

"What is in a Name?"
January 13, 2019

Luke 3:5-17, 21-22

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Call to Worship

By your baptism you have been grafted into the family of God, and become royal priests, Gods own people ordained for ministry in the name of Jesus Christ.

Remembering our baptism into union with Christ Jesus and our participation in Christ's mission, we come to praise and worship God.

Prayer of Invocation

Lord, Open us to all that you would have us be, for you and for others. 'Breakthrough' into our lives and our church with new possibilities. Amen.

The Word

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Common English Bible

The people were filled with expectation, and everyone wondered whether John might be the Christ. **John replied to them all, "I baptize you with water, but the one who is more powerful than me is coming. I'm not worthy to loosen the strap of his sandals.**

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. The shovel he uses to sift the wheat from the husks is in his hands. **He will clean out his threshing area and bring the wheat into his barn. But he will burn the husks with a fire that can't be put out."**

When everyone was being baptized, Jesus also was baptized. While he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit came down on him in bodily form like a dove. **And there was a voice from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness."**

Living the Word

One of the ongoing conversations in the realm of updating ministry, is the names we call different rooms and spaces within the church. Narthex and Nave have little meaning to people who may not have been raised in the church. We can just say "what is the big deal?" But it is very interesting how we build protective fences around what we have always understood to be 'truth.' Change is sometimes hard for us...

Updating language is a struggle when you have been served well by the 'old ways.' Yet we say that we want everyone to feel welcome. So here are some suggestions for updated space names for our church. Let me first say, that you maybe won't be able to change what you have always understood, but it helps to be aware of what is new around us.

When you hear someone refer to 'the gathering space' they might be referring to the space just inside the front door where we gather before we enter the 'worship area.' There is nothing wrong with still using the words Narthex and Sanctuary as your identifiers, but others may not. Also, the rooms I always referred to as bathrooms, aren't really for bathing, and sound better as restrooms. My concern there, is that people may linger in a restroom, but toilet room does sound a bit crass.

I haven't really heard a different, agreeable name for the Fellowship Hall...It is where we go to have fellowship, so is there another word as warm and inclusive as that? Like many things in the church – (can I still say 'church?') we are slow to change, and much discussion and possibly a even a vote, has to happen

before we can decide on things definitely. OK, I am poking some fun at our old ways of doing things, and the need to change and myself for being so forgetful, when I should be leading us all to higher ground...

What is in a name? It is more about a remembrance of what or who it refers to than just the learning of a new name. As I have moved from church to church, it usually takes me at least two years to get most of the names of everyone in my head. The nametags help, but it is when I connected with each one of you in some way that the names began to click in my head. Finally a Sunday comes when I can greet most of you at the door coming in or going out, by your name. I wait for that day and celebrate in my heart that I have connected with so many.

When you were born, someone gave you a name. Some parents plan the names ahead, some wait until they see the baby before the naming. I know with my grandson, Oliver, there were lists and books that were poured over for months ahead, but nothing was settled until he was born. I know that I was surprised that they finally chose my Uncle Oliver's name and my mother's maiden name – so he became Oliver Reed Hamblin.

Because there is a chance he will be the only child in my husband, Bob's family to carry on the Hamblin name, that too, is special. Even so, the parents didn't choose those names for any reason other than they liked them. Oliver's half-brother, Torrence, came to me just after his mother and my son got engaged 3 years ago. He was 9 then and with great excitement said: "Jeff is going to be my step-dad." Jeff was standing right there and I asked Torrence, how will that be different than now? His reply was "It just will be." Jeff had made a connection not only with Carleen, but with her children and they keep getting closer as a family. There can be security in a name.

At baptism we receive the name God has given all of us: 'Child of God.' Think of the security of that name! We are baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus told us to do. That name we carry with us as well, though sometimes we forget. When we do remember who we are as a Child of God, we go out and live our lives 'in Jesus' name.'

The first three weeks of Confirmation class is focused on God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We make lists of the names that we use for each of them. In the series of choruses we sang at the beginning of the service, we listed some of the names of Jesus. You may relate or remember him best by one or another of these names, or you may have your own that draws you closer to him. They each have different definitions.

Beginning this list with Immanuel: God with us; God in human form. When I look at the two candles on the Worship Table (which, by the way, is another name for the altar), I remember one represents Jesus as God, and the other – Jesus as Human. I have noticed lately that the one on the right flickers more than the other when lit. You may say it is the air movements in here, but could it be Jesus as God or possibly Jesus as human, is asking for more of a connection with us?

Messiah – the one who comes to save us; Beautiful Savior – the one who was perfect, yet gave himself to save us; Blessed redeemer – the one God blessed for our sake; Christ – which is not his last name, but means the anointed one of God – name above all names; Friend – Jesus is all the World to me – He's my friend...he walks with me and talks with me...

Bright Morning Star – The one who shines in our darkness; Glorious Lord and King Jesus – Our teacher and leader for our lives; and as the Holy Spirit shared at his baptism - "*You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness.*"

I invite you to think about the way you relate to Jesus, and possibly try one of these in a new direction to your relationship. If they don't seem to fit how you know Christ, could God be calling you to know Jesus in a new way?

In the baptism of Jesus, the anointed one, goes into the water. This gift from God we use to cleanse ourselves inside and out. We are washed at least symbolically in baptism, but we know the value of water in order to survive. We are told it is good for us to drink as many as 8 glasses of water each day. That is because it bathes us on the inside, cleansing out the toxin and miscellaneous other things. Then when we go into a real 'bath-room' to wash ourselves up, we are cleansed on the outside.

Water can remind us of our baptism. Baptism reminds us who we are as a Child of God and what we are able to do in Jesus' name. Each morning or evening as we bathe – on the inside, or the outside, we can bring our minds to what God might be calling each of us to do 'in Jesus' name.'

I have a gift for each of you to pick up on your way out and to put somewhere you will see it each morning or evening to help remind you of your baptism. It is not of my creation, but is used by Adam Hamilton, the pastor, at Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City, Missouri. He has it attached to his shower head and repeats it each morning as do the many that he has shared it with. It is on a laminated card so you also can hang it on the showerhead (it includes a rubber band for attachment purposes.) or you can set it by your sink.

Often people tell me that they don't know what words to say in order to pray. So this is a simple prayer you can repeat each morning: "Lord, as I enter this water to bathe, I remember my baptism. Wash me by your grace, fill me with your Spirit, renew my Soul. I pray that I might live as your child today and honor you in all that I do. Amen."

We need reminders of who God created us to be. Because sometimes we forget that God also says to us:
"You are my child, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness."

PRAY