

Name Calling
Exodus 19:2-8a along with I Peter 2:9
June 18, 2023

Exodus 19:2-8a

After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain.

³Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, “This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: ⁴‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, ⁶you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

⁷So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the Lord had commanded him to speak. ⁸The people all responded together, “We will do everything the Lord has said.”

I Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Those of you who get the email blast, on Friday I talked about names. (The email blast is an email we send out Monday through Friday mornings which contains a devotion by Pastor Craig or me or a church member, and announcements. If you don’t receive the email blast and would like to, go to our website Valleypres.net to sign up, or call our office.)

Since this is Father's Day, in that email blast, I talked about names we call our Father: Dad, Daddy, Pa, Papa. Or, how about our grandfathers: granddad, grampa, gramps, baba, pappy, pap pap. And the list goes on.

Maybe you had names people called you while growing up. I was called DC, Di ,Didy, DiDi, and Christopher Columbus.

Think of the names you were called. Some of them may have not been very nice: loser, fatty, retard, nerd. One church member told me he was called peanut and his heavier twin brother was called fatso.

When we allow people to name us, in our own eyes it begins to define us and becomes our identity. Jerk. Disgusting. Sometimes we find ourselves living up to that name. Unworthy. Ugly. Stupid.

And if you are like me, your mind focuses on those bad names. I was very shy the first half of my life. People would call me out on it (you are so quiet) that I became even more shy to the point it became disability. I can teach a class and have all kinds of people come up to me afterwards and say how great the class was, all it takes is one person to say something negative and that is all I hear in my mind...on repeat...for days.

Do you do that?

This is what I want you to hear this morning and put on repeat in your mind: God reshapes our identity by calling us other names. Three of them are in today's scripture passage: you are a treasured possession, holy, priests. What does that mean?

In our Call to Worship taken from I Peter are some more: You are called chosen, royal priests (again), holy (again), God's very own family. We are called to look at ourselves through God's perspective, through God's eyes, through those names God calls us.

A student in architecture entered a nationwide contest for building design. Judged by a panel of architects, her design received Honorable Mention. She was utterly depressed. She believed hers was the best design. At lunch on the last day of the convention she was sitting over her uneaten sandwich, looking at her creation.

An old man was looking at it, too. At last he remarked, not knowing who had designed the building, "This one, I think, is the best of the lot." Judges had merely given her work Honorable Mention, but one old man deemed hers the best. The young student went home elated. Why? Because the old man was Frank Lloyd Wright.

The One God, who is almighty, sovereign, compassionate, faithful, just, slow to anger, patient, full of love for us calls you by name. Deems you the best. This is your identity. Not what others call you, but what God calls you.

From our scripture passage:

You are called Chosen – you are acceptable and worthy

You are called a treasured possession. You are valuable. The cross proves your worth.

You are called part of God's own family. You have brothers and sisters in Christ. I spent quite a bit of time with a Christian woman who was very ill. She felt lonely because as she said over and over again, "I don't have any family." I kept reminding her she had a family, a different kind of family. All her brothers and sisters in Christ in this church are her family, and we were taking care of her.

I Corinthians 6:19 – You are called God's temple; you are the residence of the Holy Spirit. This is why you are holy because you have the presence of God who is holy.

You are called a royal priest. The priests of the Old Testament handled sacred responsibilities and were intermediaries between God and humans. They helped the people live up to their call: to be a light to other nations.

Now we are called priests. We come here on Sunday to handle sacred responsibilities in worship. We have a responsibility to minister to the needs of other people. But we are also called to go out and be a light for God so others may know God's love because this is what priests do. Thus, it says in Act 1:8 you are called a messenger to the world.

John 15:15 – you are called God’s friend

Ephesians 2:10 – You are God’s workmanship, God’s masterpiece, you are homemade.

Gal 3:26 you are called a child of God

Romans 5:8 you are called greatly loved

John 8:36 you are called free

2 Cor 5:17 you are called brand new

I Cor 12:27 you are called the Body of Christ

Romans 8:17 you are called Heirs of God

I John 2:27 you are called Anointed

Ephesians 1:3 you are called Blessed

Romans 14:8 you belong to God

Romans 1:7 you are called Saints

This is your identity.

God calls you these names over and over again in the Bible.

If you are or have struggled with who you are, what you have been called by others or what you call yourself, if you have an identity crisis or know someone who does, I encourage you to get a copy of this sermon from our website or the office, read each of these names again. Next to each name, I have their biblical address. Read them in context and be reminded again of who you are until you believe it.

We have talked about these names given to us by God as individuals. Yet, many of them apply to groups of people. When God told Moses to tell the people that they were a treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, it was addressed to the whole nation of Israel.

When Peter wrote in I Peter that we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, he was talking to the Church.

Sometimes churches have an identity crisis. At any point, a church can be a ministry, mission, movement, or it can be a museum, or mausoleum. When Peter wrote to the local churches, they were facing an identity crisis and in his letter he answers the question, “What is the church?”

In two weeks, we are going to have an exploring membership class. So far, we have 15 signed up, which is extraordinary for the summer. If you of thinking of attending class, please call me to register.

I have a teaching that I do on why join a church. One of the reasons we join a church is because of the names God gives the church. This is one of my most favorite teachings.

The church is the People of God.

The church is the Family of God.

The church is the Body of Christ.

The church is a Holy Temple.

The church is the Bride of Christ.

In other words, the church is God's people in Christ. We don't go to church, we are the church. Christ is our identity.

The nation of Israel was chosen by God, set apart for a purpose. That purpose was to be a light for God to other nations. God calls the Church a group of priests and chosen and holy, therefore, we have been set apart for a purpose. We are priests and our congregation is the whole world. We have a whole world out there to be pastors to – to speak of God, to share God's love, to be a light for God, to give compassion, and to tell people the names God gives them.

Hear I Peter 2 from The Message:

But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.

This is your identity. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Now please stand. Take your bulletins with you as we affirm our faith in a slightly different format of The Apostle's Creed.....