keeping your commitment calendar open for the “last best offer,” remember that his name is Everlasting Father. Quit doing nothing. Quit waiting like that, because if that’s you, all you’re doing is focusing on yourself. Quit thinking you’re that important. Hear the Good News: *He has already made the special delivery.* He’s *didn’t* wait for you, but took the initiative. If you are going through your days with the “let him come to me” attitude, I have news for you: He did, and apparently you missed it. Because not only did God come in Jesus, but he came to be our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Christmas is very literally about that special delivery in which our Everlasting Father delivered himself to you. “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*” So first off, realize that Jesus has already personally delivered everything you will ever need: Himself.

Second, remember that Jesus is your greatest resource in life.

- a. Who *have* you been putting your faith in? Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Everlasting Father? You need to – not because you might die tonight, but because you will probably need to live tomorrow. And you need him to experience life to the fullest.
- b. He is your Father: your provider, your comforter, your advisor, your confidant. Imagine if you knew – if you really knew that Jesus the Messiah, the one who saves us, is also our Everlasting Father? Remove everyone and everything else from that role.
- c. Because God is our Provider – He cares for us. Isaiah describes him: (40:11) *He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.*” And he does it for the lost as well! (That’s why our first core value is that God is crazy about lost people.) We know from the Bible that no one and no thing is too small or insignificant for His attention. Don’t forget, He numbers the hairs on our head and watches the birds of the air. (He also watches them fall out!) As our Provider, he is the perfect ruler of the perfect Kingdom.
- d. God is our Protector – He has a father’s compassion for the fatherless, poor, and afflicted. (Ps 146:9) “*The LORD watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow...*” And we see this compassion in Messiah Jesus, don’t we, when we look through the Gospels? Wherever He went Jesus was surrounded by the poor, the sick, and the downtrodden of society. They recognized in Him One who was concerned and filled with compassion for them. They recognized in Him One who didn’t shut His eyes and ears and nose to their appearance, cries, and smells. They recognized in Him One who actually welcomed their presence. They recognized in Him a Protector who didn’t look down on them but treated them with dignity and respect.
- e. God is Permanent - The Messiah is "Everlasting Father." He is always there. We can always depend on Him. Let me say that again. Eternally He is a Father to His children. What tenderness, love, and comfort we have here! The Messiah is "Everlasting Father." Nothing can ever separate us from His love for He always lives to give us His love and care and compassion. Name whatever you want, and it is not able to separate us from the love and care of the Messiah as "Everlasting Father." (Rom 8:35, 38-39) ... [not] *trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword ... (38) ... neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, (39) neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Every issue, every

problem, every dilemma you face, can be faced knowing that God will outlast it, and when you and I are in him, we not only outlast, but we overcome it.

Live, realizing Jesus has already personally delivered everything you'll ever need.

Live, remembering that Jesus is your greatest resource in life.

And third, live raising up Jesus in your life.

Magnify Jesus: focus on him, amplify him, know him.

Jesus is our Everlasting Father. That means Jesus is God. You can project every aspect of Jesus to infinity, and that will be exactly what God would look like. Now kids, don't try this on your selves! If you amplify me or any other human, you get some good stuff, but you also get the sin and pettiness and failures magnified too – a terribly distorted God. But Jesus is the real stuff. So magnify him. Claim Jesus as your Everlasting Father. He will come to reveal his will and purpose in your life. Jesus himself said, John 8:28 *"When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me."* Jesus the Logos of God is fully God – the real thing, not just some little version of God. It's flu season, and the shortage of shots is in the news. "The trouble with some of us is that we have been inoculated with small doses of Christianity which keep us from catching the real thing." (L. Weatherhead). Jesus the real thing.

Again I ask what I asked last time: Who have you made your Everlasting Father?... Who, or what do you look to, to meet your needs and provide for you? Money? Your spouse? Your job? Your habits? Your self? Your sins?

Listen to how John describes Jesus the Messiah in the beginning of his Gospel.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning.*

- John doesn't just take us to Bethlehem, he takes us to Genesis!
- Jesus is Eternally God, the Everlasting Father.
- The omniscient genius behind the created universe.
- The verb "was" expresses a continuous state, ongoing, outside the sphere of time.
- When we think of Jesus, we must begin here, before time, outside of time. Jesus never had a beginning. He is eternally God.
- As in "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit", all there at creation.
- Jesus, in his essence, is all that God is: Everlasting Father.

*5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.*

- The darkness cannot understand it or overcome it. A small candle can dispel darkness. No matter how hard we humans try to wipe out all the traces of God, we've never managed to do it.

- Interesting we celebrate Christmas during the darkest weeks of the year.

*10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*

- The very world and people that he created rebelled against him and didn't understand him. It's like the horror story from the Twilight Zone when the toymaker is destroyed by the toys he created.

*12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

- Listen to those verbs: Receive, believe, and become. That's what Christian salvation is:
- We receive him. Jesus doesn't force himself down our throats. Not just believing he is a savior, or even the savior, but he must be my savior, to live and reign in my innermost being.
- We believe on his name: His name is the key to our salvation. To believe on his name is to believe that Jesus can save me from my sins.
- We become children of God. The Holy Spirit comes in and dwells with our spirits.

*14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

- Luke describes the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem in about 2,500 words. John describes it in 4: "*The Word became flesh.*"

Jesus is the "Everlasting Father", the Logos. He ended the futility of waiting with a special delivery who in turn delivers us. He came as our Everlasting Father, to see us through every problem. He came as the Word, so that we can know God and face our problems.

We sang it this morning: "Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing. O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord."