

Good morning. This is Chris Witts, and a very happy and holy Christmas to you on this special Christmas Day. It's a wonderful day, and we are sharing this special day with you.

I remember some time ago a man saying to me rather abruptly, "I don't really believe that Jesus was God." Well, if we don't believe that Jesus is God, then I think the Christian faith goes out the window, but I'd like today, on this special Christmas day, to remind you of the wonderful words of Isaiah 9:6.

The scripture says, "He will be called Everlasting Father." That was given there by the Hebrew prophet Isaiah, spoken about 500 years before for the birth of Jesus, and that really addresses this problem: *I don't believe that Jesus was God*. In the prologue to his gospel, John the apostle begins his testimony by saying, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God." And John goes on to point out that the Word is Jesus Christ, who became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

And we read later on how he said, "I tell you the truth. Before Abraham was born, I am." That must have astounded the people who heard that. That was just a significant statement of the people who were hearing it that day. And many of them were Jews and they would've remembered the history books, which record Yahweh's – that's the Jehovah for God – meeting with Moses at the burning bush when God described himself to Moses with those words, "I am who I am."

So, Jesus was not only saying that he existed before Abraham. He was also claiming to be God, and he is. God is our Everlasting Father. He's heard everything that there is to hear, and he's touched everything there is to touch. And his divine hand has been at work down through the years.

So that's the testimony about Jesus Christ, whose birth today in a special way we're celebrating. But not only do we contemplate that truth as we celebrate Christmas – and it's a good time to understand who Jesus is – but "Where there are two or three together in my name," he says in Matthew, "there I am with them."

Now he knows, Jesus knows that we live in an imperfect world. We know there's pain, there's suffering, there's instability and fear. We all experience those things. And he knows because he's been there in a human body. That's the remarkable thing about the Christian faith. Jesus experienced all the testing that are common to us. Paul tells us in his writing that God is able to empathise with us because he was, in all points, tempted, like as we are. He can identify. He knows what we feel.

So he was there in the beginning, and that's the Jesus whose birth we celebrate at Christmas, and that's the Everlasting Father of Isaiah's prophecy. But it just doesn't stop there because the Everlasting Father will be with us right through. In fact, Jesus reminded his disciples in Matthew 28, "I am with you always right to the very end of the age."

The Bible is very true. Another writer says that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. He was present when the world was made, and he's present today to bless you, and he will be present in glory when we will see his face. And so Isaiah in this remarkable text, "He will be called Everlasting Father." You can read that in Isaiah 9:6.

Now that verse, although years ago, and as I said 500 years before Jesus was born, it prophesied that this child who would be born into obscurity is the Everlasting Father of the universe. And notice this, "Of the increase of his government and peace, there will be no end," Isaiah 9:7. So the counselor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, this is Jesus, the same Jesus, the baby in the manger, or another name we use, Emmanuel, God with us. We think of Jesus the carpenter of Nazareth, the teacher of Galilee and the saviour on the cross. Wonderful news, especially on this day.

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father on this Christmas Day, we know that the wise men were overwhelmed with joy. They knew that they had arrived and the baby was there, that he indeed was someone special. The wise men

had traveled so far and Lord, we all are on a journey. And in our journey today, may we know that we will too meet the Christ child and may our hearts know that same joy. We thank you, Lord, for Christmas. In the precious name of Jesus, Amen.