

Trinity 18 2018

John tells Jesus about someone going around in Jesus' name. "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

William Shakespeare has had a profound impact on our world. His plays have shaped the way we speak. Shaped the way we think. If you've ever had nothing to lose, or had a method to your madness, you got it from Shakespeare. If the world has ever been your oyster, if you have seen better days, you got it from Shakespeare. If you are eaten out of house and home, or you have worn your heart on your sleeve, you got it from Shakespeare.

If you think names just really aren't that important, you probably got that from Shakespeare as well. Juliet's words might as well be our own. "Deny thy father and refuse thy name. Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love. And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy. Thou art thyself, though not a Montague. What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot, nor arm, nor face, nor any other part belonging to a man. O, be some other name! What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet; so Romeo would, were he not Romeo called, retain that dear perfection which he owes without that title.'

Likewise, does the name of Jesus really matter all that much? It was a common name in Jesus' day. It's a common name today. I'm sure you've met a Jesús or a Joshua or two. Jesus wasn't even the first person in the Bible to have that name. Joshua is the name the sixth book of the Bible is named after. So it's not like that name is all that special. What's special isn't the name, but who Jesus is and what He did for us.

It takes more than just saying the name of Jesus to do things in the name of Jesus. Jesus Himself says that very thing. **"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven... On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'** So how can the name be important? When what we're really looking for is who Jesus is and what He's done on our behalf.

That said, our gospel reading today seems to attach a great deal of importance to names. John says to Jesus, **“Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.”** But Jesus said, **“Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. For the one who is not against us is for us. For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.**

Jesus speaks well of people doing things in His name. The Father will send the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ name. And don’t forget, the one who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. That’s a lot of promises attached to Jesus’ name. That’s a lot of promises attached to something that we don’t think matters all that much. Not to mention Jesus is very protective of His name. After all, the second commandment is about just that. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

That is what the name of Jesus is so important. But not the proper name ‘Jesus,’ per se. But rather the name that belongs to Jesus. The name that, as Jesus tells us, is also the Father’s name. It’s the one name found all over Scripture. The one name the Jews were afraid to even utter out loud. The one name that we end up translating as Lord, even though it’s something else completely. The one singular name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

That’s the name at which every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. That’s the name that gives meaning to everything Jesus does. The one who was, the one who is, the one who is to come. The one who exists outside of time itself. The one who has no beginning and no end. This one is born and who dies for us. Without that name, would those events have mattered? With that name, they are significant beyond measure.

The name of God is who God is. It is no mere identification. It is no mere symbol. To have the divine name is to have God Himself. Therefore, it is no small matter when by Jesus’ command we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism isn’t just plain water, but it is the water included in God’s command and combined with God’s word. And not just any Word. But one Word in particular. Jesus.

Names give meaning to the one receiving that name. Today Joshua John you have received/will receive the divine name in your baptism. You are given meaning by that name. You are defined by that name. Everything you do is

only understood through that name. Jesus. The One who is, has decided to be with you and to do that took a sacrifice whose value is beyond comprehension and so the cross itself gets its meaning from God's very name. The death of Jesus gets its meaning from the name of the One who is.

The ones to whom Jesus says, "I never knew you," do not have that identity. But you do. You have that name. You have the one name written in the Book of life. And to be called by any other name would not smell nearly as sweet.

For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. There is no other name under heaven by which we have been saved already.

Amen.