

Jesus: Our Everlasting Father

SCOTT HOEZEE

Few relationships in anyone's life are more important than the relationship between children and their parents. When a child gets along well with Mother and Father, it is a gift. When that relationship goes bad in various ways, the results can be disastrous. In the Bible, Jesus tells his disciples, and now all of us, to call God our Father. That was very nearly revolutionary, but it was also something previewed for us in a way in Isaiah 9; in the title related to God's Messiah of *Everlasting Father*. Today on *Groundwork*, we will think about God, our Everlasting Father. Stay tuned.

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, this is now program three of four in this Advent and Christmas series on those titles that we get from Isaiah 9, when Isaiah writes: ⁶For 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. ⁷Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we have talked about in the first episode the *Wonderful Counselor* title, and in the second episode, we talked about *Mighty God*; in this episode, we are talking about *Everlasting Father*. We will get to *Prince of Peace* after that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, yes; we want to think about this title as it applies to Jesus; and then we will, you know, say a few other things about it; and we want to look at the background of this in both the Old Testament and the New Testament in this program; but we want say right up front: Some of us tragically had abusive fathers or emotionally distant fathers; and so, for some of us, the very word *father*, even when it is applied to God, can be uncomfortable. It raises negative emotions, and not positive ones.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; there are people out there who have been triggered by their father, or they have been sinned against by their father, or their father wasn't even present in their home; and that brokenness...I want you to know that God sees and understands that brokenness. We are not trying to trigger anyone in any way, but we are trying to explain what scripture teaches about Father, because he is not like our earthly father in any way, and he is the one who can redeem the brokenness that we have experienced in our earthly fathers.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You cannot just say to someone who has had an abusive father: Well, God is not like that, so don't worry about it, you know...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That word *father* shouldn't bother you when it is God. Well, it is not that simple. We need to give people room if they have a hard time with that word. So, in this program, yes, we want to celebrate all that is good about God as our Everlasting Father, but please know we are doing this with a keen awareness that that can be difficult for some of us.

But now, again, as we begin, let's begin in the Old Testament, Darrell, where actually Yahweh, the Hebrew name for the God of Israel, he is rarely directly referred to as Father.

DARRELL DELANEY

Father would be a very provocative term, and they wanted to stay humble and they wanted to make sure they didn't blaspheme his name, which means to take his name in vain. So, they kept using the title of Yahweh...they kept using the title; and actually, there are some times when they didn't even want to speak that name, and we will get to that later; but you can see in Psalm 89 how King David refers to God. It says: ²⁴My faithful love will be with him, and through my name his horn will be exalted. ²⁵I will set his hand over the sea, his right hand over the rivers. ²⁶He will call out to me, "You are my Father, my God, the Rock my Savior."

SCOTT HOEZEE

There is an instance where David does refer to God as Father. It is more of a declaration here than a prayer. Yes, you know, you were saying that earlier, too, Darrell, that God has lots of different titles in the Old Testament: Mighty God; he is the Lord of Hosts; the Provider God; one time in Genesis God is even referred to as the Fear...the Fear of Isaac; but direct addresses to God as Father is more rare. So, Psalm 89...some of us know the simile in Psalm 103:

¹³As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

So, you know, analogically, sometimes in the Old Testament you get God referred to in father-like ways; but again, you know, you don't...you generally don't find the Israelites opening their prayers by saying: Oh, Father God, because as you just said, Darrell, I mean, these people, the ancient Israelites, the third commandment said don't take my name in vain, and they were so afraid of breaking that commandment that if they saw God's name of Yahweh in print, they would instinctively not say Yahweh, they say *Lord*; which, by the way, in some of our Bibles, if you ever...in the Old Testament or in a psalm...if you see the word LORD...

DARRELL DELANEY

In all caps, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In all capital letters, that was Yahweh in the original text, and it has been translated as LORD because that is what the Israelites would have said when they saw that in print. So, it goes without saying, people who were that careful about God, couldn't probably even imagine just saying: Hey, Father; this is my prayer. They just didn't do that.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, in our day, we have a lot of songs that sing to the Father and name the Father...I run to the Father...things of that nature. For David to write this psalm and explain: You are my Father, it might have raised a few eyebrows for those who read those and sang those in worship, because a lot of psalms became songs. Both David and Isaiah are trying to uncover a character trait of the Father, who is God; and in Isaiah 63, it is explained this way. From Isaiah, he says:

¹⁵Look down from heaven and see, from your lofty throne, holy and glorious. Where are your zeal and your might? Your tenderness and compassion are withheld from us. ¹⁶But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us; you, Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your

name.

Then in Isaiah 64 it says:

⁸Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. So, Isaiah is explaining a little bit more about the character of God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; so, in Isaiah 9 we get Everlasting Father, and then it is Isaiah himself much, much, much later in the book...we are way near the end of the book in those two passages you just read. He also, you know, is doing more there in just those two passages you read, Darrell, there is more Father talk there than almost all the rest of the Old Testament. So, that is interesting. So, the idea that Jesus is going to come...we will look at that in the next segment, to say: Hey, when you pray, call him your Father in heaven. Wow; that was revolutionary. But before we close out this first part of the program, Darrell, we need to note one other thing, and that is that these four titles that we are looking at from Isaiah 9 are applied to the Coming One...to the Promised One...to the Messiah, and Everlasting Father is one of them. The thing is, we now know that Jesus, as the Messiah, is the *Son* of God, and yet, this title is about the Everlasting *Father*; and so, maybe it seems a little confusing to think of Jesus as the Son of God made flesh, also being the Everlasting Father is a little confusing. In a way, it might seem that way, but there are ways to still distinguish Father and Son even so.

DARRELL DELANEY

If you think about the Trinity—the Godhead—you have Father, you have Son, and you have Holy Spirit; and they are very distinct in person, but they are the same in essence and unity; and so, you know, they cannot be called each other, but they actually can be united as far as what they are. Even Jesus says in the New Testament: If you see me, you have seen the Father. I and the Father are one. So, they are so close in nature, that they can actually interchange the titles. So, Jesus is also Creator...Jesus is also Redeemer...Jesus is also Savior; and that could be said about each part of the Godhead because of their essence.

SCOTT HOEZEE

They always work in tandem; that is one of the key parts of the doctrine of the Trinity. You never get one without the other two...the Persons of God...and they are always working so closely together...hand in hand...that you get one, you get the other. So, yes; Jesus is the Son of God made flesh, but he is also identified with the Everlasting Father, as this title in Isaiah 9 tells us; but in just a moment, let's now go to the New Testament and talk about God our Father. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Darrell, we just noted that although Isaiah assigns a title of Everlasting Father to the coming Messiah, the Messiah who actually came, the New Testament teaches, was the Son of God; but that Son is the one who brings us to the Father; and of course, Darrell, we know that in Matthew 6 and in Luke 11, Jesus teaches the disciples how to pray; and it opens, of course: ^{Matt. 6:9}This, then, is how you should pray: (Jesus says in Matthew 6:9) "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."

DARRELL DELANEY

So, when Jesus goes into this prayer...I mean, throughout the New Testament before his resurrection, he usually says: My Father this, my Father that... So, when he teaches them how to pray, he says to say our Father. Now he is inviting them into a different kind of relationship than they have had in the entire history of Israel, because they did never...like you said before, they never...they never said his name...they never actually got that intimate...that close; and now, Jesus is saying: You need to come closer, and this is your Father.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Probably for the disciples, raised as good Jews with proper, due reverence for God, that was rather revolutionary; and you would never dare call the God of the cosmos Father unless somebody with an awful lot of authority told you you could do it. Well, guess what. Jesus has an awful lot of authority. So, if he says call God our Father, it is okay; you can take that to the bank, because that is exactly what Jesus wants us to do; and of course, it wasn't just in the Lord's Prayer. In fact, Jesus talks a lot about the Father, as you were just saying, Darrell, and maybe nowhere more so than in what we call the farewell discourses of Jesus, near the end of the Gospel of John—sort of 13 through 17—those long discourses; and in John 14, there is a lot of talk about the Father.

DARRELL DELANEY

⁶Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." ⁸Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." ⁹Jesus answered, "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. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹Believe me when I say I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. ¹²Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, again, notice how these words...by the way, bolster what we said at the end of the previous part of this *Groundwork* program, namely that although Jesus is the Son of God, we can see why Isaiah also says that we are to hail God's Messiah as Everlasting Father, because the link between God the Son and God the Father is so snug, you get one, you get them both. That is what he says to Philip: Show you the Father! You are looking at him. You have been looking at the Father all along. So, that connection is there; but more, Darrell, in the passage you just read, Jesus says: Look, I am in the Father; the Father is in me; so, if you are in me, you are in the Father and the Father is in you. We are all this in-ness that Jesus has in these words in the farewell discourses; but more than that, Darrell, what you read there said that when he ascends to the Father, he is going to be praying for us...interceding for us...he is our mediator, who will bring our prayers and our requests to the Father, so that the Father can grant those things. That, by the way, Darrell, is why, in the tradition of the Christian Church, we conclude our prayers with: For Jesus' sake, or in Jesus' name; because it is Jesus, the ascended Lord, sitting at the right hand of the Father, who is winging those prayers through the Holy Spirit to his Father, that the Father can give us the things we need.

DARRELL DELANEY

It's a beautiful thing how Jesus...he is explaining his connection to the Father, but he is not only explaining his connection to the Father, he is explaining our connection to the Father—his disciples' connection to the Father; and also, when he ascends, he will actually be able to bring our prayers to the Father. So, he is showing that this is actually one of the traits of the Everlasting Father: I am going to have you have my character traits within you so that you can be in our family. So, you see the connections not only with Jesus and the Father, but also the disciples as well.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Speaking of prayer, in Luke 11, the same passage in Luke where Jesus gives the Lord's Prayer, a little bit later, Jesus reminds us what the posture of our heavenly Father is when we pray. Luke 11:9: "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg,

will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

DARRELL DELANEY

I love that last part of that verse, Scott: If you being evil give good gifts to your children, how much more... I love when Jesus says: How much more. He is trying to show that, you know, you have a father who has tried his best to provide for you on this earth, and he is not perfect; he has made mistakes; he has dropped the ball; but your heavenly Father is never going to drop the ball. He is always going to be there for you; he is always going to give you exactly what you need; and is there willing to help you, so you don't need to be afraid of him.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; indeed, we did a series here on *Groundwork* on Romans recently...Paul's letter to the Romans; so, we remember these lyric lines from the middle of Romans 8: ¹⁴For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again (as you were just saying, Darrell); rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” (Abba, meaning almost Daddy...Father.) ¹⁶The Spirit [himself] testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

That is just such an encouraging passage there; and here again, Paul, for Old Testament believers, for the Israelites, for the Jews, just being told to call God Father was revolutionary. Paul moves it a notch farther here with the Abba, which a really intimate term. I mean, I slipped in Daddy when I was reading it because some Greek scholars say that is sort of the force of Abba. It is not just father; it is Dada..., you know, it is Daddy; that level of intimacy goes up even more here in Romans 8.

DARRELL DELANEY

And Jesus being explained as the Everlasting Father is connected to this verse. So now, he is our Everlasting Father because he gives birth to a new nation of people who are kingdom-minded people who are believers in his name and the person and work of what he has done. So, I mean, Romans goes on to tell us that he has credited righteousness to those who believe by faith in the person and work of what he has done. So, now we are children of God because of that belief. So, it is being connected as Everlasting Father because he is the father of those who believe.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In just a moment, as we conclude this episode, we will ponder some more applications and implications of all this for our lives of discipleship. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, here on *Groundwork*, we always seek to dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives, as we say all the time; but you know, Darrell, we dig into God's Word, not just for the sake of idle curiosity; not just for academic reasons to learn a little bit more; on *Groundwork*, we really want to try to perceive, you and I, and our team, you know, what are the needs of our listeners—what are people feeling, and how can *Groundwork* help address those needs and yearnings and questions and hurts? For this program, we are pondering the amazing fact that we serve a Savior who is himself identical with the Everlasting Father mentioned in Isaiah 9, and he is the one who directed us to call Almighty God our Father in heaven; and so, how this applies to our lives is maybe somewhat obvious, but you know, we want to conclude this program by thinking a little bit more about what this means for us every day.

DARRELL DELANEY

We want to look at 1 John because 1 John talks about how we are to experience Jesus. He was there with Jesus, and so he has a lot to say about it; but in the letter of 1 John, he says this: That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life. ²The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy complete.

SCOTT HOEZEE

John says that this knowledge of God being our Father, that we are in the Father and we have fellowship with the Father, it makes our joy complete...and what a lovely phrase that is, Darrell...a lovely phrase there from 1 John 1:4...make our joy complete; and who doesn't need more joy these days?

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I mean, we need good news in a world shot through most every day with terrible news. We need a reason to get out of bed in the morning, when all around us seems wrong. We need something to bring us joy; and of course, Darrell, as we have noted before on *Groundwork* programs in various contexts, joy is not the same thing as happiness. In fact, you can have joy even when you are not happy.

DARRELL DELANEY

The analogy that I think of when I think of joy versus happiness is a thermometer versus a thermostat. The thermometer would be happiness because it goes up and down, whatever happens in your life, you are kind of carried along with whatever is happening around you; but the thermostat is set, and joy is set; it is set on Jesus Christ; it is set on the hope that he has given us; and there can be things happening that make us hot, make us cold, up, down with our lives; but because Jesus is our thermostat, he can establish our joy even in the most dire of circumstances, and he anchors us when things are tossed and driven.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And in fact, it is probably in life's harder moments that we need that thermostat set to joy; we need the deeper truths of the cosmos. That is what keeps us on our feet, and it helps us put one foot in front of the other as we journey on with the Holy Spirit in this often hard and difficult world. So, that is one thing, but there is another truth here, too, Darrell. We currently live in a time when, as we all know, there has been a pandemic of COVID-19. We have had a pandemic; but one thing that has run alongside of and through COVID, and it kind of existed even before COVID, and maybe is only worse now... So, we have had the pandemic of COVID...we also have an epidemic of loneliness. People today report being lonelier and more isolated than ever.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, remember when we had the lockdown and everybody had to go home. We had a curfew, and people had to quarantine; and so, being isolated in those situations for people who need social connection, that has been really devastating, and we are just now trying to figure out how to re-gather and reconnect with one another all over again, because the pandemic reset the way that we even fellowship, and that was really hard for a lot of people.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In fact, the *Washington Post* newspaper recently ran an article in which many of their readers wrote short essays about how their lives have changed after COVID, and one woman said she has always been kind of a loner, but now, after COVID, she never even leaves the house. She sold her car; she has her groceries

delivered; she basically has no friends; she never goes out to meet anybody for coffee or for dinner. I mean, that is just so sad; but Darrell, I think that is true of a lot of folks today. People wonder: Do I belong? Do I have anyone who loves me? Am I an orphan; a stranger to everyone else? Maybe...I think we probably all have had moments when we wonder those things, Darrell; but let's go again to address this from 1 John, this time 1 John 3; let's hear these words of embrace and inclusion by belonging to the divine family. John writes:

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

DARRELL DELANEY

And for people who, Scott, feel extremely lonely and isolated, wondering if they belong, this verse can actually bring them hope, seeing the Father's love lavished on us. That word *lavished* really sticks out.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; God doesn't dispense his Fatherly love with an eyedropper. I mean, he puts the spray attachment on the end of the garden hose, turns the water on full blast, and he just douses us with his love. That is the sense of that word *lavish* there; and then we are told: What is more, at the end of the cosmic day, when Christ reappears, we look back at ourselves, we will discover that we have become just like our elder brother Jesus. We will see him as he is, and then we will become, John says, what he is. So, that is just a great truth and a great promise.

DARRELL DELANEY

For those of you who are feeling like: Do I belong? Where are my people? Do I have anybody to connect with? First and foremost, the heavenly Father has opened his arms to you. The Everlasting Father, Jesus, is opening his arms to you, showing that he loves you; showing that he wants to continue to have you as the center of his attention and the apple of his eye.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Do I belong? Does anybody see me? Do I count? The love that the Father has lavished on us, as John writes, answers all those questions with a resounding: Yes indeed! And that is good news; all that good news, and even more spins out of the fact of our Savior as the Everlasting Father, who brings us to the Father, with whom he is one; and with whom we are now one in the power of the Holy Spirit; and you know, what else can we say than what we usually say at the end of our *Groundwork* episodes: Thanks be to God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we consider the last title Isaiah gives the coming Messiah: Prince of Peace; and what it means to us.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

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Printed on May 9, 2025