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Advent 2 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“And His name shall be called . . . Everlasting Father”

Text: Isaiah 9:2-7; John 3:1-8

“For to 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 . . . Everlasting Father . . .”

Although I have not yet experienced it, I think one of the joys of being a parent is watching your children grow up to be parents themselves. Children cannot remain children, they must grow up. And so too the child in the manger. Those who remember Him only at Christmas never let Him grow up and become anything other than the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in the manger. And that is sad, and tragic, for then they will never know Him as He wants to be known; they will never know Him as anything other than a spectacle, that shepherds and wise men and *we* come to visit, but only to visit. But He has come to be much more than that. He has come to be, as Isaiah writes, a child who grows up – to be called an **Everlasting Father**.

Now, it’s tempting to see Trinitarian overtones in this verse, along the lines of when Jesus told Philip, ***“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”*** (John 14:9) But that’s not Isaiah’s point here. He’s not giving us a lesson in the doctrine of the Trinity in these verses, but telling us something about our Saviour. And Isaiah wants us to know that this child Jesus will not remain a child, but will grow up to be a “father” in His own right – a begetter of children. But not in the *modern day fantasy world of unbelievers and critics*, who claim that Jesus never *really* died on the cross, but faked His death, so that after He revived He ran off with Mary Magdalene and had kids of His own! No, He is to be called the Father of all who are born again; of all who are begotten from above; all who are begotten of the Spirit and are children of God.

For without Him, without His atonement, without His forgiveness, without His death and resurrection, **there would be no children of God**. We would all still be in our sins and not God’s *children*, but His *enemies*. And that is true even of the believers in the Old Testament, who were saved not only because they believed in God *the Father*, but because they believed the promise of God to send a Saviour. *For what Jesus did in time is applied for eternity*. His work of salvation is applied both to those who came before Him, and to those who come after Him. And so it is in *this* sense that He is a Father to us and all believers, giving life through the forgiveness of our sins. The divine Bridegroom

begetting children who are born of His bride, the Church.

But Isaiah does not only call Jesus here a father, but *more* – he calls Him an ***Everlasting Father***. Which is terribly important, because it reminds us that there is much more to being a father than just begetting children. There are plenty of men-folk around today who do that, but who then *abandon* their children – emotionally, physically, and spiritually. For many today, the act of procreation is the *only* act of fatherhood. And so they are really no fathers at all. . . . **But not so this one!** We are not begotten and given new life, and then abandoned and left on our own! We have one who acts as a father for eternity. One who will never cease to guard us and care for us, supplying *all* our needs, both physically and spiritual, and who has promised to do so. And that is something that not even good fathers can do! For no earthly father – as good as he may be, and as hard as he may try – can be an everlasting father. We must all leave our children behind at some time. Death will take us; and our children, who become the fathers, must carry on without us.

But again, not so this one! For He will die, yes; a *real* death! For His children. But He will then also rise from the dead, to be an *everlasting* Father, who having once died cannot die again. And if He is an everlasting Father, you know what else that means? It means He must have everlasting children also. And if there is an everlasting Father, and everlasting children, that means there is also an everlasting Kingdom! A Kingdom of dominion over sin, death, and the devil – which is exactly what Isaiah tells us, when He says that our Saviour has broken ***“the yoke of His burden, the staff of his shoulder, and the rod of his oppressor.”*** That the tramping war boot and bloody garments are needed no more. For this child, who to us is born, will grow up to win the victory over all our enemies. He will not stay in the manger, but hang from the cross and rise from the grave, so that ***of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end.*** So that He will be for us an **Everlasting Father**.

And so it is. ***The zeal of the Lord of hosts has done it.*** And *what He has done in time is applied for eternity*. Applied to you and me, by grace through faith. We are children of the Gospel, born again and begotten from above by the Spirit in the divine delivery rooms of Word and Sacrament; Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and Holy Communion. And what a comfort that is! To know that we are always His beloved. To know that nothing can separate us from Him – not even death. For this One, who came from eternity and into time as a tiny baby, will also come to take us, His children, from this time and into eternity.

And so rejoice! To know that we have such a Saviour! A Saviour who is as a father to us. Who will not leave us on our own, but has promised to be with us always. That is the

One whose birth we celebrate this season. The One born of us, that we might be born again of Him.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.