

Sunday morning December 17th 2017 at CBC

Sermon outline: 'Everlasting Father' – Isaiah 9.6

"Eternity, Eternity, I wish that I could sound or shout that word to everyone in the streets of Sydney. You've got to meet it, where will you spend Eternity?"

Eternity confronts us this morning as we return for the third time to a prophecy given to a man called Isaiah about 700 years before the birth of Jesus, ie about 2700 years ago.

[1] THE PROMISE OF A CHILD

Isaiah lived amongst people who, through their own fault, were in spiritual darkness. They were in darkness and distress.

But Isaiah had a message of hope:

Darkness would turn to light. Defeat would turn to victory. Sadness would turn to rejoicing. The yoke would be lifted.

And how would this happen? Isaiah's message was a birth announcement. A special, indeed unique, baby was going to be born. Now we might think that what this meant for the people of Isaiah's day was that it would only be a matter of a few years, relatively speaking, before this ruler took up his authority. Had he perhaps already been born? Were there, say, less than 20 years to wait before he was old enough to rule?

It wasn't going to be like that.

One way of understanding God's call to every generation is this, as expressed by the theologian and preacher Jonathan

Edwards - *"The task of every generation is to discover in which direction the sovereign Redeemer is moving, then move in that direction."*

For Isaiah and those faithful people of his day, it meant identifying their eternal destiny with the promise of the birth of this special child. They would not see the child born – that would happen later in the procession. But as long as they put their hope for eternal security in this child, they would be eternally safe even though his birth was in the future.

[2] THE ARRIVAL OF THE CHILD

People were amazed at the teaching of Jesus, for he spoke with authority, not like contemporary teachers. People noted the astonishing power at his disposal. People were astonished that he forgave people their sins and put them right with God. Was he the person whom Isaiah 'saw'?

Yes, Jesus is the Wonderful Counsellor! Yes, he is the mighty God. Yes, he is the Prince of peace.

Which leaves the question for this morning – in what sense is he the everlasting Father?

[a] 'Everlasting Father' does not mean God the Father

God the Father is not God the Son, God the Son is not God the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit is not God the Father. But God the Father is God, God the Son is God, and God the Holy Spirit is God.

In Isaiah 9, therefore, the designation ‘everlasting Father’ does not mean that this child to be born will be God the Father. He is always God the Son.

[b] ‘Everlasting father’ = ‘Father of eternity’

[i] the ‘father figure’ – of/in a community, church, nation

A father figure is someone who adopts the role of father either for those who have no father themselves, or in a different environment, in a firm, or some community where they are looked upon as person who provides continuity and security. Jesus is that figure. See: John 14.1 and 18

[ii] the very source, essence, personification, fullness of eternity

Jesus is the father of eternity. He is its ultimate representation and ambassador. *See: John 3; John 6:40; John 6:68; John 10:27-28; 1 Timothy 6:12; 1 John 1:1-2 1*

[3] THE MISSION OF THE CHILD

See Luke 23:32-43

Here were two criminals about to meet eternity. What a place to be in – facing eternity and having no peace with God.

But on this day there was a third man between the two criminals. And who is he? He is the father of eternity!

One criminal asked for help. Bishop Ryle, a 19th century evangelical bishop is often quoted to the effect that *‘one thief was saved (in order) that no sinner might despair, but only one, that no sinner might presume.’*

He went on to note that the criminal has left a clear pattern of what constitutes the faith and repentance that lead to eternal life.

[a] A fear of the awesome God He says to the other man, 'don't you fear God?'

[b] An acknowledgement of his sin 'We are justly punished for we are getting what our deeds deserved'.

[c] A recognition of Christ's innocence 'This man has done nothing wrong'.

[d] Personal faith in Christ's ability to save and in the reality of his kingdom 'Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom.'

[e] A willingness to pray For all of this was surely a prayer

[f] A spirit of humility 'Remember me' – As Ryle says, 'He mentions no great thing. Enough for him if he is remembered by Christ.'

Hebrews 11:39-40 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. 40 God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. NIV

Is the father of eternity our father? Is the Lord Jesus our rock and saviour? None of us dare face eternity without him.

To God be the glory!