

Jesus the Father of Eternity

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[0 : 00] But just as we begin, one of the verses that we've been going through is this, you might have heard it, it was the verse that Catherine read, this is verse 6 in chapter 9 and it said these amazing things about who Jesus is, who the child to be born is.

You see, he was a wonderful counsellor, mighty God, we looked at that last week, this week is everlasting father, everlasting father. So that's what we're going to be thinking through, how does Jesus show us in his life that he becomes the child, the child to be born as he grows, he demonstrates that that is who he is.

I'm going to pray for us and then we'll sort of look at it together. Almighty God, Father, we thank you that we can come to you and praise you and we thank you for your word and just as we think about it now, we just pray for our hearts, we pray that you take away any distractions that are occupying our mind and we pray that you'd centre our focus on thinking through for ourselves and our own hearts, the person of Jesus, thinking who the baby in the manger is and what that means for us. And bless us, we pray as we think about this together in Jesus' name. Amen. Christmas really is, it is that time, we've mentioned it, I've mentioned it lots of times so far, it's that time to stop and rethink who really is the baby born in the manger.

Where does that understanding come from? Where does your understanding come from? Is it he to say? Is it just, you know, what someone else told you? Well, if it is the, you know, to find the truth about Jesus, where better else to look than the source itself?

[1 : 47] We look straight from the horse's mouth, we look at the Bible. This morning, I've mentioned we're thinking about that third title for the baby born, the child given, the everlasting father.

But before we go into the passage, we're looking in John 8, we do need to pause and ask what on earth does that mean? The phrase everlasting father, how can the son, the child be born, also be called everlasting father?

Well, it's probably better, I think, I think more helpfully translated as the father of eternity. The father of time, you might say. The one who created the beginning and the end.

And so what we're going to do, we're going to see how Jesus in his life shows that he is the child of that verse. Shows in his life that he is the one who created the beginning and the end in this passage that we look at in John 8 and how people react around him.

Now, by way of illustration, as we're kind of getting into this, we all remember, I'm just checking who's in the room now, but we all remember sitting on Santa's knee when we were little.

[2 : 55] Perhaps, I know some of us, we've got used to taking our children to do the same, maybe meet him on a train or at the school fair. And you get different, you get, Santas come in different calibres, don't they?

You get some Santas that are amazing, they've got an amazing costume, the realistic beard. If you're looking, they might have their own beard that fits in. But as adults, we see through the costume, right?

We see through, we know that it's just a bloke underneath. But for children, no, the costume, the illusion, it's very much a reality.

However perfect they are, we know that the person on the inside is an actor whose shift will end. We don't want to spoil it for our children, but their identity as Santa is temporary.

The costume is a disguise. In John 8, what we're going to read in a moment, what we see is a crowd, who are speaking to Jesus, who wear an invisible fancy dress costume.

[4 : 07] It's one that they hide behind. And the costume that they wear is one of perfect performance, that they believe elevates them to be accepted by society and, importantly, by God.

They believe that they're the bee's knees, the creme de la creme with God. And the reason they believe it is because of their family background. It's their Jewish family history that they believe makes them more special than anyone else.

But it's no more than an illusion. It's a fancy dress costume. It's like, imagine the bloke, this is what it's like.

Imagine the bloke playing Santa really believes that they're him. They're under an illusion, and we know that's silly. But that's the crowd. They believe an illusion about themselves. They wear a costume of performance that they think makes them acceptable.

The startling reality, I think, that I want to kind of address with us is that actually, on many levels, we're very similar to the crowd we're going to see. The crowd value what others think about them, and so do we.

[5 : 14] You take Christmas, we all, you know, majority of people love it. But at the same time as loving it, why does it become so stressful?

The thought goes through your hind. You know, I've never done this, so I can only imagine and I've seen that it's stressful, is cooking the Christmas dinner. I wouldn't attempt to, like, take it on, because you wouldn't get one.

But you think, you know, I must make the Christmas dinner right. To, you know, you've got to prove that you're good enough in the eyes of your in-laws. I've just received, oh man, I can't believe it. I've just, you know, it's only the 1st December, and I've just received a card from that family up the road. Man, are they organised. I haven't even thought about sending cards yet. When am I going to get the time to do that? We want to show that we're, we want to present to that family up the road that we're just as organised as they are.

We don't want to take off the costume that maybe we're not. It's trying to fit in with the unwritten Christmas achievement standards that exist.

[6 : 22] And it's exhausting. It is exhausting. And so we want to wear the costume that makes us look that we've got Christmas nailed down. That we've got it all together and that we make the grade.

The illusion, this is the illusion. The illusion is this. If we meet the Christmas standards, if we manage to do it all, we'll fit in and our hard work will just bring the peace that we crave.

But the reason it's illusion is because the costume of poemants doesn't bring peace, it brings total stress. Jesus, the Christ of Christmas, he offers us a way to rethink how we live.

A totally new way of living. And I suppose the opportunity that I want through, that I want the living God to present to you today is that you can put down the costume of Christmas performance.

You can take it off. You can be free of all that. You can actually go to Christmas and live in your own skin and not be worried about what anybody else thinks.

[7 : 35] You can live with Christmas imperfections and missed deadlines, maybe even burnt gravy, knowing you don't have to work for acceptance from other people. You don't have to live with the illusion, with the costume that you've got it all together.

You can be free from meeting other people's standards. Let's see what Jesus has to say. 1074.

John 8, starting from verse 31, reading up to 59. This is God's word. To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. They answered him, We're Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?

Jesus replied, Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

[8 : 45] I know you are Abraham's descendants, yet you are looking for a way to kill me because you have no room for my word. I'm telling you what I have seen in the father's presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father.

Abraham's our father, they answered. If you were Abraham's children, said Jesus, then you would do what Abraham did. As it is, you're looking for a way to kill me. A man who has told you the truth that I heard from God.

Abraham did not do such things you do in the works of your own father. We're not illegitimate children, they protested. The only father we have is God himself. Jesus said to them, If God were your father, you'd love me.

For I have come here from God. I have not come on my own. God sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you're unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires.

He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth. For there's no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language. For he's a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.

[9 : 50] Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I'm telling the truth, why don't you believe me? Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.

The Jews answered him, Aren't we right in saying that you are Samaritan and demon-possessed? I am not possessed by a demon, said Jesus. But I honour my father, and you dishonour me.

I am not seeking glory for myself. But there is one who seeks it, and he's the judge. Very truly, I tell you, whoever bays my word will never see death. At this they exclaimed, Now we know that you're demon-possessed.

Abraham died, and so did the prophets. Yet you say that whoever bays your word will never taste death. Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets.

Who do you think you are? Jesus replied, If I glory myself, my glory means nothing. My father, you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.

[10 : 51] Though you did not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you. But I know him and obey his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day.

He saw it and was glad. You're not fifty years old, they said to him. And you've seen Abraham. Very truly, I tell you, Jesus answered. Before Abraham was born, I am.

At this they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds. You see what Jesus says the whole way through, he talks.

Particularly those verses at the beginning. He talks about being free. Being free. The real question then is, what do we need to be freed from?

Where are we trapped? Why do we need setting free? This is kind of the problem we see with the crowd, and we'll kind of see as our problem too. You look at me, the crowd believes that they're free.

[12 : 01] They believe they're free. And the reason they believe they're free is because of their ancestry, their family history. You look, they say time and time again, verse 33, what do they say? We're Abraham's descendants that have never been slaves of anyone.

How can you say that we'll be set free? They believe they're free already. Again, verse 39, they say Abraham's our father. Abraham is the top of the family tree.

And every Jew could trace their family history back to this one man. They're Israel. God's people by bloodline, and nothing can take that away from them. They're saying, that makes us free.

That qualifies us. That is the set standard that God has put in place. You have to belong to be a descendant, a part of his family line. He needed to be able to trace it back.

But that is the illusion. That is the costume they wear, yet they have no idea. That very thought is what traps them. That's the costume, the pretense, that they don't even realise and they're enslaved to it.

[13 : 03] Thinking family history is all they need to get into God's good books. That mum and dad basically make them holier than thou. What Jesus says is devastating.

It is devastating to them and highly offensive. Look at what he says. I think it's verse 34. Jesus said,!

Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.

He says, if you're sinning, God's family, you've got no permanent place there. That's what he's saying. When Jesus speaks to that, it's like telling the kids that Santa's not real.

Devastating. It's like telling the kids that they've believed a lie. You let that one out when they're little, only one thing will ensue.

[14 : 05] Tears, tantrums, maybe a few angry parents. But the illusion is destroyed. It's totally destroyed. Jesus is telling the crowd the lie is on you.

It's not, you believe something about yourself that's not true. You believe your family history sets you apart, that it frees you. Jesus says, that belief in itself, you're enslaved to it.

A slave is constantly trying to be in charge of their own worth and acceptance. The root is that they want to be in control of their own future and it's tied to their history.

The consequence is no place in God's family. The costume will eventually come off and the realisation is that the family history doesn't matter one bit.

All their performances are sure and it's not enough. Now we might not have Jewish blood, don't think anyone has Jewish blood here, maybe you do. So what does it mean for us?

[15:06] What do we think is the thing that qualifies us to make us acceptable with the living God? What is the thing that we do to try to earn our place, earn acceptance and worth in our families like we mentioned at Christmas?

We try, try, try to make everybody happy. And even if, and here's the thing, even if you do pull it all off, there's just, then there's the next time when you've got to meet that standard again.

So it's never ending. Maybe it's not Christmas. Where do we wear the costume? Where do we, where are we terrified that if people saw the real us, unorganised, imperfect, sinful, that we'd be rejected by them?

We'll never be able to do enough. And the problem is that we bring that, what we think about, people think about us, we bring and believe that perhaps that's what God wants from us too.

That we must earn our way to please Him. However much we try, and whatever we do, you know, it's never, it's the invisible costume.

[16:23] The truth is, the living God knows, He knows, that we can never do enough. He knows that. So instead, this, you know, the truth is, is actually, it's wonderful to behold because instead, what He offers is true freedom without charge.

He offers it as a gift. This is, this is, this is the gospel. The gospel of Christmas is this, that Jesus, He says, here, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

The truth is that Jesus becomes a slave to set us free. At Christmas, we celebrate who God, who puts on human clothes, not as fancy dress, but becomes fully human without taking off His divine ones.

You know, putting on clothes is really one picture of what the good news is all about because Jesus puts on human, not human clothes, but He becomes fully human.

But actually then, what He does is, we've got, there's actually two more sets of clothes involved.

There's a third garment. And He doesn't wear this as a costume either. He puts it on for real because He puts on our sin and guilt and shame costume.

[17:41] All the trying to be someone that we're not, all the attempts to be acceptable that fail, all the dirt, all the mess, all the guilt, all the shame, He puts that garment on. Jesus says, a slave doesn't have a place in the family, but He's treated like the evicted black sheep.

Like a slave of no value. He wears our sin costume and dies on a cross of wood because of it. But there's not just three costumes, there's another one.

The costume trade isn't finished. There's one more item of clothing. Not that Jesus puts on, but that He takes off and that He gives to us. It's His perfect life costume.

He takes our flawed, sin-stained, ragged, tatty costume and He gives us His garment of perfection. Look what He said, verse 36.

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. Jesus, the one who is truly free, at peace in His own skin, never trying to please or meet a standard of anyone but His Father in Heaven, He swaps His freedom clothes and gives them to us.

[18:54] Instead of a slave, you get brought into the family. You become a son and daughter of a God that loves you. You see what that means? Rather than being weighed down by trying to perform, trying to keep up appearances and earn your acceptance, the living God accepts you because of what Jesus has done and sets you free.

That freedom is on offer today to know true freedom of never having to meet anybody else's standards ever again because Jesus gives you His perfect standard.

The reason He can set you free is because of who He is. The Jews wear the fake costume that Jesus sees right through.

Jesus has true divinity not as a costume but as a hidden reality. But here's the spoiler alert. Jesus is about to bring out His true persona.

He's about to spoil the game and bring it out. Jesus is the everlasting Father, the Father of eternity able to bring eternal freedom.

[20 : 09] End of the chapter. See there discussing about who Jesus is. Verse 56. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day says Jesus. He saw it and was glad.

They argue back. You're not 50 years old they said to him and you've seen Abraham. Very truly I tell you Jesus answered before Abraham was born I am.

Abraham lived about 2,000 years before Jesus and he says before Abraham I was there. Jesus spoils the game.

You know it's like someone has pulled the beard on Santa and the game is ruined. Jesus he steps out and says the illusion's over I'm going to tell you I am the living God before your father Abraham existed I was there talking of a time before history when he was present.

He's kind of tapping into existence that before he was born the eternal I am the same God who appeared to Moses in the burning bush that's me. And the reaction of the crowd is not too dissimilar to a five year old who fires out about Santa more than a tantrum though they pick up stones to throw at him.

[21 : 36] The crowd rejects Jesus because they think he's blaspheming making himself to be God which they don't believe. Jesus is saying I'm the living God and the truth is he has to be the infinite creator even for to be able to give us freedom.

Here's why. When we mess up when we sin as we call it against an infinite God it means that we the punishment will be infinite.

Because Jesus is the infinite God when he dies he's the only person able to pay for an infinite amount of sin. It's how we know that the check that says payment for infinite sin clears because the bank account of heaven is infinite.

It's how we know that he can pay because the infinite God dies on the cross. Only the death of an infinite God is able to pay for an infinite amount of sin which means he's able to save the whole world.

Jesus only is able to bear it because he's fully God. His death carries infinite weight and our freedom is guaranteed. Because Jesus is who he said he was achieving what no one else could he sets us truly free able to live and never have to put on the costume of performance again.

[23 : 06] Right at the beginning he outlines the response what that looks like. There's a call to true free living look with me verse 31 Jesus announces to the crowd how freedom is not a fantasy but a reality.

He calls them ushers them to experience true freedom in him. Verse 31 to the Jews who had believed in him Jesus said if you hold to my teaching you are really my disciples then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

On a first read that still sounds like just another standard to reach and keep failing at. If you hold to my teaching. It sounds like true freedom will only come if we do Jesus says but that's not what it means.

You see that word for hold on has another meaning it means to abide it means to dwell in to stay put. You see when we understand if we read it differently if we read if you abide in my teaching in my word in me it changes everything because Jesus is talking about freedom not as something we earn by doing what he says but as something that we receive.

It's the video from before the John Lewis advert. We saw the gift to the dad was his son not the actual present. Jesus is the son who's been gifted to us to receive free of charge and when we receive him freedom from the spirit of God is to live differently is part of the deal and so we receive the strength and power that enables us to not in ourselves but from Jesus to say no to the old ways of life no to the costume of trying to please no to the old costume of trying to measure up no to the old costume of trying to present ourselves as someone we're not we're inside we're trying to hide all that we can say no and yes to living in our own skin.

[25 : 18] When we think back to the actor playing Santa that's never him he's never Santa he's always performing he's always trying his hardest to give every child the best experience to keep mum and dad happy he has standards to maintain to be the perfect Santa to keep the costume presenting to the children like he's the real deal underneath that's not him and underneath we know where this is grabbing our hearts but with with Jesus Jesus is not looking for your performance you no need to longer to wear that you can you can put it down trying to be perfect because Jesus in his perfect life guarantees that you are free from living that way we don't earn his freedom but when we abide we truly live because we're giving it in him you see you see how this this is an opportunity to change even just to change this year at Christmas rather than pleasing the in-laws or your family

with Christmas dinner you get to be free of the stress knowing that you're loved regardless of how it goes other families might be more organised than you you're free to take that costume of appearing like you are off you don't need to try persuade anyone else that you're anyone other than who you actually are because Jesus accepts you as you are he takes you and he changes you to be more like himself by his power and so this just goes for not just for things at Christmas but any area of life where you're trying to present somebody on the outside rather than who you truly are trying to keep those clothes on is exhausting but you can take them off today you can take them off today this Christmas will you let

Jesus shatter the illusions you've made the baby in the manger is fully divine let him shatter the costumes that we've made to be free to live in our own skin taking off that heavy sweaty costume that is exhausting to keep on and take his perfect life clothes that he takes off and gives to us his righteous life in place for ours so that we're free to live with new life the invitation is for all of us you might still dress up as Santa that's okay but you'll take that off again Jesus clothes his perfect status are there to wear forever let me pray Almighty God I thank you that we can come to you and you know the areas of our life where we wear those clothes of performance where we don't want to show the real us and we try to please other people and try to present ourselves as if we've got it all together when inside we haven't

I thank you that you don't care about any of that but you know the real us you know what's going on in our hearts and that we can come to you as with humility and vulnerability and you don't you don't you don't want we can't earn it you don't want us to try and pay for it but to receive the gift of eternal life the gift of true freedom as a gift as the most precious thing the life of Jesus the person the relationship with him as the gift that we could receive today and so we pray that you'd bless us and to know that truth more deeply and more fully in all of our lives and at this time of year we ask for this in the name of Christ Amen Amen