

October 22, 2017    The Everlasting Father    Isaiah 9:1-7

I would anticipate that many of you would recognize the reading this morning from Isaiah chapter 9. If there is a surprise attached to that reading, it is that I would pull it out and bring it before you in late October, as the leaves are turning colour, and when there is even a hint of summer in the temperature and warmth of the day. The truth is these words from Isaiah 9 are most often read in church services during the season of Advent and often, as will be the case this year...on Christmas Eve.

Christmas with its focus on the birth of the Christ child, is the time looked forward to by this Old Testament prophet. He foretells a time when a very special child is born. A time when a son is given to an undeserving and for the most part, unobserving world. Government, that is the rule of law, and the rule of power will ultimately rest on His shoulders. And He has significant names that make the point that HE is not the normal, routine, this worldly type of ruler. HE is called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

The record shows, that the disciples of Jesus in every age have recognized what the Jewish teachers of Holy Scripture recognized. These names apply to the Messiah whom God sent to redeem people who were lost in their sin. We are convinced that the words of the prophecy are sound. Specifically we are convinced, we have convictions of faith, that

these words were fulfilled and came to pass in the birth, the life, the ministry, the crucifixion, and the resurrection of Jesus, born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, who walked the hills of Galilee by the way of the sea, and along the river Jordan. He died on the outskirts of Jerusalem, crucified, dead and buried. And the 3<sup>rd</sup> day HE rose again, confirmed by the experience of the 12 apostles. Confirmed by the experience of the 120. Confirmed by the faith of the earliest martyrs. By the apostle Paul as one born out of season. Confirmed and reaffirmed by the existence and witness of the church, that gathering of souls who would not turn away from HIM. And who brought a ministry of care and concern to orphans, the sick, widows, the dying, and the outcasts of every society known to mankind.

This morning I want to focus our attention on just one of the 4 names mentioned in Isaiah 9: He shall be called Everlasting Father. This name, applied to Jesus makes a number of points that puts our faith in HIM in perspective. It is Jesus this passage of Scripture is about. It is Jesus whom we are told here will be called Everlasting Father.

I have a friend in Belleville whom I meet with regularly in the context of a small group Bible Study. He has been a Presbyterian Christian most of his married life. Like me he is a senior citizen. Unlike me, he was raised in the Roman Catholic tradition and educated in the Catholic schools. One of the things he regularly contributes to the Bible Study group as a whole is his observation that the concept of the Trinity, God

who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all at the same time is found all over, that is throughout the canon of Holy Scripture.

When I read these verses in Isaiah 9, I can hear Doug's voice commenting, "There is the Trinity again." And he is absolutely correct. We know this about the law and the prophets of the Old Testament. These are the Scriptures that belonged first of all to the Jewish community which worshipped, and radically so, One God, the Living God, that is the God who enters into world history and journeys with HIS chosen people. And the prophecy concerning Jesus which is found in Isaiah 9 spells out the nature of what the church would come to call the Trinity. The name Wonderful Counselor is clearly (to us at least) a reference to the Holy Spirit mentioned in Genesis chapter 1 as hovering over the waters. The name Mighty God is as clear a reference to the fact that we are talking about God, and no one but God. The real God. The living God. The everlasting Father is one of the most familiar names we apply to God when we talk about the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). And the Prince of Peace we have always understood as a direct reference to Jesus.

Here is the revolutionary thing about Isaiah 9 verse 6. It says all of these names if you will, apply to the child born to us, the son who is given for us. In Jesus we meet the Mighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus is rightly recognized to be the Everlasting Father, among us in the flesh, the Mighty God. Jesus is rightly recognized by us to be the Wonderful

Counselor, who opens our eyes to faith, and assists us to live faithfully, the Mighty God. Jesus is rightly recognized by us to be the Prince of Peace, our Saviour who died for us on a specific Friday as a result of the decree of the Roman Empire, represented by the Procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate. The Prince of Peace was dead and buried. And the 3<sup>rd</sup> day HE rose again. And the rest as we say is history....leading to us and our involvement in the Kingdom of which Jesus alone is King and Head.

I have a tendency when I pray to pray to the "Father". I am not praying to the Chairman of the Board of the universal church, or the Christian movement. I am praying to the One true God, the Living God, who touches lives and heals sick people. I am praying to the God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three in one and one in three. Surprisingly, it is an Old Testament concept that flowers, blooms and bares fruit in the New Testament times and beyond that era to our own. Jesus is the Everlasting Father even as he is the Wonderful Counsellor and the Prince of Peace. Jesus is God in flesh among us. God who offers on the bloody alter in the world...HIS body to redeem HIS people from their sin. This is a WOW! Concept. It is not theoretical. It is grounded in history and human experience.

Jesus is the Everlasting Father. That means HE was God, that One true God, the Living God back when Genesis 1, creation happened. He was the Everlasting Father back then.

Jesus was the Everlasting Father, when he said to the 12 in answer to their request to be taught how to pray, say this: Our Father which art in heaven. He is the Everlasting Father in our time when as Jesus people we take a moment to pray to Mighty God, in our daily routine.

Let me tell you a story about answered prayer. As I said, I participate in a Bible Study Group with my friend Doug and a number of others. As part of our time together we end off meetings by listing some people we know who are in need of prayer. People who are grieving, people who are sick and so on. For months we have been praying for a teenager named Allie. We first learned of her difficulty through her grandmother. Allie has a history of hearing problems. About a year ago her hearing loss became severe. Both ears are affected. She has in effect been deaf. She had surgery one ear. Surgery failed. It was roughly at that point that we began to pray for Allie. And our prayer seemed to have gone unanswered. We knew we were asking for a miracle. Weeks ago Allie was to have surgery on the other ear. Concern mounted as her 3 hour operation became a 6 hour surgery. What her surgeons discovered was that everything in the former ear that was operated on was working but she could not hear. So they took the time while Allie was sedated and on the Table to examine things very closely. They removed a significant amount of scar tissue which resulted from the first surgery. Today Allie can hear. She may need more surgery to remove more scar tissue. I am not for a moment forgetting

Allie has very gifted surgeons working on her case. God bless them. But I am convinced our praying for Allie over a long period of time resulted in her surgeons making a discovery for which they were not looking. Jesus is still the Everlasting Father, the Son who is the Spirit, the Mighty God. We praise HIS Holy Name.

Let us pray;

Everlasting Father. We bow before YOU, YOUR servant people in these days. We confess our need for YOUR presence in our lives. We ask YOU to continue to touch those whom we know who are tried and tested by life, age, and illness. Grant that we might see in our limitations, opportunities to serve YOU and those whose lives YOU would have us touch. Redeeming, Awaiting Father, we thank you for YOUR patience with us. Grant us faith to serve YOU and our needy world. Amen