

Foretold//“The Son,” pt 2//Isaiah 9:1–7

It's been a pretty adventuresome weekend (no baby, not for that reason), but it's been pretty amazing...

- Thursday was our project
- Chris got selected to drive the truck
- Some of you may have seen...
- Couple of things came out of it:
 - God used it (coverage)
 - We learned some lessons. In retrospect, should be obvious. I wouldn't let Chris carry

Christmas survey:

- How many done with Christmas shopping already? (CMC/WCC: “but you can't see.” Do it for your campus sake, not mine!)
 - (OK... How many of you hate the people with their hands raised?)
- How many of you have ever re-gifted a gift at Christmas? How many of you it was the same Christmas season? Chris (don't mean to pick him) told me that he did that w/ a book... but he overlooked that the person had written a personal note to him in the front cover.
 - Be suspect of gifts from Chris at Christmas. And don't let him drive your truck.
- How many of you are nervous about seeing family over the holidays? At least your in-laws, right? (Had this thought: We always complain our family... you ever think, maybe they dread seeing you?)
 - How many of you get reminded every Christmas that your family could really be a candidate for the Jerry Springer show?
- Anybody meeting potential in-laws and nervous about that?
- How many of you have a gift you're very excited about giving to somebody?

Well...we know giving is a huge part of Christmas... nothing wrong with that: it's a way we commemorate the gift God has given to us.

- My wife and I love to give to each other... always have at Christmas we don't just give each other inspirational thoughts and Bible verses... we love to be generous with each other...
- But we also (around here) believe in giving generously to those in need in the neediest parts of world. We live in a world where 2 billion people don't have access to the Gospel, and where 26,000 children die every day of a hunger born

disease, and as disciples of Jesus *we want to give our lives for them.*

- This is not just something we do at Christmas, we want to be involved all year long, but Christmas is a key time when we can really do something intentional.
- God has blessed us financially, at least compared to the rest of the world, where 1.5 billion people live on less than \$1, and I want you to enjoy that as God's blessing and not feel guilty about it.
- But I also want you to be extravagantly generous and to share what God has given to us.
- Here's a phrase I want you to really embody this Christmas (all year round, but especially at Christmas): **Live sufficiently; give extravagantly.**
- 2 ways you can give are our **Believe project** and our **Christmas mission offering** (both of which are in your WG).

So today, we want to reflect on the gift that began all this: the gift that motivates us and gives us a pattern for giving. The gift of Jesus to us (**Now, that's not cliché at all, is it**—a pastor preaching on Jesus as a gift at Christmas... I'm probably the only pastor in America doing that this Sunday... but there's a reason I want us to focus on it.)

Isaiah 9:6 prophecies to us these words: *"For unto us... a Son is given."*

Now, as I showed you last week, Isaiah 9 is a prophecy. It was a prophecy spoken into a real situation... a Jewish King named King Ahaz was being threatened by attack from 2 different enemies... And so God, through Isaiah, tells Ahaz that He would help him... but in the midst of His promise to help them, God also made a prophecy to them about a Messiah that wouldn't be born for 700 years... and so we asked the question, How can a prophecy about a Messiah that wouldn't be born for 700 years help the situation they were in?

What we learned was that ultimately our problems require a much more significant solution than simply delivering us from a particular battle or particular problem... our problem, as a race, is not simply bad health or bad marriages or disintegrating families or attack from our enemies, but our problem is our separation from God, and ultimately all our other earthly problems go back to that one.

And so God, in the midst of his offer to help, promised a Messiah that would come to **save us from our sins** and **restore us to God** by dying on a cross in our place and thereby paying for and destroying the power of sin in our lives.

We cry out to be delivered from bad health; God intended to deliver us from the curse of death that causes disease. We cry

out to be delivered from injustice and broken relationships; God wants to deliver us from the sin and selfishness that causes bad relationships. They wanted help in a battle; God promised a Messiah who would end all wars.

Christians believe that ultimate healing begins through a relationship to Jesus, receiving Him as Savior and Lord. Unless you've been restored to God, even if you have peace, great health, great relationships, and an abundance of riches... you're still separated from real life, which is God Himself, and you stand eternally condemned.

So Jesus' first mission was to deal with our sins. Now, when Jesus comes again, the 2nd time, He will restore justice and peace on earth. Here was your Christmas theology lesson: *The 1st Advent brought relief from our sins. The 2nd Advent will bring relief from our suffering.*

You say... well, that's all great, but how does that help me in the present? I've got problems right now. **I showed you two things: (1) God does answer prayer in the present** (He loves to help His people; He did in this story and He will do it for you... many of us have experienced that) but secondly, and more importantly... (and this is one of the most important truths you will ever learn): **(2) what we get in the present is relationship with Him... a relationship so valuable and weighty to you that though it doesn't automatically change your pain, it changes your perspective on it.**

- **I told you a quick story about my dad..** (I feel that way about my wife; I see it in my kids... sometimes just my presence takes away pain).
- If the presence of another human who loves you is that kind of comfort to you, can you get your mind around what it's like for God who made the universe and who holds it all in his hand and who loves you more than anyone else has ever loved you to be there with you in all of it? If that is true, wouldn't that change how you looked at your pain?

So God describes Himself to them by **4 relational names**.

God said He would come to us (1st as) a **"Wonderful Counselor."**

- Jesus would be a Counselor who helps us with our problems. That means He helps; He understands, He sympathizes. And He's not one of those Counselors that lectures you about your failures and holds them over your head and beats you up about them. "Hey idiot, how did you get yourself into this situation? Seriously. How dumb are you? I feel like I'm wasting my time on you."
- *"If any of you need wisdom, let Him ask God, who gives help without reproach..." James 1:5* Many people are afraid to come to God because they screwed up their own life. When you repent, God doesn't reproach, He receives

and helps.

The 2nd name was “the Mighty God”: The Messiah was the God who could overcome all of life’s dangers.

- Jesus demonstrated that when He came. The Gospel of Mark opens up by systematically showing you that Jesus had power over everything that threatens us. The Gospel of Mark opens like a WWF match:
 - Round 1: Jesus vs. **disease**; winner, Jesus!
 - Round 2: Jesus vs. **demons**; winner, Jesus
 - Round 3: Jesus vs. the weather; **(disaster)**
 - Round 4: Jesus vs. **death**
 - Get to the end of Mark 5 and it’s like Mark is going... “Anybody else?”
 - I swear, if Mark had been written today, I’m pretty sure it would have opened with the phrase, “Ladies and gentlemen, are you ready to rumble?”
 - He was the Mighty God; **to put it in the vernacular, He was kicking tail and Mark was taking names.**
- But I showed you that the Messiah was not just mighty in those things (disease, demons, disaster, death), as awesome that is, He was even more mighty in what He was willing to go through to save us.
- The God who could command the wind and the waves and the meteors and the tsunamis was the God who crawled on his face through Gethsemane; who submitted Himself to the **horror** and **darkness** and **humiliation** and **torture** of the cross so that He could rescue us.
- In other words, He was not just mighty in power, He was **mighty in love, mighty to save!!**
- (I gave you one of my favorite quotes by the early church... **the true strength of a flame is not shown by its ability to burn upward, but by its ability to burn downward.** (Illus. *match vs. blowtorch*).
- God’s true might was not shown by His ability to create the universe (as awesome as that is), but by what He went through to rescue us. **Mighty to save.**

Today, we’re going to look at the next name God gives to us, v. 6: “the Everlasting Father” (v. 6)

This is kind of an odd name, (if you’re not familiar, Christians believe Jesus was the 2nd member of the Trinity) and He is called “God’s Son.” Normally the Son is not called “the Father,” but here “the Son” is called “the Father,” and the reason God gives Him that name is because Jesus would be to us, in relationship, like a Father.

And I would suggest to you that if there was ever anything we needed in a Savior, it was anew and restoring Father.

For many of you, some of the greatest pain in your life goes back to a messed up relationship to your father.

- I know some of you have good fathers and you have sweet memories; but for many of you, a lot of you, it was bad. Maybe he was abusive; maybe he was never there—divorce, or just too busy;
- maybe you just remember how disappointed he always seemed to be with you.
- Maybe he was just never emotionally connected to you, and now it's just awkward when you get around him, and that is especially brought to light at Christmas time. Like this:
 - ***Elf CLIP***

Nothing really speaks to our deepest pain at Christmas like Will Ferrell in green tights. Some of you can laugh at that, but it's really not funny.

- Even if you had a good dad, the best of fathers at some point, disappoint us.

How many of you had a father? OK, so this applies to everyone.

Sociologists and psychologists have consistently noted that one of the most, if not the most, significant factors that form how we engage with life is what our relationship with our father was like.

- For example, one California school study noted that 98% of its discipline issues were caused by emotionally-damaged young boys whose common characteristic was father-loss.
- I picked up a fascinating book this week by **Stephan Poulter**, [Father Factor](#)

: *How your Father's Legacy Impacts Your Career*: He outlines for you 4 types of dysfunctional fathers and what effects they have on your career...

- I want to use his 4 categories and help you see how your relationship with your dad might really affect how you look at your life, and even how you look at God—how what you experienced in your dad affects how you look at everything now.
- I'll change some of his names and add a lot of my own stuff...

1. The never satisfied dad

- This was the dad who, no matter what you did, never seemed to be satisfied with you.
- This is the parent who was always concerned with how well you did; how you looked; how you compared to the other kids; whether or not you won or where you ranked in your class.
- Poulter says that you can see this style early on... parents are image conscious; worried about how their 4 year old is dressed when they go to the park; always comparing how their kids are doing compared to the other kids at various stages.
- The message the kid got, even if it was unspoken, was that he had to achieve something to be worth something. Even if his parents never said it, the kid got the vibe: you're not smart *enough*; not athletic *enough*; not pretty *enough*; you're too fat; you don't try hard enough; you're not really impressive; you don't *really* make me proud. The kid hears, "I'd be happier with you if you were better. If you did more, you'd be worth more."
- So, for kids who grow up in this kind of home, proving themselves to others becomes the dominating theme of their lives.
- And, naturally, they apply it to God. Whatever you do, you have this nagging, unspoken doubt, *'Have I done enough? Does God approve of me? I bet God would be happier with me if only I were more self-disciplined; if only I were bolder in my witness; more generous.'* You compare yourself to others and say, "If only I were like that guy, I bet God would be happy with me..."
- If this is you, you'll see that your self-image goes in cycles... when you compare favorably to others, you feel great about yourself, you feel "approved"; but when you compare unfavorably, your whole system of self-worth is challenged.

2. The time-bomb dad

- This is the kind of dad you just never knew quite what to expect from him. If he had a bad day at work... the smallest thing would set him off. You were scared of what he would do and walked on eggshells.

- Maybe it was alcohol or drugs behind these outbursts; or maybe he was just under stress or couldn't control his temper. But more than once you got hurt... verbally, emotionally, or physically.
- Your dad kept order in the house through sheer volume, or the threat of a blow-up.
- Maybe it was sexual abuse... whatever...
- **You lived in fear of him...** Kids that grow up in this kind of household grow up hating their dads, because you can't love someone you are afraid of and can't trust.
- A lot of times these kids become control freaks... because, you see, when their dads exploded for whatever reason, their lives crashed, so they want to control everything now to keep that from happening.
- The author said these kids become like **Pearl Harbor**: *after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor a radar system was installed that is so sophisticated that it can detect any movement on the Pacific Ocean within a five-thousand-mile radius of Pearl Harbor.*
- That's the way these kids grow up. Always on the lookout for where the next blowup could happen and scared to not be fully in control.
- The author says, "(An incredible number) of anxiety disorders have their beginnings in this style of fathering."
- Well, then you apply this to God.
- I read of one little girl who, when her father would sexually molest her, he would quote Ephesians 6:1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." What's that do to your relationship to God?
- Or something bad happens, you think, "Well, what's God ticked off at me about now? What's God's problem?"
- And you never really learn to love God... because you can't love someone you're afraid of and you can't trust.
- You might fear God and obey Him for that reason, but you don't love Him and want to know Him... you resent Him.
- And, just like with your dad, you try and control Him by doing whatever you have to do to contain him: you go to church, be a good boy, do what it takes to keep him off your back... but again, you do it all out of duty; you have no real love for God, no adoration, no craving and desire to know God.

3. The emotionally distant dad

- This is the kind of dad that was stable, consistent, and moral... he never abandoned you or abused you... he just never expressed emotion to you.
- This is the television dad of the 1950's: *Leave it to Beaver*, *Father Knows Best* kind of dad.
- This kind of dad never abused you; he never cheated on your mom; but he never made you feel special.
- I've told you before that there are 3 things every child needs to hear from his father:
- I love you

- I'm proud of you
- You are good
- You never heard those... To hear your dad say "I love you" would feel awkward; hugs now are awkward. If you call and your dad answers the phone he immediately yells for your mom.
- Because of that, you never learned to open up emotionally to others; not your spouse; not your kids; not your friends. You stay at a distance.
- You apply this to God, and you see Him as distant. A lot of Christians are like this: God is more of an intellectual theory they obey and a Judge they report to than a Daddy that they love and crave to spend time with.
- I can see this by the way that a lot of people worship... it's not demonstrative. It's more ritual.
- They're good Christians, but there is no emotion.
- They relate to God intellectually, but not really emotionally.
- People who grow up with this kind of dad usually live with a fear of failure, a sense that when you are in pain you are alone, and you don't emotionally engage in your marriage or with your children.
- The author says, tragically, a lot of these dads had no idea that their emotional distance was causing that kind of emotional pain and conflict. They thought, "I'm doing my job, I'm providing for the family." "These men were clueless that part of being a 'good provider' included emotional nurturing and active involvement with the children."
- The author said that this fathering style made up approximately 50% of nuclear families between 1945 and 1980.

4. The absent dad

- This is the kind of dad that was just not part of his kids' life.
- Maybe he dad walked out on you. 40% of children in America live in fatherless homes.
- Or maybe he never left, but he was just never there. He was always working. Never spent time with you or came to your games.
- Years ago I filed the most incredible quote by Bo Jackson, some argue was the greatest athlete to ever live—professional in both football and baseball: *"My father has never seen me play a football or baseball game. Can you imagine? Here I am, Bo Jackson, one of the so-called premier athletes in the country, and I'm sitting in the locker room and envying every one of my teammates whose dad would come in and talk, have a beer with them after the game. I never experienced that."* **Bo Jackson, Sports Illustrated, 1995**
- Or Ricky Bobby's dad never came to watch him race. (Yes, that's the 2nd Will Ferrell reference today). Always left tickets for him at will call but he never came.

- This is the also the plot of every Tom Cruise movie filmed in the 80's.
- Here's what happens: children interpret the absence of their dad has a kind of personal rejection. You felt you weren't important to him because you weren't good enough. This produces an incredible sadness in the kid that he doesn't quite understand; this sadness is accompanied by a fear of aloneness, and a lot of times this sadness and fear, as the kid grows up, starts to express itself as anger.
- Article in the *N&O* this week... talking about the violence, gang culture, high school dropout rates among our teenagers here in the Triangle. Don't know if you know this, but our state ranks #4 in the nation in high school dropouts...
- more ph'd's per capita and just about more high school dropouts (good news is if you can get past high school here, you'll be a genius)
- In the absence of a father figure... young men try to define their masculinity in some other way: rebellion; sexual prowess; bragging about athletics; violence and gang activity.
- **Jay-Z and Eminem** become heroes to these guys *because they represent a masculinity* these guys didn't have in a father.
- Other guys who grew up without a present father figure become over-achievers, trying to be the man their father never was.
- Some girls who grow up in fatherless homes become very loose sexually because they crave the attention of a man that they never got from their father.
- Do you know what % of female pornography models were sexually abused? 90%. The absence of her father, or abuse by her father, turned her to crave the attention of men. (Some of you guys, next time you are looking at porn why don't you think about that... was it her father, or an uncle, or her grandfather that she lost her virginity to?)
- Again, then, you apply this to God. You don't want to know God because inwardly you feel like He'll just leave you or you can't really open up to Him or you're not good enough. You might begrudgingly obey Him, but He's not somebody to depend on and build your life on.
- When I was doing my Ph.D. studies I discovered the most incredible thing: Almost all the famous atheists of the past century—Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Bertrand Russell, Madelyn Murray O'Hare, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Albert Camus—all had one thing in common: *the absence of a father in their childhood. That anger and resentment expressed itself toward God.*

Fathers were to be a ray of the sun to us (**Eph 3:14** says that all earthly fathering is patterned after the heavenly father)

CS Lewis example was that our dads were to be to us like a ray of the sun... We were to feel the love and acceptance and security of our earthly fathers and that was to be our training wheels to teach us to love and relate to God our father.

For many of you, however, your father has been more of a cloud that obstructs your view of God rather than a ray that leads you to Him.

The greatest failure, I believe, of mankind has been the failure of fathering. If the world is to be corrected and set aright, it will have to be through the restoration of fatherhood.

So here, in Isaiah 9, we see a description of the Messiah that ought to scream salvation to us: He will be called the *Everlasting Father*.

- Jesus would be the Father to us that we have always longed for...
- And He would teach us men to become God-like fathers again.
- In the last verse of the Old Testament, Malachi 4:6, Malachi says of the Messiah... (this is how the whole Old Testament ends, a prophecy of the Messiah): "...he (the Messiah) will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children back to their fathers." **Malachi 4:6**
- He would restore to Fatherhood to us.

So let me show you: ***Jesus, the Everlasting Father:***

- **Rather than being never-satisfied, Jesus accepts you fully, as you are**
- The Messiah's salvation was not that if you could be good enough for long enough then He would save you. Jesus' salvation was an announcement of His acceptance of us based on the work *He would* do for us: He would live the life we were supposed to live and die the death we had deserved to die, in our place, so that if we would just accept it we would be immediately and fully forgiven and accepted.
- This is seen in the fairly famous story where the woman caught in adultery is brought to Jesus. Woman caught in adultery, what should we do, who among you... where is your accusers. None Lord.... "*Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.*" (**John 8:11**). Notice the order... Acceptance 1st; then change. We change not to be accepted, but because we have been accepted.
- Listen: Your Father, your Heavenly Dad, could not love you more than He does right at this moment. If you had been perfect all your life, He wouldn't love you more. If your life has been a series of mistakes He doesn't love you less.

His acceptance is a gift all you must do is *receive*.

- He fully accepts you; you must just believe and receive it.
- You say, "Well, I don't feel this acceptance." Your feelings don't change reality. God has said this is the case and to be saved means simply that you believe Him. That means that if you *feel* abandoned, it's because you are projecting your own feelings onto God, but God doesn't define Himself by your feelings. God is what He is, and you should bring your feelings into conformity with His reality.

- **Jesus is not a "time bomb," but "slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love."**
 - *"The Lord is compassionate and gracious; slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love."* **Psalm 103:8**
 - "Abounding" means consistent. He doesn't blow up.
 - Yes, there are times He disciplines us and times He allows painful things to happen to us. But when He does, it is never to take out vengeance on us, or because He's having a bad day and we have irritated Him, but solely for our good.
 - **Hebrews 12:10** says even though sometimes our when our earthly fathers discipline us they do so just because they're in a bad mood or we irritate them, *"He disciplines us always for our good."*
 - Paul said the same thing this way, in a verse a lot of Christians know but that few of us actually believe: *"I know that God is working together all things for good in my life."* **Romans 8:28**
 - David understood this, and said, *"Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life."* **Ps 23:6.**
 - *Can you say that?* That you have assurance that in *everything* that happens to you God's goodness, and mercy, and good and loving plan for you are controlling the situation?
 - I'm telling you it would change your life.
 - Some of you are bitter about your life, how it's turned out, and it's because you don't really trust God as your Father.
- **Jesus is not emotionally distant, but emotionally engaged.**
 - "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." **Romans 5:5**
 - *In us... pouring out love.* Doesn't get more intimate than that.
 - Here's another verse on this I find amazing, if not a little embarrassing: *"The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing."* **Zephaniah 3:17**
 - Imagine if your dad rejoiced over you with loud singing and dancing: "This is my son, I'm so proud of him..." Thanks, Dad. But, later.

- Jesus is not absent, but **ever present**.
- *"I will never leave you or forsake you."* **Heb 13:5** Never.
- *"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* **Romans 5:8**
- A lot of kids, because their dad is absent, interpret that as a form of rejection. Jesus is exactly the opposite. When we actually did deserve to be rejected, it was *then* Christ died for us.
- Or look at this one: *"Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands."*
Isaiah 49:15
- I've experienced this 3 times. She has a scary radar sense. Kid hiccups. She's out of bed like a pinball in the dark hitting everything on the way out.
- My wife's necklace; God's like, "I *tattooed* you"... and on His hands! Tattoo looks like a nail print.

We crave this... we yearn for this type of father. The reason for that is because we were created for it. And your fathers, who were supposed to be a ray of the sun to you, were a cloud. And many of you say, "Well, yeah... that's why I can't understand God. My dad was too screwed up." Of course you can. That's why you are so mad and disappointed and bitter at your dad, because you have an inward sense of what he's supposed to be like because God has imprinted on your heart the pattern of the REAL Father. *"For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in."* **Ps 27:10**

Some of you, your earthly father "left you," let you down. **Judge your earthly Father by your heavenly one; not your Heavenly Father by your earthly one.**

(You say, But I have a hard time seeing that God has been there, my father, always in control. Where was He when I was being abused? I feel like God my Father has let me down as much as my earthly one. I know... look to the cross. And where you can't see or understand, trust. Think about the cross. Never looked like evil was more in control. But God was at that moment working His greatest plan for our good. The same is happening in your life. It may seem that God is absent, out of control, but believe the love demonstrated at the cross and trust Him even when you are in darkness and can't feel or understand it. The cross assures you He is always with you; always in love with you; always watching over you. Always in loving control of your life.

Jesus, the Everlasting Father. (Doesn't this thrill your heart? Doesn't this overwhelm you with awe?)

Now... One more question: **You say, "OK...** this is a great talk on fathering. But why are you talking about it in terms of prophecy? Why is this a key prophecy?"

God knew a key component of our salvation would be the restoring of fatherhood to us. And this is something that God had to give us from heaven, not something we could do for ourselves, and so God prophesied (He foretold) that He would do it for us.

The whole theme of the Old Testament, the whole point of prophecy, is that what we most need in terms of our salvation is not something we can work up for ourselves, it has to come from above. It is a gift. The whole Bible is a message that is coming from heaven, and we should wait for it... and believe it when He comes.

Let me show you something about the context of Isaiah 9... Isaiah 9 starts out by saying, "*Nevertheless...* the people walking in darkness have seen a great light..." (**Isaiah 9:1–2**). What comes before that "nevertheless?" What's it pointing back to? Look back one verse. Talking about the situation that Israel is in, and it says, "They (Israel) will look to the earth, but behold, only distress and darkness and the gloom of anguish! And they will be thrust into thick darkness...*Nevertheless...* the people walking in darkness have seen a great light... unto us a Son *is given.*" (**Isaiah 8:22–9:7**)

The theme of the whole Bible, from cover to cover, is that what we need to be saved is something only God can give, not something we can give to ourselves. Want to hear one of the most dominant, important themes of the whole Bible (one of top 2): **Only God can save.**

- I was asked recently at a dialogue... this is the theme of the whole Bible: God alone saves. Man wants to save Himself, but only God can. What we need comes not from the earth, but from *heaven*.

You can't save yourself, but God is willing and able... so look to Him. For God's sake, look to Him.

- Are you scared to stand before God? Scared to die? Look to God.
- Is your family in disarray? Look to God.
- Are you overwhelmed by addiction? Look to God.
- Hurt your kids by you because you failed to be the father to them? Look to God!
- Have you been hurt by a bad relationship with your parents?

You must just come to Him! Receive the gift. What it looks like:

- Salvation
- Being a part of the church: get to know Him.
- No accident you are here... *Snow*. God is seeking you!
- A lot of you lack assurance of salvation... you think you can't know. What kind of Father wouldn't want you to be assured of their love?
 - I don't want my kids to be unsure of my love! **Illus: *Kharis in pool***. She's full of doubt; she's embarrassed. Not doing well. At that moment, I want her to be sure of my love and commitment.
 - God wants you to be assured of His love, and have joy and confidence in that knowledge. God wants to you know...
 - Here is the Gospel. Jesus, the Everlasting Father, paid for all your sin, by dying in your place, so that He could offer you a gift. To receive it is to know Him.
 - When people tell me they don't know for sure whether or not they are saved, I know that means they don't understand salvation. Christ is salvation. To simply accept Him, to accept the gift, is to be assured of salvation. *Have you received it?* Are you depending on Christ alone for salvation?
 - Here's how I explained it to my daughter: What do you have to receive the gift? Just take it! Have you taken it?

Bullpen:

- (Heard about a married couple who was having major marital problems. They went to marriage counseling seeking help. Within six months, their marriage was significantly better. The husband asked the counselor how he had helped them so much. The counselor replied, "When you know that someone loves you and is for you, then you're half-way home." Believe that God loves and is for you, and you're half-way there to healing!)
- I was asked recently at a trialogue... this is the theme of the whole Bible: God alone saves. Man wants to save Himself, but only God can. What we need comes not from the earth, but from *heaven*. Islam teaches you save yourself. Naturalists believe we save ourselves.
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- One of the things that will set you free is when you realize that God changes us not by reacting to our performance, but by giving us a vision of what He wants to do, the potential with which He has made us and calling us up into that. A friend of mine calls that the difference in visionary or reactionary parenting. A reactionary tries to change his child by reacting to his son's failures and whipping him from behind; a visionary tries to change his child most by holding a crown over his son's head and growing him into it. God is a visionary parent; this is what you could be; this is what I have intended for you; go forward and grab it! Any whipping that He did, He did to Christ.

The greatest failure of mankind has been the failure of fathering.

- A very important dimension of the first sin of man in the eating of the forbidden tree was the failure of spiritual leadership. The Hebrew indicates he was standing right beside her when she took the fruit... Adam knew that God had said if they ate of the forbidden fruit they would die, so the fact that he stood right there and let her eat it means a) he was not actively leading her and b) the coward was willing to use her to test out if God was serious or not. Adam was the first "absent, uninvolved" father figure!
- This is the perpetual curse we as men have perpetuated. Our first failures have been as fathers and all of you in this room are affected by it! Even if you feel like you had a great dad... you experienced pain where He failed.
 -
 - And I can't really recommend the book because he doesn't really understand what the longing of our hearts is all

about; his diagnosis is right on but his prognosis is terrible.

- And what I want to show you is that a lot of times, how we relate to our fathers often influences how we relate to God.
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- **((Lance Morrow, Time: “The damage caused by a father’s absence may be severe and may last a lifetime. It is a shadow; the longing of sons for their fathers is almost physical; something passionate, profound. It is often mysterious to sons what it is they want from their fathers, but I... see it in my sons: their longing for me.”**
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- All kinds of speculation on this... some people tie it to the effects of the war, that many men just shut off their emotions.
- Couldn’t show emotion. Awkward hugging moments.
- Cross: absolute acceptance: could not love you more
- Resurrection: ability to restore
-
- When you come to Him and admit need, He helps. James says He gives us help “without reproach.” That means that He doesn’t criticize, even when He could. There are so many things I think I understand better about God now that I am a father. The way my heart responds to my kids when they call out to me... even when they have gotten themselves in a bad situation. When my kids have made a mistake and they know it and they’re in trouble and they’re sorry for it... I go to them.
- One California school study noted that 98% of its special education students were emotionally-damaged young boys whose common characteristic was father-loss.
- Christmas time: Some of you have sweet memories of your father; others of you, it’s painful. For some, it’s just awkward and confusing.
- *Elf*
- How we see God... supposed to be a ray. Instead, it can be a cloud. Project those things onto God.

The anti-Christmas.

- “People”

- “We are the World?”

8:22 They will look to earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.... *Nevertheless...* the people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

Salvation comes from above!

Nihilism from the earth...

5. Compassionate

- Accepting; corrects gently in love, not explodes in anger. When he disciplines it is obvious his goal is the good, not just expressing his irritation. He is emotionally engaged and is a constant presence in our lives.

How many of you ever had a father? So, this applies to everybody.

- And it calls Him the **Wonderful** Counselor... I showed you that the word “wonderful” is a Hebrew word that means wondrous and awesome and majestic... when you put those together what you see is that ***the way that God helps us most in our problems (the way he is our Counselor) is by allowing us to see how awesome and wondrous He is. To see His value to us.*** In Christ, you have the presence and the promise of the God who holds the whole universe in His hands; the God whose love defies our descriptions and even our imaginations; and the absolute approval of the only One whose opinion really matters.