

Sanctuary II Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[18 : 29] There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples, of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus.

It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing.

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, be strong, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance.

With the recompense of God, he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

[19 : 49] For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water.

In the haunt of jackals where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness.

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing. Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. They shall obtain gladness and joy.

And sorrow and sighing shall flee away. I wonder if you noticed that the promised king who was to come would be the shoot and the branch of Jesse, the father of David.

And yet also the root of Jesse. That's because he himself is the root of all things. Emmanuel, God with us.

[20 : 48] With power to reverse the curse of sin. And to make his blessings flow as far as that curse is found. And that's why Christmas is indeed a message of real joy to the world.

God with us.

Let the pains of science. Let all the grief of ■ in ■ Galatians play him all the way of holiness.

één ■ Thank you.

vows h ■ h regeneration Jesus King Eve He's a human sin Jesus King Eve An évwow Jesus King Eve For my sins At the old God So long and ■ Thank you.

[23 : 00] And with his chaser's muerte And what is long all the disciples And what is long all the gospel And the heart of God will subservστε And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you, you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace amongst those whom he is pleased.

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.

And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger.

[24 : 38] And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them. Many people get very sentimental about Christmas, don't they?

It's easy to sentimentalize shepherds and angels and fluffy lambs. Although actually there aren't any fluffy lambs in the story at all. But the Bible itself has no sentimentality at all about the Christmas message.

There's a message of peace, real peace, yes. Peace even descending from heaven, yes. But the thing is that real peace doesn't come from God to rebellious human beings without an almighty cost to God himself.

The cost of making peace. And so, o'er this babe, still infant crying, shadows of the cross are lying. Precious birth and costly dying.

[25 : 49] Sinners, greet your servant king. Sinners, greet your servant.

surged from heaven, yeah. ends Mc warm in our home you will become G sacrifices

Thank you.

Thank you.

And why were there such reactions to the birth of this child? Reaction of joy from so many of the faithful waiting for the promise of God in the first century.

[29 : 00] And all from the wise men, from the shepherds, even the angels themselves. And also of hatred from Herod the king and from many in the religious establishment and the political establishment of that day.

Why were there such expectations of this child? Well, the answer lies in the words of the prophets of old, who foretold his birth many hundreds of years before it actually happened.

And this year in our services together at Christmas, we've been focusing on one of them. We've been trying to understand Christmas from his perspective. 700 years before the birth of Jesus.

Christmas according to Isaiah the prophet. Listen again to the very familiar words that he spoke, telling us about this child the people were to look for.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in the land of deep darkness, on them has the light shined.

[30 : 07] For unto 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.

Of 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 uphold it with justice and with righteousness.

From this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. Very well known, isn't it?

You've heard it many times at Christmas. You've heard it sung in Handel's Messiah. And over the last couple of weeks we've been looking together at the names that this prophet Isaiah gives to this child.

And what they signify about him. Remember that names in the ancient world, certainly names in the Bible, they're full of meaning. Much more so than our names. I suppose our names can convey some meaning, can't they?

[31 : 15] If we're named after somebody perhaps in our family particularly. But of course nicknames often tell us an awful lot more, don't they? About what a person's really like. If you tell me that your name is Andrew, well I might not tell me very much at all.

But if you say to me, well danger is my middle name, then I'll know an awful lot more about you and your character, won't I? At any rate, so it is with the names of God.

They tell us about who he is and what he's to be like. And that's so with this child. First we saw that he is to be the promised Lord. He's the ultimate king of the world forever.

That must be so if the government is to rest upon his shoulder, if his kingdom is to have absolutely no end. It's an astonishing claim, isn't it? In fact, it's quite an impossible claim, isn't it, for any mere mortal.

Next we saw that he would be the present and the permanent leader for his people. The wonderful counsellor. Who counsels or who purposes wonderful things for his people and leads them into the wonders of his salvation.

[32 : 22] Again, it's a great claim. He would be, this child, the wonder-working God himself. And yesterday morning we saw that he also would be the powerful liberator for his people.

He is the mighty God. The God who redeems and delivers his people with his mighty hand. Out of darkness, the shadow of death, and into the light and the life of God's glorious kingdom.

Well, there's only two names left. And these two names tell us something about the condition that the birth of this child would bring into the world. And tonight I want to look at that name, the second last one.

He shall be called the everlasting father. He will bring and show paternal love to his people. Now again, let me just say that the language there that's used of this child tells us that Isaiah is clearly indicating once again his deity. It's a language he only uses ever of God himself.

[33 : 32] So in one place he says this, But now, O Lord, you are our father. We are the clay. You are the potter. We are all the work of your hand. You see, God is his people's father.

He's their creator. Like a potter with a piece of clay. In another place he says, You, O Lord, are our father. Our redeemer from of old is your name.

He's not only their creator, but he's their redeemer, their savior. And notice what it said, From of old. It reminds us of another of the prophets, Micah.

Another famous reading we often have at Christmas time, Micah chapter 5. Listen. But you, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, from you shall come forth one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is of old, from ancient days.

See, there's great consistency between all the prophets of old in the Old Testament, isn't there? So, you see, to say that this child will be an everlasting father is to say that he, a human being, born as a baby, would be called the creator and the redeemer of his people.

[34 : 46] This child. And that's why the carols bid us, Come now with awe to something beyond our comprehending. Love in its fullness lies in mortal span.

Or another one, Low within a manger lies he who built the starry skies. That's what Isaiah means when he says, This child shall be called the everlasting father.

He will be one who himself is both the creator and the redeemer of his people. When you come to read the New Testament, you find that everywhere we're told that is exactly who Jesus Christ was. Hebrews chapter 1 begins with these words, He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

You see, he's the creator. And it goes on, after making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. He's the redeemer who purifies from sin.

[36 : 01] He, this child, says the apostle Paul, is the image of the invisible God. God. And Isaiah says he comes to make known to this world and to us human beings the wonderful paternal love of God, our creator and our redeemer.

Right here on earth, in our sight, in our experience, so we can know him. St. John, in the first chapter of his gospel, says this, no one has ever seen God.

The only begotten son who is at the father's side, he has made him known. And Jesus said, whoever has seen me has seen the father.

I and the father are one, he said. He, this child, the Christ child, the one who would be Emmanuel, God with us, he shall be called everlasting father.

Father. That's Christmas, according to Isaiah the prophet. And that explains the joy and the awe and the wonder in that first Christmas story.

[37 : 10] I want tonight just to think for a few minutes about what it means for this child to be a truly father-like one to his people. Just three things briefly that the Bible itself points us to in our thinking.

First of all, this child comes to give his children life. As a father gives life to his children, so he is called the everlasting father who gives everlasting life to those who are his.

That's just a simple fact, isn't it? You can't have the beginning of life without a father. Well, of course, our scientists today are caught in controversy often, aren't they?

Dabbling with cloning and all kinds of technologies with rather frightening implications. I was just thinking the other day, it's rather interesting, isn't it, what an extraordinary popular outcry there is against genetically modified food.

It's really just a fancy form of crop selection. Yet there doesn't seem to be nearly the same kind of outcry against genetically modifying human beings and human embryos, chopping them up for spare parts.

[38 : 17] It's strange, isn't it? But it is a strange world we live in. But, of course, Isaiah is not thinking about anything like that and grotesque things in that way. No, he's just saying that God is a father who gives life.

He creates like a potter with clay. He fashioned something beautiful out of something that was just once a lump of dust. And that's what this child was born to do, says Isaiah, to bring life everlasting for bodies that are otherwise just dirt, just dust.

Clay. To make something beautiful and lasting and useful and beloved and cherished by its maker. And in the coming of Jesus Christ, the New Testament tells us that God's purpose and grace from before the beginning of all ages has now been manifested, says Paul, through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

He comes to give his children life, everlasting life from an everlasting father. I came, says Jesus, that they might have life and have it in abundance.

Not the dead religiosity of human religions, it's burdensome, it's flavorless, kills the soul, but life. Life that conquers death, life that transcends death, resurrection life, because Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life.

[39 : 55] Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live in a life that transcends death. This child came to give his children life everlasting.

He is an everlasting father. And there's no greater assurance or comfort, friends, in this life, in this passing life, than to know that.

But second, this child came to give his children love. As a father gives love to his children and protects them and provides for them, so he will give everlasting father love to protect and to provide and to love his children.

Of course, it's true, isn't it, that not all fathers do love and protect and provide for their children. Alas, we live in a culture, don't we, where the absent father is increasingly common and I guess many children have mixed feelings about their fathers.

Although, of course, it's true also, isn't it, that many absent fathers do love their children very dearly and would long to be with them much, much more than they are. But there are some, aren't there? Maybe you're one of them who has no real disappointment from a father, not the love and the provision and the protection that I'm speaking about.

[41 : 18] But even, even the very fact of that disappointment we feel, even the anger that we feel, it does tell us, doesn't it, of what we know that a father's love should be and what real fatherhood does indeed speak of.

And the Bible portrays God constantly as an everlastingly loving father. The prophet Jeremiah speaks of God in just the same fatherly terms as one who lavishes love even on wronged children, even on wayward children.

He dries the tears from their eyes, he says. I will lead them back, he says. I will make them walk by brooks of water in a straight path where they will not stumble for I am a father to Israel.

And Ephraim is my firstborn. I will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock. He gives his children love. He cares for them like little lambs.

As I use this again and again, just the same imagery of the father's shepherd-like love. Behold, the Lord comes with might and his arm rules for him, he says. Yes, he's a figure of authority just as any good father must be for his children, but also of great tenderness.

[42 : 33] Listen, he will tend his flock like a shepherd. He will gather his lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom and gently lead those who are with young.

And when this child was fully grown, Jesus said, I am the good shepherd, the one who loves his sheep so dearly that he lays down even his own life for his sheep, just so they may not come to harm but may be protected and provided for forever.

He gives his children everlasting love to protect and to provide and to lead and to cherish. I remember years ago watching a film which was rather sentimental and feeble, I can't remember the name of it, but there is a line in that film that I've never forgotten.

It was a father speaking to his child who was about to be born. And he said this, I'll be a father to you from the day you're born until the day I die.

And that's true of the Lord Jesus Christ to us, except that he shall never die because having been raised from the dead, he shall never die again, says the Bible.

[43 : 54] And that means, friends, that you can bank on his love and on his promise of love to you forever. He'll always stand with you in the dilemmas that you face throughout your life, in the struggles that you encounter in your life.

He'll always provide for your needs so that you need not live in anxiety and in fear. Of course, he won't always provide for your wants. No good parent would always provide for their children's wants, but yes, for your needs.

Don't be anxious about clothes and food and all that sort of thing, says Jesus, because your Heavenly Father knows that you have need of them. And even when it seems that perhaps he's being harsh with us, the Bible tells us that we know it's only those he loves that he disciplines. You know that also like a father who cares for his children and he intercedes in prayer for his children and everyone at the throne of heaven.

Hebrews 7 says he always lives to make intercession for us because he is an everlasting Father. And his prayers never, ever go unheard at the throne that rules the universe.

[45 : 15] He comes to give life, he comes to give love, but this child also comes to give his children a legacy. As a father gives a legacy to his children, a home and a family and an inheritance, so he is called the everlasting Father who gives an everlasting home and family and inheritance to his own.

Now once again, all of that's wonderful, isn't it? If you have such a father and such a home and there's means and substance and a family like that, and many don't, of course.

Many fathers leave a lot to be desired. Some of us, alas, have been left orphaned because a father has died. But you see, the wonderful message of the Bible is that this child will be an everlasting Father who extends his legacy even to those who have never known anything of that in their earthly relationships.

Never known the joy of a home and a family and all of that brings. Listen to what the psalmist says about this God of the Bible. Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy dwelling place.

God sets the solitary in a home, the lonely in families. You see, he's an adoptive father. He's one who reaches out to draw into his own family and under his own protection and care those who otherwise were outcasts and strangers and lonely and lost and solitary.

[46 : 51] A great feature of our modern world, isn't it? Aloneness. Solitary people and solitary lives lost and lonely in the midst of an increasingly busy and noisy world.

But all of that, you see, all of that and much more are merely symptoms of a much greater lostness that the Bible tells us is the real problem of our human condition.

It's the problem of sin. It's the rebellion in our hearts against God our Father, our Creator, our Lord. It's that that's left us adrift, cast us out of our true home, the family of God, the place where God himself dwells.

That's what that reading about Genesis is all about. The Garden of Eden barred to us by the angel with a flashing sword because of our rebellion, because of our refusal to live under our Father's Lordship.

But this child, says the message of Christmas, comes to be a father again, to give us that legacy again that we had lost, to give us a home, a family, an inheritance.

[48 : 01] Listen to the Apostle Paul. In the fullness of time, he says, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, to redeem those under the law that we might receive the adoption as sons, to be heirs through God.

We have received, he says, the spirit of adoption by which we cry, Abba, Father, to God in heaven. And that's what this child accomplished by bearing away our sins in his body on the tree, on the cross.

Apostle Peter says, we who were once straying like sheep have now returned to the shepherd and the overseer of our souls. As a loving Father, he has moved heaven and earth to come and bring us home, to a real home, to a real family, to an inheritance that lasts not just for a time, but forever.

And that's why Jesus can say to his disciples just before he went to his death on the cross, in my Father's house are many rooms, I go to prepare a place for you. And he did, through his death. The good shepherd laid down his life for the sheep, that they might have at last the legacy that he had purposed for them, the everlasting home and family and future of the one who is called the everlasting Father.

[49 : 28] He came to show us paternal love, the love of a father, life and love and a legacy that belongs to all, all who know him as their everlasting Father.

So let me ask you this Christmas, is he a father to you? Do you belong to his family? His is an open door.

Jesus said, I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved. you know, it's also possible to refuse, to refuse to have anything to do with this father and his family.

That was the case in Jesus' day. You refuse to come to me and have life, said Jesus to them. That's true today as well. When he said, I am the good shepherd who loves and cares and provides for his own, some rejected him.

They said, he's got a devil. They said, he's insane. They said, it's all nonsense, all that talk. His is a glorious legacy, friends, of everlasting love and everlasting life.

[50 : 48] But that legacy can't be for those who insist on writing themselves out of the will, who scorn his life. That's why the open door is a warning as well as a great promise.

But listen, even for those who have scorned Jesus Christ and spat upon him and rejected him and wanted nothing to do with him in the past, even for such as these, Jesus says he is still willing to be an everlasting father.

Perhaps the best known parable in the whole Bible is the one that Jesus told, often called the prodigal son. It might just as well be called the parable of the waiting father. Because at the first sight the father has of the lost son returning home, Luke tells us that the father felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

And even as that prodigal son was confessing his sins to his father, his father was clothing him and putting a ring on his finger and beginning a great and wonderful celebration of joy. Welcoming him back to begin a new life, to his true family, to his true legacy and above all to the father's heart of love.

Friends, that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's what Christmas is all about, nothing else. In Jesus Christ, the wonderful paternal love of God is revealed to rebellious human beings like you and me.

[52 : 35] He came to be an everlasting father, to bring you home at last, to where you belong. Don't write yourself out of his life.

Don't write yourself out of his love and his legacy this Christmas, will you? Why would anyone ever want to do such a thing when this child is called everlasting father and he came to be an everlasting father to you?

Let's pray. Our gracious God, we thank you for the love of your heart, which even before the beginning of the dawn of time, was focused on those that you love, and where you determined that you should come and bring home the lost, that they might know the joy and the wonder of your everlasting love.

Help us, we pray this Christmas, to ponder these things like Mary in our mind, and to rejoice in the life and the love and the legacy of all that Jesus Christ, your son, came to bring to us, to everyone who will receive him.

For we ask it in his name. Amen. Our last carol tells of the story of that love in the father's heart, in councils of eternity, before all worlds were formed.

[54 : 13] No sun or moon shed light on earth, nor stars the skies adored. There, deep within the father's heart, love issued in decree. The sons of earth, though lost in sin, my royal heirs shall be.

here,orde and father. me. me...

ZANG EN MUZIEK So so so OK OK Yeah Yeah Yeah People are trying to sing.

The case is a New Year'n.

the leaders in high The quality that he is living To the divine and the life Andashi also The great Karenino world The truth of the truth that our world is the earth in our love.

[57 : 23] The truth of the truth that our world is the earth in our love. The truth of the truth that our world is the earth in our love.

The truth of the truth that our world is the earth in our love.

It will feel just about the right time to come and to sing a few carols before you have your Christmas dinner. But a very, very happy Christmas to you all. Let's just pray as we close. Let's pray as we close.

His word has proved the past. He loved us from the first of time. He will keep us to the last. Our Lord and our God, these are the assurances and the joys known to all who call you Father.

Father, we pray that every one of us here tonight may reach out and indeed call out your name. Knowing that to everyone who does, you promise your presence, your life, your love and your legacy which is everlasting.

[59 : 27] And to that end may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of his Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever. Amen.