Who is Your Father?

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Who is your Father? The answer is of course in that piece that we all know from Handel's "Messiah". It's Isaiah 9:6, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'” It startled me when I first read “Everlasting Father”. This piece is obviously the prophecy of Jesus’ birth, the Messiah, and you’re used to Jesus being called the Prince of Peace, or even Wonderful Counselor, or even Mighty God -- but you’re not used to him being called Everlasting Father.

It struck me that there was some kind of misunderstanding here because God surely is the Everlasting Father and Jesus is the Son. But in fact, because Jesus is God and wherever God is Jesus is, and whatever God is Jesus is, all that God is Jesus is also. He is certainly our Everlasting Father in a special way too, because he is really the one who begot each one of us. I don’t want to bore you with it, but I did this little diagram to remind you of it: I've used the mathematical sign for infinity here, but this [pointing to diagram] is eternity and this is eternity, and in between is this little piece of time.

You remember the way we’ve often talked about it -- we've said that wherever we cannot talk about the beginning when God was, we don’t know about that, but in eternity somewhere God IS and He conceived of creating the world. he conceived of people like himself in that world. Of course Colossians 1:15 states that Jesus was actually the first born of all the creation. God actually took his only begotten son whom he had begotten in eternity and he asked him to become the first born of all creation.

Jesus therefore became the first one to be born in that creation and God conceived of that. This presumably we think of as a millisecond in God’s mind. He conceived of it, he did it and he completed it all in a millisecond. We just talk about it in terms of “stages” because of our finite minds, but God conceived of a creation and of people like himself whom he could love, and he conceived of his only begotten son becoming the first born of that creation, becoming the first man.

Romans 8:28 says, “All things work together for the good.” And “the good” is we might be conformed to the image of his son in order that HE might be the first born among many brethren. So God conceived of his own son becoming the first born of creation so that HE would be the first born among many brethren. I think often we go a little astray because we think, “Oh yes, he did it for us, he did it for us.” Well, in that he loves us, yes, but first and foremost, he did it for his son -- that his son might be the first born of all creation. For that reason he created us. Ephesians 2:10 says, “We are God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which he has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” God conceived of creating us in Jesus that we might do many mighty works that he had prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. He conceived of that taking place and then realized of course, that we would be free to do what we wanted to do.

We would be free to dwell in Jesus and to be what he wants us to be -- or we would be free to refuse him, and reject him and to oppose him. At that moment God knew that he would have to change all that he had made --for as many of us that wanted to change he would have to change us -- and he would have to crucify us and begin to make us all over again. That is what happened according to
Revelation 13:8, “That the Lamb was slain from before the foundation of the world.”

God conceived of all of that in a millisecond. Presumably, he didn’t have to speak to his son, but in our human terms it was like him saying to his son, “My son, this is what will take place. Are you willing for that to take place in you? Because, the only way these dear brethren that I am going to make inside you will ever be able to be like us is if you are prepared to bare the destruction of what they become and their recreation again in what I want them to be.” Of course, the Savior lovingly said, “Yes.” Then in the beginning, God made the heaven and the earth. Then God began to play that all out in time. Of course the part that he has allowed to play out that we can see so clearly is this downward path. This is what we see around us: we see what our life would be if we had NOT been crucified in Jesus and the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the earth and made again anew in him and recreat ed in him. If we hadn’t done that this is the kind of life we would live -- and this is the kind of life that the world would live until there is a new heaven and the new earth.

Of course, when we are born of God, what happens is we do what Jesus said: we repent and believe the gospel. We change our mind about the way we think of our past life. We stop thinking, “I am my father’s son. I am my mother’s son.” “I am my father’s daughter. I am my mother’s daughter.” We begin thinking, “I am Jesus’ son.” “I am Jesus’ daughter. Jesus is my Father. I was created in him. The reason I was created was so that he would be the first born among many brethren. I belong to him. My father and mother were only the means by which God brought me into physical birth, but I belong to Jesus. I am part of him.” We change our way of thinking -- and at that moment what happens is all of eternity here, by the Holy Spirit, is brought into our lives and we are born of God. Has each of us here accepted that?

I would to take you back to a very real experience that I’ve had over the past couple of days -- and that everyone in London will understand because we spent so much time on computers. For two years, believe it or not, I’ve been trying to get a program that would do what we call in computer language, “multitasking”. It would mean that people like my dear wife would be putting in a sales order in the computer and someone would call and say, “How much do I owe you? What is my debt to Crown Jewelry?” And she would be able to hit one key and it would immediately replace that sales order module on the screen with the customer file and would show her immediately the credit.

Or, if she thought in the middle of entering the sales order she wanted to do a fax to Dan in Thailand to order some more of a certain item, she would hit a key and it would flip over immediately into the fax program. Now, believe it or not, that’s very difficult to do with computers. The way we do it now is that we have to withdraw from the sales order module and have to go back to the main menu. From there we go into the Windows program and into WinFax and we write the fax. You actually have to come out of one program, go into another program -- and it all takes time.

Multitasking is the ability to switch from one thing to the other. They call it multitasking because for that to happen, the computer has to keep all of them up at one time. It has to keep all the programs open. That’s very difficult for a computer. For two years I’ve been working with a complicated IBM program called OS2 because it will be able to do that -- but, it’s not able to do it just yet.

On my little computer I have had 50 megabytes set aside for that program and I’ve been playing along with it all the time. I’ve been trying to make the DOS programs work for all of you and for London
when they need it. I’ve always had in my mind, “OS2 is the answer. OS2 is the answer. I have to somehow wait till all the systems get refined enough so that it will work.” That was the situation.

Then they came out just a month ago with the new “DOS 7” program. It arrived and so it was wonderful. I thought, “Great! I can put it onto my computer and I can once and for all ‘leave my earthly father behind’. I can go with a whole heart into what now is a workable situation with this DOS 7.” So I have to make changes to my computer but I thought, “Yeah, but shouldn’t I try to keep this old OS2 up just in case this doesn’t work? Maybe I’ll go back to the original idea.”

So yesterday, I started to work on it. In the course of it all, something went wrong in the computer. I have in my portable computer all kinds of things: all the work I was doing with Mary in London, the International Secretary of CCI stuff, all the projects that we have in Thailand, all kinds of faxes, the cash flow -- which fortunately I’ve copied off onto another computer -- but I had everything up. Then, something started to eat away at all the stuff on my computer!

It was dreadful. It was like being driven back into a corner. I would try one program and another. We have a program that doubles the disk and I had to unstack it -- I had to make it not double. Of course when you have twice the stuff on it the disk, you have to put it somewhere, so I tried to put it onto another part of the disk. I kept working and working, and the thing kept eating up more of my information, and more programs failed and more programs failed!

Before I started the whole thing, God had spoken to me and said, “Have you absolutely burned your boats? Are you no longer your father’s son? Are you only my Son’s son? Is He your real father? Do you see your life only as HIS and not in any way as outside Him? Are you ready in this computer business to leave aside what you’ve been fiddling along with for two years?” He said that before I ever started all this, and it was as if He started to eat the stuff away.

I couldn’t believe it because I was losing precious stuff -- and it took me hours -- it will still take me hours to put a lot of it back. I couldn’t believe and I couldn’t understand why it was happening because I’m not dumb as far as computers are concerned, and it shouldn’t have happened. More and more of my 240 megabyte disk started to be eaten away and more programs disappeared. My dear program, “Sidekick”, that I have all kinds of appointments and phone numbers on disappeared. I couldn’t get into it!

Then at one point the computer asked, “So that I can rescue the rest of the disk will you let me delete those files?” I said “yes” because I couldn’t do anything else. I deleted 1,700 files! I just got back and back into a corner. I thought, “Lord, am I willing?” It was parallel with, “Who’s Your Father? “Am I willing to let this go and start anew -- to put all my eggs into this DOS 7 basket and go with it-- and go with that life?” “Am I willing to forget all the past, to forget all the things -- even the nice things that I think about my father and my mother, even the enjoyable things about the past -- am I willing to forget about it all, the good and the bad, and to go ONLY with Jesus?”

Of course, while this computer thing went on until about five o’clock, it was dying. The whole thing was just dying. Finally I said, “Yes, Lord, yes I am. I’ll put this DOS 7 on now.” I couldn’t get the DOS 7 on until I had all the rest prepared but I thought, “I’ve nothing left. I’ll put the DOS 7 on.” So, I put the DOS 7 on. I don’t have every program back, but I have a lot of programs back like Sidekick and Manage Your Money. I’ve lost a fair bit of stuff, but I’ve got a lot back.
I do not know why. I don’t think it’s an angel. I don’t know why, but I do know what God said to me very, very clearly, “Who is your Father? Are you willing to forget all – just to leave aside all the make do’s and the self-help things that you’re holding onto -- all the little bits of self-effort, all the virtues that you think you might have brought from the past -- are you willing to leave all those make-do’s aside and let them be buried and destroyed for ever and go only as a son of my Son?” I just got it very clearly.

I’d feel this way even if I hadn’t the programs back. It’s just a mystery as I don’t know how the programs got back, I don’t know how they came back. Obviously, it’s something that is very clear and probably very simple to some other person who knows better and certainly very simple to God. The message I got very clear in my own heart, and that’s what I want to say to you, “Who’s your Father?”

Are you still kind of saying, “Well, I mean the heavenly Father is my Father, but my father is my father and my mother is my mother and I owe a lot to them. I’m them. I’m part of them and I like them.” Well are you or are you not? Has that life died and has it been crucified and destroyed? Is it no longer reality? It was never reality. Are you no longer treating it as reality? Are you in Jesus ONLY and is he everything to you?

I can see that it takes a VERY definite step into that. To be translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his beloved Son is a very deliberate step from a life that WAS into a NEW life. It’s very much connected with what we are thinking this moment and what our attitude is. So I’d ask you, “Who’s your Father?” Have you really died to all that the world knew you as, and even your parents knew you as? Have you really seen that all that is a life that was planned from the very beginning to be replaced by the real life -- you as the part of the body of Jesus himself -- that you are nothing but a part of Jesus? You’re just a little bit of Jesus.

You’re not a little bit of Mr. Blomfield, or not a little bit of Mrs. Livingstone. You’re a little bit of Jesus and that is all you are -- but that is EVERYTHING you are. Are you living like that? Have you really accepted that? Have you burned your bridges? Have you let go of all the past or are you still trying to hold on to a little bit of something that you might be outside Jesus because you’re hanging on to something that will disappear as quickly as my old programs disappeared on my computer? Jesus is in fact, our Everlasting Father.

Let us pray. Dear Lord, we see Lord Jesus, that there is nothing outside you and that we do not exist outside you. What the world sees of us, of our face, and our hands, what the world hears of our voice is like a cinder, a burned out cinder that will collapse the moment someone touches it. It is something that has been, that has been crucified with Christ, that no longer has any real existence. The real existence that we DO have is that we have been created by you in Christ Jesus for good works which you have prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. That’s our only purpose here in this life, to walk in those works with clear hearts, free minds, and with joyful feelings.

Lord, we would embrace that with all our hearts. We would walk forward into that with our whole heart Lord and say, “Lord Jesus, you are our Everlasting Father. We are members of you, limbs in your body. Let’s go, Lord. Let us go. Take us forward. Walk into the good works through us that you’ve prepared beforehand. We cast away all that is past and we walk now in a glorious liberated present for your glory, and the love of God.” Amen.