

“Everlasting Father” // Isaiah 9:6–7 //

Hope Has a Name #2

DPAC and Pastoral Prayer

Hello, Summit Church! I promised you last week—as Uncle J.D.—that if you didn’t get tickets to Christmas at DPAC, you’d be hearing from Cranky Uncle J.D. this weekend.

- And sure enough, **within 7 hours of making them public, all 3200 tickets for each of the 6 services** were sold out.

Which leads me to **2 things I need you to hear—1 to do.**

- **Maybe you got tickets you can’t use.** Maybe you signed in under 7 different names and got 50 tickets. **If that is you, I want you to turn back** in what you are not using.
 - **Let me implore you: Please do that**—what a tragedy to have an empty seat that someone who needs to hear about Jesus could sit in because you didn’t use the ticket.
 - **christmasatdpac.com**, there are instructions for what to do.
- **Others of you didn’t get a ticket** and you want to know how to get one.
 - **Maybe you meet someone over the next couple** of weeks and you really want to invite them, go there and you might be able to get one.
 - Again: **christmasatdpac.com**
- **You can also try just showing up at the door.** You do need a ticket to get in, but at a certain point we open up whatever is left to

Works Consulted:

“Everlasting Father,” Resident Geniuses

“Knowing the Father,” Tim Keller.

“Everlasting Father,” Craig Groeschel

Families and Faith, Vern Bengtson, Norella M. Putney, and Susan Harris

“Fathering and God, Isaiah 9,” Greg Surratt

walk-ins. **In 5 years, we have yet to have to turn a person away.** (But there’s always a time for 1sts, so, no guarantees).

Now, I want us to spend some time praying together. The church, Jesus said, is supposed to be a HOUSE OF PRAYER. And I want us to pray for these services at DPAC.

1. That our friends who don’t know Jesus would receive the invitations to come.
2. That the Spirit of Jesus will be powerfully present, calling unbelievers to salvation.
3. That God would give wisdom and clarity to those of us leading to know how to best present Jesus.

You can pray with someone—group of 3 or 4 around you—or by yourself.

- Either way, *I want you to pray out loud.* We **need to hear** each other pray as an encouragement to each other.
- Now, if you are just totally weirded out by that, or you are like, “I’ve never really prayed in front of anyone else.” Just drop your head and pray or sit silently. That is the universal symbol at the Summit Church that you want to be left alone.

OK, Isa 9, if you have your Bibles...

As we begin today, I’m curious... How many in here are expecting a child? Pregnant, expecting to have a baby?

One of the things they didn't cover in my pre-marital counseling is the difficulty of choosing a name for your kids. I've had to do it 4 times—it can be a real relationship tester.

There are **all these rules** no one ever tells you about.

- For example, **if you or your spouse ever dated anyone** with a certain name, that name is off limits from now until the end of the world. Don't even suggest it for the dog.
- **If you suggest a name for a girl that reminds your spouse of a girl** that she didn't like in high school, that name is also off limits.
- **And then you** have to think through 1st and last names carefully. If not, you're like the Mann family who named their daughter Anita and sentenced their daughter to do through life declaring "Anita Mann." You can see how that could be a problem.

This week in my extensive and highly academic sermon research I found a list by Craig Groeschel of **unfortunate name combinations** of actual people:

- For example, one person named their daughter **Eileen Wright**. You could see how awkward that would be... get certain conversations started off on the wrong foot.
- There was another one, though I think this one is awesome: **Lois Price**. I don't know, that name just makes me feel close to God. *Lois Price*.
- There was one lady, **Helen**, who married a guy with last name name, "**Back**." After 10 years of marriage to her, he said it was true.
- **FOR RADIO, CUT THIS SECTION OUT:** ~~Perhaps the worst was **Keesha May** who had the last name Ash. *Keesha May you just don't even want to go there.*¹~~

Names are important and they can reveal a lot about us. So, it's important to note that **when God promised to send a Messiah**, he

described him by 4 important names that showed us what kind of Savior he would be to us, 4 names that addressed the problems we were facing: **"...And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."** Isaiah 9:6

Today, we're going to dive into "**Everlasting Father.**" I would suggest to you that if **there ever was anything we needed in a Savior**, any relationship that needed to be redeemed and restored, it is an Everlasting Father.

Some of you have great dads or you **had great dads**, and your memories of him are fond and cherished.

But for many of you, you didn't have a great relationship with your dad, and some of **the greatest pain in your life** comes from your relationship with him.

- Maybe he was **never there**. Maybe he abandoned you when you were very little;
- or maybe **it wasn't even his fault**—maybe he died early and wasn't there during some **pivotal moments** when you really needed him.
- Or maybe **he was physically present** but he wasn't really *there*, if you know what I mean—he was always too busy and never really paid that much attention for you.
- Or maybe **all you can remember is how disappointed** he always seemed to be with you.
- Or maybe you just **never really felt any connection** to him. It's the kind of relationship now where when you call home and he hears it is you he calls for your mom to come get on the phone because he doesn't know how to have a meaningful conversation with you.

¹ Adapted from Craig Groeschel, "What's in a Name?" Isa 9:6–7

- **Or maybe he was abusive.** In a church this size, there's a lot of people who were physically, or even sexually abused by their fathers.

For whatever reason, there's a lot of pain that is brought up when you think about him, and so when I say Jesus wants to be your Everlasting Father, that doesn't do a lot for you. One of our church members who attend the Downtown Durham campus—named Jonathan Edwards, not the Puritan Jonathan Edwards, but the Summit Church's Jonathan Edwards—**wrote a great article** recently that got **picked up by The Gospel Coalition** about the difficulty he's had learning to call God "Father" because of the difficult relationship he had with his father. He says,

*"I was 25 years old before I could say the word 'father' while praying, because of the kind of relationship—or lack thereof—that I had with my dad. It didn't roll off my tongue the way it did for many of my Christian friends... How could I come to God without fear when I had been scared to go home whenever Dad was there? How could I understand God's love and faithfulness when Dad left town because he loved something, or someone, more than me? How can God be a mighty fortress of protection when Dad hit instead of hugged?"*²

Unfortunately, **this is the experience of a lot of people in our society. And as Jonathan indicates**, that ends up having a powerful, shaping influence on your understanding of God.

- Sociologist Vern Bengtson says in his book *Families and Faith* that studies conclusively show that the **quality of the child's**

² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-can-jesus-be-our-everlasting-father/>

³ *Families and Faith*, Vern Bengtson, Norella M. Putney, and Susan Harris, 76. **Focus on the Family study** done a few years ago that showed if a child is the 1st one to come to faith in a family, there is a **3.5% chance** everyone else in the household will follow; mother, 17%; father, 93%.

relationship to the father is the single-most important factor in whether the child adopts the faith of the parents.³

- **Eric Metaxas** pointed out that almost all the famous atheists of modernity—Freud, Nietzsche, Sartre, Hume, Bertrand Russell, Madalyn Murray O'Hare all had one thing in common—an absentee father or a traumatic relationship with their father.
 - **No less than Sigmund Freud** noted, 'Nothing is more common than for a young person to lose faith in God when he loses respect for his father.'⁴

Beyond just our faith, our relationships with our dads can be the most shaping influences on how we approach life:

- National statistics show that 71% percent of high school dropouts are from fatherless homes.⁵
- 75% percent of teenagers in substance abuse centers are from fatherless homes.⁶
- One of these studies claimed that **"Almost every social ill faced by America's children is related to fatherlessness."**
- 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 want to **identify 4 types of father wounds**, and show you how Jesus came to heal those and become to us our Everlasting Father. **I borrow these categories from a book** called *Father Factor: How your Father's Legacy Impacts Your Career*. It's a little unusual of a sermon, because I want to use his 4 types of dysfunctional fathers as anchor points, but when I read them I thought it was a perfect way to show us why when Jesus came he did so as our Everlasting Father.

⁴ Eric Metaxas, *Life, God, and Other Small Topics: Conversations from Socrates in the City*, (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 88-93

⁵ <http://www.fathersforlife.org/divorce/chldrndiv.htm>

⁶ <http://www.fathersforlife.org/divorce/chldrndiv.htm>.

(And I know this might be a little difficult for some of you, and may bring up some painful memories, but I want you to stick with it, if you can, because my point is not to try to dredge up the painful past, but to point you to the good that God offers us in Jesus.)

One quick theological thing I want to clear up, just so it's not confusing: at 1st, calling Jesus "the Everlasting Father" may seem odd, since the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus is the 2nd member of the Trinity, "called God's Son." **Here the Son is called "the Father."** This doesn't mean he's switched places with God the Father in the Trinity, just that Jesus, in his relationship to us, would be like the Father we've always long for.

1. The never-satisfied dad

This was the dad who, no matter what you did, **never seemed to be proud of you.**

- **I know a pastor's wife who said her dad** was this way. He was not unkind or abusive. He always provided for her. But she never heard the words "I am proud of you," from him and she **always craved that.** She was the first person in her family to ever go to college. Not only did she go, she got a 4.0 and all kinds of academic honors. As her graduation approached, she said, "You know what I was dreaming about? Not walking across the stage and everyone cheering. I was dreaming about walking *down* from the stage, and my dad pushing through the crowd, finally, in front of everyone, to say to her, "I'm so proud of you, and I love you!" **So, that moment comes, and it's just like in her dream.** Her dad really is pushing through the crowd to get to her. And she thinks, "This is it!" And the moment he gets up to her, what does he say? "Well, it's getting late. It's a long drive home, so we'd better get going." She's **crushed.** Absolutely **crushed.** And years later, it still

affected how she approached her job, what she needed from her husband, how she related to her friends.⁷

So, **for kids who grow up in this kind of home,** proving themselves to others often becomes the dominating theme of their lives.

And, **understandably, they carry this perspective of themselves into their relationship with God.**

- Whatever you do, you have this nagging, unspoken doubt, "*Have I done enough? Or you think, I bet God would be happier with me if I were a better Christian; if I were a better witness; a better wife.*" You **constantly compare** yourself to others and say, "If I were like him or her, I bet God would be happy with me..."

But your heavenly Father could not be more different than that:

- **Isaiah** says that we, as God's children, are "precious" to God. Precious is a strong word (43:4)
- **He tells us in Isaiah that he pays more attention to us than a mother thinks about her newborn infant!**

"Can a woman forget her nursing child, and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Isaiah 49:15 (It's almost as if to illustrate God's delight in us Isaiah has to leave the analogy of father and go to motherhood, because most mothers are far more attentive to their newborn children than the Fathers are. When our kids were young, I was always amazed at how aware my wife Veronica was of their smallest physical features. "J.D., did you see that Ryah has a new freckle behind her right ear?" (And I would say, "Uhh... Ryah is our 3rd one, right?" Just kidding.) Yet God knows me better and watches me more closely than the most attentive, love-stricken mother.

⁷ Scott Rodgers, from series *He Will Be Called*, "[Everlasting Father](#)," sermon on Isaiah 9:6

- **Jesus told us in the Gospel of Matthew that our Heavenly Father** is so attentive to us that not one hair falls from my head without his knowing!
- **Zephaniah 3:17**, “The Lord will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.” I know some awesome dads. I don’t know any that walk around singing about their children. Oh, Jennifer, you are so pretty and so smart.” It’s almost a little hokie... but this is how in love with you God is.
- Maybe my favorite description of this is the one by King David in Psalm 139 as he revels in the love the Heavenly Father has for him: *O LORD, you have searched me and known me!... You formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. Your eyes saw my unformed substance (when I was just a so-called “fetus”); in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.*

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

Where could I go from your Spirit? Or where could I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol (the Old Testament word for hell), you are there! Truth is, of course, we did make our bed in hell. And God ran into hell after us. He stood in the way of the judgment we deserved and took hell into his own body.

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. (Ps. 139:6–11)

Do you ache to be special to someone? You are special to God.

Do you yearn to matter? You matter to him.

Do you know how much God thinks about you? He knew you in the womb before anyone else even knew about you. He had laid out a plan for your life and planned to take care of you and be a Father to you.

Do you know how valuable you are to him? MY GOODNESS! David says, “Even if I made my bed in hell, he wouldn’t quit thinking about me.”

And that love is deeper, greater, and better than any love you failed to get from your father. I don’t know how to say this, but he is crazy about you and more attentive to you than the most love-stricken father.

Is there any wonder David said, “Such knowledge is high, too wonderful for me!”

And, BTW, before I move on to the 2nd father wound—If you want to be a good, Christ-like dad—I have one piece of counsel for you: Be crazy about your kids and let them know that. Some of **best advice about being a parent even given to me** was given to me by an older pastor. He told me, “Be their dad, not their pastor.” A pastor is always pointing out where you are wrong and need to change; a dad is just really excited about who you are.

- A pastor is always checking in on your spiritual progress and telling you what to do you better. A dad is at your games beaming with pride.

Remember that study I referenced, *Families and Faith*: the single greatest factor in determining whether they adopt your faith is the quality of your relationship to your kids, not the quantity of what you taught them,

- Which means the quality of the devotions you do with them is probably not as important as the good times you have with them, and all the excitement that you communicate about them.
 - **I'm all for family devotions**—but the good times you have with them on Saturday is every bit as important, if not more so, as what you teach them in family devotions.

2. The time-bomb dad

- This is the **kind of dad you just never knew quite** what to expect from him. If he had had a bad day at work, the smallest thing would set him off.
- And maybe **alcohol or drugs magnified** these outbursts. But more than once you got hurt... verbally, emotionally, or physically.
- And, of course, you never really learned to love this kind of dad, because it's hard to love someone you are terrified of.
- **Stephen Poulter** says that negative ramifications from this are manifold. He says, "(An incredible number) of anxiety disorders have their beginnings in this style of fathering."
 - **For example, kids who grow up like this can become control freaks in response** ... because, you see, when their dads exploded, their lives crashed, and so now they want to control everything to keep that from happening again.
 - In counseling, that's called **hyper-vigilance**. Psychologists say it is similar to **PTSD**.⁸
 - Poulter compares it to the **U.S.'s response after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor**. *We put in a radar system was installed that is so sophisticated that it can detect any movement on the Pacific Ocean within a 5000-mile radius of Pearl Harbor.*
 - **That's the way a lot these kids grow up, he says.** Always on the lookout for where the next blow-up could happen and scared to not be fully in control.

And **this, of course, affects** how you see your Heavenly Father.

- You have a **hard time just trusting him, or in leaving things** in his hand. How can you trust that he'll really take care of you? **What if he happens to be in a bad mood?**
- And, **just as with your earthly dad**, you are always trying to figure out what to do to contain him, to stay on his good side.
- **When something goes wrong**, you wonder, "What did I do now?"

But your Heavenly Father is not like that, either, you see. **David said, "The Lord is compassionate and gracious; slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love." Psalm 103:8**

- For some of you, your dad was the opposite. He was abounding in anger, and slow to show affection.
- **"Slow to anger."** He doesn't get angry quickly. Literally in Hebrew that literally reads "long of nostrils"⁹ which I think is a great Hebrew metaphor... What happens when you get angry? Your nostrils flare. If you're quick-tempered, your flaring nostrils get going right away. Soon you're like a bull, raring to charge. But what do you do if you're trying to control your anger? Well, you close your mouth and breathe deeply through your nose slowly...
- **God doesn't get going quickly, and he is ready to forgive us** the moment that we repent.
- **Think of the Father in Jesus's parable** who stands at the door of his home yearning for his son to come home and the moment he sees him breaks into a sprint to welcome him back.

Yes, there are times God disciplines us and times he allows painful things to happen to us. But it's never done in anger, for those of us who are his children. It's always for our good.

- **The writer of Hebrews says that even when the best dads, their discipline can sometimes be mixed with selfish anger, but the discipline of the Heavenly Father is always pure and perfect love with no anger at all.**

⁸ <http://bradhambrick.com/ptsd>

⁹ *t'erek 'appayim*

- That's because he **poured out all the** wrath and judgment for our sin on Jesus so that not a drop remains for us (**Rom 8:1**).
- **And God promises us in Rom 8:28** that he now controls all things in our lives for good. *If you are God's child, not one thing has ever happened to you, or will ever happen to you that God does not intend for good.*
- **How would that change how you looked at your life?** Everything in your past, everything in your present, everything in your future...?

I want you to know that if your dad was the kind who was always angry or you never knew what to expect from him, your Heavenly Father is the opposite.

And let me use this moment to say: You've got to stop viewing your Heavenly Father through the lens of your earthly one. Reverse the order: Understand your earthly father through the lens of your Heavenly one.

My friend Jonathan Edwards (whom I quoted earlier) said this was key in his development of his trust in God. He started to realize, he said, **that God was the real Father; his dad was only the replica.**

- An earthly dad is supposed to be like training wheels teaching you about the Heavenly Father. And I had some really bad training wheels, he said—they were terrible, but now I know the real Father, and that was the point the whole time, which gives me the ability to cope with all the ways my earthly father failed me. So, reverse the order. Stop viewing your heavenly Father through the lens of your earthly one; evaluate your earthly father through the lens of your Heavenly one.*
- Become healthy **and** forgive...

3. The emotionally-distant dad

This is the kind of dad who may have been **stable and consistent; never abandoned** or **abused** you... he just never expressed emotion to you.

He never made you feel special or told you he was proud of you.

- **The author said that this fathering style** made up approximately 50% of nuclear families between 1945 and 1980. The Leave it to Beaver dad. Dads just weren't supposed to be emotionally engaged.

Maybe you grew up with a dad like this. One book I was reading said that that there **are 3 things every child needs** to hear from his father: *I love you/I'm proud of you/ You are really good at...*

But you never heard those. And that left you with an insatiable desire to prove yourself so you could hear that from someone.

- Years ago, I filed the most incredible quote by **Bo Jackson**, who some argue was the greatest athlete ever to 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 drink with them after the game. I never experienced that."¹⁰
- Or, I think of **Ricky Bobby's dad in Talladega Nights** who never came to watch him race. *You were thinking it; I had to say it...* Always left tickets for him at will call but he never came. And it left him with an **insatiable desire to prove** himself. This is also **the theme of every Tom Cruise movie** in the 1980's.

¹⁰ Bo Jackson, *Sports Illustrated*, 1995

Poulter said that kids who grew up in an environment like this not only fail to develop a **healthy relationship with their fathers**, they often **struggle to develop healthy relationships with others** because they have never learned to open up emotionally with others: Not their spouses; not their kids; **They don't really have close friends.**

When they go through pain, then tend to go through it alone. They may be extroverts with lots of acquaintances, but they don't really have friends whom they depend on and go deep with.

- **And tragically, this often** plays out in a repeating cycle: **you end up creating this same kind of emotional distance in your kids.**

Your **Heavenly Father isn't like that**. The Father is so emotionally connected to you that, according to Jesus's parable of the prodigal son, he **literally could not be happy** while you were away. Every day the prodigal son was gone, the father stood at the door waiting for him to come home. **The father I'm sure was a busy man**, with lots of things to attend to, but he literally could not be happy when his boy was wandering and hurting. And when his son starts to come home, he can't help himself. He lifts up the corner of his robe and springs to receive home his son.

BTW, John Piper, says that with nearly every other parable Jesus taught, he ends by giving his hearers something to do: "Go and do likewise." But in the parable of the Prodigal Son, he gives no action step. **We're supposed to just stop and worship.** "*Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us!*" **1 John 3:1**

Before I move on to our last one, if I could just say this to you dads: **Maybe the most significant thing you can do for your kids is just be emotionally connected** to them.

- In **Poulter's book he says that emotionally-distant dads usually have no idea** the damage their emotional distance is causing i

their children. They think, "I'm doing my job, I'm providing for the family." They are "clueless," he says, "that part of being a 'good provider' includes emotional nurturing and active involvement."

- **I've told you before: Most Christian men feel** like they are good dads if they provide **food and shelter** for their families. And I've asked, "**Really? That's the standard?**" I mean, possums give their offspring food and shelter. Is that the bar we want for godly fatherhood?¹¹
- **You are supposed to be present in their lives**, shepherding them. You should be the chief disciplinarian. **You should show as much intentionality and ownership of the raising** of your children that you do with your job!

Last one...

4. The Absent Father

This is the dad who just wasn't there. **40% of children** in America live in fatherless homes. In some places, of course, that number is much higher.

- And **here's what happens**: Kids often interpret the absence of their dad as a personal rejection. They think they weren't important enough; good enough.

Counselors say this often manifests itself in a **background sadness** (soundtrack) that the kid lives with that he doesn't quite understand; a fear of aloneness, or in a **nagging suspicion** in their lives that any good thing in life is going to eventually go away.

Often, this sadness and fear starts to express itself as anger. For many fatherless boys, in the **absence of a father figure** who could show them what real masculinity was, they turn to some other way to

¹¹ Thanks to John Bryson for this great line!

try and prove it: rebellion; athletic or sexual prowess; sometimes even violence or gang activity.

One author said that fatherless young men often gravitate toward aggressive heroes like violent action heroes or gangsta rap stars because they represent a masculinity they never got from their fathers—it's a skewed masculinity, but it's what they gravitate toward in the absence of authentic masculinity.

- Never **got on the ground and wrestled** with them and showed them what strength under control looked like; what strength harnessed to protect and bless looked like... so they only learned to express their strength and masculinity through the domination of others.

Some guys who grow up without a present father figure become over-achievers, trying to be the man their father never was—to prove themselves so that they can get from others the affirmation they never got from their fathers.

Girls with absentee fathers can manifest **that** in similar ways. Sometimes they struggle to develop respect for themselves or confidence in their careers. Sometimes, **in the absence of a father's** love, they crave the attention and care from a man they never got from him, and they become willing to do whatever to get it.

- Listen: One study showed that **90% of female porn models** were sexually abused. **Doesn't that break your heart? Guys:** Why don't you think about that when you are tempted to look at pornography? **Chances are that girl you are gazing at is there because she has either been sex-trafficked,** or, even if she chose that career for herself, it was because she had developed so low a view of herself because some man taught her early she was little more than a sex object. When you are tempted to look at her, ask yourself: I wonder if it was her father, or an uncle, or her grandfather that first abused her and taught her she was nothing more than a sex object to be exploited and then discarded?)

Well, as I hope you've seen by now, Jesus is the opposite of the absentee father.

- He says to us in **Hebrews 13:5**, "I will never leave you or forsake you."
 - Do you know what the Greek word here translated "never" means? NEVER. Never, ever, for any reason. Never!
 - He wouldn't leave you when you had spurned him and walked away; he wouldn't leave you even when you made your bed in hell.
- **Far from being the kind of dad who would walk out on you to pursue a better option—he had a better option,** he couldn't be happy until you had returned home.
- **Far from using or abusing you for his own pleasure,** he allowed himself to be abused and tortured for you so that you could have eternal life. As we pounded nails into his wrist, all Jesus could pray was, "Father, forgive them for the they don't know what they do."

(MUSIC) Jesus is the Heavenly Father you've always craved. Even if you had a good dad, at some point he disappoints you and fails you.

And here's another reality: Even the best dads die. They won't be around forever, and when they die, they can leave this big gaping hole in your heart you don't know how to fill!

That's why I love that word that Isaiah adds, "Everlasting." Jesus is the Everlasting Father. He never disappoints; never forsakes; never leaves; never dies. He's the Father your heart has always craved.

I repeat again: Don't judge your Heavenly Father by your earthly one. Evaluate your earthly father by your Heavenly one. He's the Father you've been searching for, and when you realize that, you **can heal from the wounds and disappointments** left by your earthly father, and in many cases, even learn to forgive and love him again.

And, by the way, if you are a dad who is sitting here feeling overwhelmed by how you've failed... apologize to your kids, and point them to the Everlasting Father.

Jesus wants to heal many of you this weekend from the wounds left by your earthly father.

Zephaniah 3:17, "The Lord will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing."*

I love that phrase, "quiet you by his love..."

ILLUS. *Sometimes I'll be at home in my office working* and I'll hear the distant cries of one of my children... The other day I heard this scream that kept getting louder and louder and finally bursts right into my office. There is Ryah with skinned knees and elbows and she jumps in my arms, and she does "Huuuu, uhhh, uhh uh uhhhhhhh." And I'm like, "Honey, it's going to be okay. It's going to be okay." And she keeps on with this moaning. So, I whisper in her ear, praying for her, "Jesus, take the owies away! Help Ryah to settle down." And I'm holding her, and I can feel her start to relax.

Maybe that's you today. Life has left you with bloody knees and bloody elbows. And nobody sitting next to you has any idea about that pain you're going through. But I'll tell you what: When you go running and screaming and you jump into the arms of the Everlasting Father, he's going to whisper in your ear. He's going to pray for you, and he's going to calm you. **He will give you his peace, and he will never, ever, ever, let you go. Never. Never. Never.**¹²

Zephaniah 3:17, "The Lord will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing."

As high as the heavens are above the earth...

East is the West

Nothing can separate you...

He knows how many hairs on your head...

John 10...

He will never leave you or forsake you and he dances over you with singing...

Invitation: Do you know the Heavenly Father? You were created for him. And **good news**—this weekend, you can! He died to remove your sin so he could have a relationship with you. He wants to forgive you and save you, if you'll receive him. You can **right now**, by turning over control of your life to him and receiving Jesus into your life as Lord and Savior and Everlasting Father.

¹² Adapted from Scott Rodgers, "Everlasting Father," Life Church.

