

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Pentecost 14

September 6, 2020

Sermon by Pastor Dan Pautz

What's in a name?

—Exodus 6:2-8

God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.'"

What's in a Name? Maybe nothing! Shakespeare said, "A rose by any other name would still smell as sweet." However, the names of many people do carry a message or have significance. My brother Dwight born in wartime 1944 was named after General Dwight D. Eisenhower. A niece was named Lara for at that time there was a Lara in the movie Dr. Zhivago. My name is Daniel and my first grandchild is named Daniella. The names of all four of my brother-in-law's children begin with the letter K – Koreen, Kevin, Kyle, and Kurt, Kenneth is my brother-in-law's name. If you hear names such as Herbert, Frieda, Lena, Leonard, Louis, and Clarence, you are probably thinking of people who were born in the early 1900's and likely have a mid-European background. Some are named after Biblical people such as James, John, Joel, Ruth, Mary, Martha, and Christine. And there are names which have an actual meaning.

- a. Jesus – Savior
- b. Eve – Life- mother of living
- c. Jacob – heel grabber
- d. Sarah – Princess
- e. Peter – rock

We received our names from our parents. But God gave Himself His name. In the Old Testament are several names or titles for God. There are three names for God in our verses this morning.

1. The first word in our text for God is identical with Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The name is Elohim, used 2600 times in the Old Testament Scriptures. That name is used in many situations but especially as the Creator God.
2. Another name used in our text is El Shaddai, used 50 times in the Old Testament, meaning the Almighty God.
3. And the third name translated as Lord is Jahveh. That name is used 6500 times in the Old Testament. That name means Lord or boss, but it carries the connotations of Complete Independence, Gracious, compassion, loving, keeping covenants and promises. God had said, "I am the Lord, that is my name." (Isaiah 42:8)

Now you might be wondering why we have had this brief look at names of God. There is a reason. Four times in the verses in front of us are these words spoken to Moses, "I am the Lord." Moses needed to be reminded that the one in charge was the Lord, the loving Master. The setting is Egypt about 1500 BC. The Israelites were enslaved. Moses obeying the Lord's directions told the Pharaoh of Egypt that the Lord said he should let the Israelites go. Pharaoh snorted, "Who is this Lord that I should obey Him?" And then Pharaoh made things even tougher on the Israelites slaves. "Thanks a lot, Moses, you should have kept your mouth shut," would sum up how the Israelites felt. Moses bitterly complained to God.

"I am the Lord," God said. "I have heard the groaning of the Israelites. I have not turned a deaf ear to them. I know what is going on." The Lord was aware and heard their complaints. And that is so true for us today especially when we have been treated unfairly. He is the Lord. That name means He is in charge and He hears us. There are words from a verse in the Easter Hymn, "I Know That My Redeemer Lives" that go this way: "He lives to comfort me when faint; He lives to hear my soul's complaint." Comforting, Isn't that!

Now sometimes our complaints are wrong and sinful. We look quickly t three examples. 1) "It's not fair," a child whines and cries, "My sister got one more M&M than what you gave me." 2) A person was bitterly complaining about America and listing all its faults but never stopped to think about all the blessings the Lord has given to us.

3) If I were very bitter and angry and continued to moan and groan when my old AC unit had to be replaced as actually did happen two weeks ago, our Lord Jesus could say “Air conditioning – I never had air conditioning when I lived on earth for 33 years. Never a comfortable home with running water and microwaves and cell phones! Don’t be so gripey! Have some gratitude.”

However, this year of 2020 has been a rough and tough year for almost everyone. Covid-19 virus, racial tensions, riots, turmoil, unrest with the upcoming elections! It bothers us. But the Lord is aware. In addition, many of you are carrying heavy loads in life. Maybe you have been treated unfairly at work or in school or by others – the Lord knows that and hears you. Maybe you are carrying a heavy load of problems in connection with your health or family matters. Maybe your heart is heavy because a son or daughter or a grandchild has strayed from the Lord – and that truly hurts. Possibly you are carrying a load which you have not shared with others – it could be guilt, a disappointment. Keep the message in mind, “I am the Lord.” By that Name He is reminding you that He cares. “What a Friend We Have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care? We should never be discouraged, Take it to the Lord in prayer.”

“I am the Lord.” A thought in the word Lord is eternal existence. He has had centuries of experience dealing with the difficulties and problems of His people. It is interesting that as the Lord spoke to Moses, He reminded him of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, all of whom had lived 400-500 years earlier. Problems, pains, and pressures – they had them. But they also had the Lord’s providence and promises. When you are experiencing difficulties and burdens, remind yourself that the Lord has had many years dealing with His children who have gone through similar difficulties. Widows – think of how the Lord helped widows such as Ruth and Naomi and Mary and the widow of Zarephath. Young men, think of how the Lord helped the faithful young man Joseph and also Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego. Challenges of older years – think of Solomon who in his older years was led by the Lord to write Ecclesiastes. Think also of your Christian parents, grandparents. The same eternal Lord who guided them also guides you today.

What’s in a name? “One of the greatest aspects of the name Lord is that it refers to Him making promises and covenants and also keeping them. God had promised Abraham and Isaac and Jacob that their descendents would be given the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. That promise was repeated to Moses. “I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.” Promises, promises, promises! And the Lord kept those promises. The Israelites would have to weather a few more months of cruel mean slavery. But soon the Lord through Moses would be leading the Israelites numbering about 2 million out of Egypt and its slavery on their way to the Promised Land. The Lord always, always keeps the promises He makes. That’s just how He is!

The most wondrous promise? It runs throughout the Bible. That promise was made to Adam and Eve, to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, to the Israelites who left Egypt. You will find those promises written by David and Isaiah and Zechariah. It was the promise that a Savior would come who would take away the sins of the world. The promises contained many details such as He would be born in Bethlehem, a descendent of David, born of a virgin. His parents would have to escape King Herod and take Him to Egypt. He would do miracles, raise people from the dead, be betrayed by one His own. Someone counted 333 promises about the Savior in the Old Testament plus previews of His coming such as the lambs that would be sacrificed. And the Lord kept that promise. All we need to do is look at the cross where the Lord Jesus gave His life as was promised. We look at that empty tomb from which Jesus rose victoriously. And then look at the details of the Lord keeping all those promises. That is how the Lord is.

Think of the Lord’s promises to you. What promise do you like best? Is it not that the Lord in His grace will take you home to heaven? Your future is bright and wonderful. You will be with Jesus who loves you immensely. Maybe there are days when you get weary of this life. Maybe some of you are in the pains and weaknesses of older age. You look forward to the joys of heaven. You leave behind Covid-19 and cancers and frustrations and needless dramas.

*Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come,
Tis grace has brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home.*

*The Lord has promised good to me His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be, as long as life endures.*

The Lord has also promised to take care of you throughout your days on earth. And He has! He has given you many blessings from infancy to the present time. The hymn puts it this way.

*Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done, in whom his world rejoices;
who from our mothers' arms has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.*

May the words "I am the Lord" always have meaning for you throughout your life.