



December 11, 2016

Week 3

Learn

Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

*For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

John 9:1-7 (NIV)

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

Hebrews 12:10b (NIV)

but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.

Main Idea

This Advent we are taking a look at the promise of the Messiah given to us in Isaiah 9:6 that Jesus will be a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. In this series, we will consider what each of those names mean and how Jesus was the embodiment of them, both in the time he spent on earth and even today in how he works in our lives. This week, we are looking at how Jesus fulfilled the promise of being an Everlasting Father. We see Jesus become father to his disciples by helping them face their pain, leading them by example, teaching them a new way, and then letting

them get their hands dirty by trying to live out the gospel themselves. Jesus is still fulfilling that role in our own lives, and Advent is a time in which we have an opportunity to allow him to father us and reveal something new about himself and the Christmas story.

Think...

1. The Trinity is a tricky and sometimes difficult concept for our minds to navigate. And yet Zach makes a point this week to remind us that Jesus was not created at the time of Christmas, but that he has been a part of the Trinity since the very beginning. In fact, Jesus was in the very words that brought the world into existence. Sit still for a moment with this truth: The Jesus that came to us as a baby in the manger spoke the words of our world into existence. Ask God to reveal to you the power of that truth. How does this knowledge change the way you view Jesus this Advent season?
2. As an Everlasting Father, Jesus helps the disciples face their own pain in order to move through it and ultimately bring light to a dark place. As full of joy, love, and peace as the Christmas season is, it can also inadvertently bring pain along with it—either in our own lives or for those around us. In the story presented to us in John 9:1-7, we see the disciples distance themselves from the pain of the blind man by entertaining themselves instead with a theological debate. Are you distracting yourself from the pain that can accompany this season in your own heart or in the lives of those closest to you? Where is Jesus asking you to face the pain and allow him to move through it with you? Ask God to help you trust him with your pain this season and to illuminate the areas to you in which he is hoping to bring beauty and healing from the pain in our broken world.
3. Before engaging the disciples in their theological discussion, Jesus looks at the blind man. He looks at him with intention and with the recognition that this man's story is not over yet. As Zach observes, "Jesus looked at him knowing the best was yet to come in this man's life." This simple act of intentional looking was what would lead to a new light shining in the darkness, both in a blind man's personal world, and in a broken world where darkness seemed to be reigning. Have you ever experienced becoming an example of God's light in a dark world as a result of a follower of Jesus seeing that your story was not over yet? Have you ever looked at someone else that way and called life out of someone's seemingly dead space, refusing to believe that their story was over?
4. To follow the way of Jesus and to allow him to be our Everlasting Father, we must live our lives in a way that we can be interrupted. It is in the interruption that what is dead is brought back to life. Christmas brings its own variety of interruptions to our lives. How are you with those interruptions? Are you allowing yourself to be interrupted this Advent by what Jesus is hoping to teach you and bring back from the dead in your life?

Discuss...

1. Despite the insensitivity of the disciples questioning where the sin was in the blind man's life, Jesus never rebukes or shames his disciples for asking it. He moves past the shame of their

question while still addressing it and, in doing so, moves them toward himself and toward the blind man. Jesus wants to engage us in our insensitivity and teach us something new about himself in spite of it. How are your shame levels this Advent? Are you stuck in the quagmire of shame and self-loathing, feeling distant from your Everlasting Father? Ask God to help you claim the freedom of our new lives in Christ and to help you put away your shame for good.

2. Jesus calls good out of the blind man and teaches the disciples a new theology. The blind man's loss of sight was never meant to be a punishment, but rather an opportunity to elevate both the blind man and show Jesus' glory. In his healing, Jesus gives both the blind man and us a new theology that offers hope in all circumstances. Where are you feeling a little hopeless these days? Where do you need to ask Jesus to bring his hope and remind you that we never suffer in vain or in punishment, but so that we can feel the victory of a broken world being healed?
3. **Read Acts 3:1-10.** The story of Jesus and the blind man in John 9 ends with Jesus inviting his disciples to get their hands dirty. He invites them to take initiative and follow the example he just provided and in Acts we see two of his disciples do that very thing! Where is your Eternal Father asking you to take initiative in your life? Who are the blind men that he is asking you to see?
4. We learn from our Everlasting Father this week that we need to look, to feel, to act, and then, in doing so, we meet a need and show his glory and power. Which of these steps is the hardest for you right now and why? What is one step you can take this week to follow the example our Everlasting Father has set for us?

Next Steps

This Christmas Eve at all of our services we will be presented with the opportunity to follow the example that Jesus lays out for us in the story of the blind man. The offering that is received at all of our Christmas Eve services is always given away in its entirety to an organization that we believe is fulfilling Jesus' example in our world. This year, our offering will be given to [Children's Hope Chest](#). This organization serves what many would consider to be the least of these and brings hope and healing to the dark places of Ethiopia. We choose to believe that God is not done with the stories of these children yet and we are hoping to give generously to the work that is being done to show them the best is yet to come. Take some time this week, as we get closer and closer to Christmas Eve, to ask God what he might be asking you to give to that special offering. Ask him where your finances could use a little interrupting and where he is asking you to take initiative with us as we give generously this Christmas Eve to Children's Hope Chest.