

**A NAME FOR EVERY NEED: ABBA**

Sermon written by Martha-Jean Fitch

October 8, 2023

TEXT: Isaiah 9:6, Romans 8:15-17

As we begin today, let's start off with a brief game of trivia. Some of you will be really good at this, while it might be a struggle for others. But I think all of us will get a few answers right. We'll see how this goes. This is a game about fathers. Just shout out your answers. The first one should be pretty easy:

Who is the father of our country? George Washington  
How about the father of the light bulb? Thomas Edison  
The father of immunology and vaccines? Louis Pasteur  
Fathers of the airplane? The Wright brothers  
The father of the telephone? Alexander Graham Bell  
The father of the American automobile industry? Henry Ford  
Father of the atomic bomb? Robert Oppenheimer  
The father of dynamite? Alfred Nobel  
The father of the Nobel Peace Prize? Alfred Nobel  
One in the same person!

One more – who was the Father of Eternity? Or should I say, “who IS the Everlasting Father?” Jesus Christ – the Son of God to given to us – as found in the book of Isaiah.

Turn with me to the book of Isaiah, the sixth chapter – and we'll continue our series about the names of God by looking at the names mentioned in Isaiah 9. While you are finding that book, which is somewhat near the middle of the Bible, let me tell you a bit about this prophet Isaiah. He was writing in a period of history when the Israelites were in a time of war. The Assyrians were attacking. It was a scary time – a time when the people didn't know what the future held and if there was any hope left. It was a shaky time and they needed something to hold on to – something (or better yet, Someone) they could cling to, like a sure and steady anchor.

Have you ever felt like that? Like you just wish there was that promise that you could hold onto, to steady you through uncertain times?

Isaiah 9:6 is one of those promises – promises for the people of Isaiah's day – but for us today as well who live in turbulent times. If you have your Bible open, I encourage you to underline or highlight this important verse, if you haven't already. You will see the words up on the screen and I invite you to read them together with me – with great boldness and confidence. This is a promise for you and me!

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.  
And the government shall be upon his shoulder;  
And His name shall be called*

*Wonderful, counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting  
Father, the Prince of Peace.*

What incredible names of the Messiah – the Son of God – showing us the kind of relationship God wants to have with us.

Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor – the wisdom and direction that we so desperately need.

He is our Mighty God. And notice that name used here in Hebrew for God is El for Elohim. He created everything and holds everything together the power of His word.

He is the Prince of Peace – who brings the perfect wholeness of shalom...that peace that surpasses all understanding.

And He is our Everlasting Father – the name we focus on today. If we were to look in Hebrew for this word, we would see the compound word Aviad. “Avi” is the name for Father that is connected to the word “ad”, meaning forever, eternal, everlasting. It could be defined as the “Forever One”.<sup>1</sup> Literally – Jesus is the Alpha and Omega – the beginning and the end. He has always been and will always be. He really is the Father of eternity. We know He was with the Father, our Creator God, in the beginning when the world was created. In fact, nothing was created except through Him. (John 1:4) There was never a time that Jesus wasn’t there. And He will be with us forever!

What that means is that Jesus is over all our past, present and future. We can trust Him with all of that! If we have a past where we have made mistakes and had sorrow, regret and bitterness – Jesus can redeem that! God can help us make sense of it all and help us to change our regret to peace and our bitterness to gratitude.

We have an Everlasting Father that walks with us in our present as our Constant Companion – everywhere we go – and He will never, ever leave us or fail us. In Psalm 103, we hear David declare that the Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate. He is merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. That’s how much He loves us and wants to be in that forever relationship with us.

God also gives us a future and a hope. We don’t have to be paralyzed with fear of what is going to happen in the future – because we are assured that God is there in our future. There will never be a time when we don’t have Jesus – because there is nothing that can separate us from His love.

And as we put our hope and trust in Jesus – He will give us everlasting life. We don’t have to worry about what happens when we die. We can be assured that Jesus will be there too – carrying us home to the place He has prepared for us! He is everlasting and He gives us everlasting life!

Thus, in the Old Testament – the name Aviad, our Everlasting Father, gives us a hope and a promise!

Now as we go to the New Testament, we see the Aramaic word for Father is Abba and the Greek word for Father is Pater. Pater is the most often used name for God the Father in the Greek New Testament. But we know that Jesus and His disciples didn't speak Greek – but the everyday language of his people which was Aramaic. So everywhere we see the word “Pater” in the Greek New Testament, behind it was the use of “Abba” in spoken Aramaic...the word Jesus would use to speak of His Father. Jesus prayed to Abba when hanging on the cross – “Father, forgive them”. But Jesus also used another Aramaic phrase, calling out to God, “Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?” – notice the similarity to the name Elohim!

No one ever addressed God directly as “My Father” in Bible times. It was considered disrespectful. They might describe God as the Father of the nation – or the Father of faith – but to say “My Father” was way too familiar, too intimate. Writer John Bloom shares: *“Abba was the most common term Aramaic speakers used when speaking to their earthly fathers — Jesus and his (half) siblings would have used it when addressing Joseph. To talk to God this way outraged the Jewish leaders. To them this led to blasphemy worthy of capital punishment, because “he was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.” (John 5:18)*<sup>2</sup>

But Jesus had that kind of intimate connection with God the Father – being His Son. What was so amazing was that Jesus taught all of His disciples that they could relate to God as “Abba Father”. When Jesus gave the disciples – and all of us – a model or pattern for how to pray what we know as the “Lord’s Prayer”, the first thing He taught us, was to pray, Our Abba – Our Father.

Commentator David Legge described this incredible privilege and intimacy this way: *“This is the picture – a little Jewish home where there is a little Jewish boy, and Daddy is out all day working perhaps as a Shepherd with the sheep. He comes back at the end of the day and opens the door, and little Benjamin comes running and throws his arms around his neck and cries: ‘Abba! Abba! Abba!’ God’s word says that that is what it means to rise up in your heart towards you Father in heaven – that childlike awe and affection that a toddler has for his Daddy – we ought to experience towards Father in heaven.”*<sup>3</sup>

I John 3:1 says, *“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God.”* I love that word “lavished”! God loved us so much that He paid the ultimate price in sacrificing His only Son so that we could be saved – and be adopted as His children.

The Apostle Paul spoke of this in Romans 8:15-16 - our change from being a slave to sin to a beloved child of God. Turn in your Bibles to Romans 8 and follow along as I read: <sup>15</sup>*So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, “Abba, Father.”*<sup>16</sup>*For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children.*

We have such a privilege. We are adopted into the family. We don't need to stand afar off from God, but we can come boldly into His presence – and we can know, through His promises, that He will hear us and care for us. We are not slaves – but children and we can come into his immediate presence and call Him “Abba”.

Some of you might remember this famous picture from 1963 of John F. Kennedy, sitting at his desk during the Cuban Missile crisis. There were many dignitaries there at the Oval Office to discuss the crisis - and they all had to show credentials to enter the Oval Office – but there was John John, playing at the feet of the president. He had a right to be there. Nobody else could do that, only a child of the president. And that is the privilege we have been given as children of God. We have free and full access to our Father in heaven and we know He wants to be in a close, intimate relationship with us.

But there may be some of you here today that may be turned off by the name father to describe God because your experience with your earthly father was such a bad one. Your father may have been abusive or absent or uncaring. In some cases, you may not have even known your father. And that can bring a lot of pain.

But please hear that you have a perfect Father that is beyond any of our sinful imperfect fathers. The Father that will never leave us or disappoint or fail us. Psalm 27:10 says: *“even if my mother and father abandoned me, the Lord will hold me close.”* Some of us may have had a good relationship with our fathers but now they have gone on to their heavenly homes. We don't have them in our lives anymore and we miss them terribly. They were not a forever father because earthly fathers cannot live forever and be there for us always. But we have a perfect Heavenly Father! We will ever be out of His grip! Jesus said, *“I give them eternal life and they will never perish. No one can snatch them out of my hand!”*

God the Father loves you and calls you, His treasure. He even says that He takes great delight in you and with His love He will calm all your fears. And He will rejoice over you with singing! (Zephaniah 3:17) That is the kind of God we have – a good, good Father!

Sheridenn Voysey tells the story of Malcolm who didn't know the good news of God as a good father. Even though he appeared confident as a teenager, his confidence was a mask. In truth, a turbulent home left him fearful, desperate for approval, and feeling falsely responsible for his family's problems. “For as far back as I remember,” he says, “every morning I would go into the bathroom, look in the mirror, and say out loud to myself, ‘You are stupid, you are ugly, and it's your fault.’”

Malcolm's self-loathing continued until he was twenty-one, when he had a divine revelation of his identity in Jesus. “I realized that God loved me unconditionally and nothing would ever change that,” he recalls. “I could never embarrass God, and He would never reject me.” In time, Malcolm looked in the mirror and spoke to himself differently. “You are loved, you are beautiful, you are gifted,” he said, “you are a child of God.”

Voysey continues: *Malcolm’s experience illustrates what God’s Spirit does for the believer in Jesus—He frees us from fear by revealing how profoundly loved we are (Romans 8:15, 38–39), and confirms that we are children of God with all the benefits that status brings (8:16–17; 12:6–8). As a result, we can begin seeing ourselves correctly by having our thinking renewed (12:2–3).*

Years later, Malcolm still whispers those words each day, reinforcing who God says he is. In the Father’s eyes he’s loved, beautiful, and gifted. And so are we.<sup>4</sup>

That’s why the name Father is a name we can cling to for our every need.

As I close, I am going to read Romans 8:15-17 one more time – but this time from the “Passion Version”. Let these words sink into your soul. Knowhow very much you are loved by our Father God as His child.

*“And you did not receive the “spirit of religious duty,” leading you back into the fear of never being good enough. But you have received the “Spirit of full acceptance,” enfolding you into the family of God. And you will never feel orphaned, for as he rises up within us, our spirits join him in saying the words of tender affection, “Beloved Father!” For the Holy Spirit makes God’s fatherhood real to us as he whispers into our innermost being, ‘You are God’s beloved child!’”*

## PRAYER

*Father, thank You for loving me, gifting me, and making me Your child. May Your Spirit work in me today to truly, deeply believe it.*

## INVITATION

## RESOURCES

Hebrew Word of the Day, <https://hebrew.jerusalemprayerteam.org/aviad-everlasting-father/>

<sup>1</sup>Jon Bloom, “We Call Him Father”, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/we-call-him-father>

<sup>2</sup>David Legge – “The Father Heart of God – Part 6: “Abiding in Abba’s Love”  
[www.preachtheword.com/sermon/father06.shtml](http://www.preachtheword.com/sermon/father06.shtml)

<sup>3</sup>[Sheridan Voysey](https://oddb.org/2020/08/05/loved-beautiful-gifted), “Loved, Beautiful, Gifted”. <https://oddb.org/2020/08/05/loved-beautiful-gifted>