

Sunday Sermon: February 9, 2020

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 2: 9-12

Sermon Theme: Called by God to Reveal

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

I'd like to read a famous passage from a very famous play.

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy. What's Montague?

What's in a name? That which we call a rose By any other word would smell as sweet.

So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called, Retain that dear perfection which he owes without that title.

Romeo, doff thy name, And for that name, which is no part of thee take all myself.

A very famous soliloquy from Rome and Juliet where Juliet is lamenting that she and Romeo cannot be together for no other reason than the name of their family. The most famous quote from this passage is the question, "What's in a name?" To Juliet's and Romeo's family, a name was everything, it even meant war between their families.

What's in a name? Maybe you have had a nickname or two during your life. Some of them good and some bad. Usually there was reason you got that nickname and that reason was the reason it stuck.

What about your given name? Why were you named what you were named? Some of you might have done some research on the name that you were given. Again, there might be a family story why you have that name that you have My name is Nathan. It's a Biblical name which means God gives. But I was named Nathan simply because my mother liked that name.

The answer to Juliet's question, "What's in a name?" is ... a lot. There is a lot of importance in our name. Our name is one of only a few things that we carry with us throughout our whole life. We are aware of our name from a very early age. As we grow, we become even more aware of our name. We want it to be one that people know and honor. We even talk about making a name for ourselves in this world. Our earthly name is so important that God even protects our good name with a commandment.

But our earthly name is not the only name that we have. God calls us by a number of other names in the Bible. There is so much in these names that God gives to us and calls us by. We will hear who we are by nature, not a great name. But we will also hear some wonderful names that show us who we are in Jesus. We will also see that when we are given these names, they also give us a responsibility. We will see that we are called to be revealers.

The first name that we need to know about is the one that Peter refers to when he says, **Once you were not a people, once you had not received mercy.** Paul says in Romans, **"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** The Bible calls us sinner.

None of us would want to attach that name to ourselves. But there may have still been times in our life where we are proud of the sins in our life. Maybe there was a time in our life when many people knew us by our sins. Maybe we flaunted them people because we knew they would not point them out to us. Maybe those sins even defined who we were. We not only wanted people to keep quiet about our sins, we wanted them to condone those sins and accept them.

Yet, what happened when someone confronted us with those sins? Our reaction was no different than anyone else. Instead of repenting of those sins, we sinned more by rationalizing them and justifying them. We twisted and turned God's Word to allow ourselves to continue on in our sins.

The name sinner fits us. Even, if we don't want to live by that name any longer, we live up to that name with the sins we commit in thoughts, words and actions. Without God's love and mercy in our life, that name sinner would be leading us to death and hell.

Who would want to love a person who sins against us constantly and wants to ruin the relationship? God would and he does. Paul tells us, "**While we were still sinners Christ died for us.**" Peter calls us a new name. He says that we are a chosen people. Being chosen is very different from doing the choosing. Think about a time that you were waiting to be chosen. Maybe a high school play, a job opportunity, or even that time on the playground. You were not doing the choosing, you were waiting for others to choose you.

Even though we are sinners, God loves us so much that he chose us to be his own. He sent his Son to make that choice complete. Martin Luther explains: Jesus came to buy us back from sin, death and the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy precious blood and innocent suffering and death.

Jesus chose us to be his own people and made us his own by his death on the cross. His blood has washed us clean of every one of our sins. Because of this Peter calls us another name: holy nation. The word holy pictures something that was dirty, but now has been made clean.

Driving down the interstate you see the truck that has been out in the desert and it is so dirty, or the truck that has been out mud bogging somewhere. It is so dirty and must be clean. The word holy describes what the blood of Jesus has done for us. We are so dirty with sin, it is caked on. Yet, Jesus washes away every dirty stain and mark of sin from us. We are not just clean, we are new people. We are part of the holy nation.

We are holy, not because we are so good that we work off our own sins, or make ourselves holy. We are holy because Jesus has washed all of our sins and the sins of the whole world.

Jesus has chosen us to be his own. We are now longer people who are lost in sin and death. Jesus has washed away that name sinner and has given us a new name.

If Romeo or Juliet had a different names, their families may not have been at war and maybe they would have been able to get married. However, the whole point of this tragic play is that they were kept from things, they were not allowed to be together simply because of their name. In the New Testament, there was a group that you wanted to be a part of. In much the same way as being a Capulet or Montague, doors were opened or closed, rights were given or refused because you belonged to that group. That group was the citizens of Rome. You wanted to belong to that group because it was so special.

Being a Roman citizen was very important. But Peter tells us we belong to an even more special group. This name is more importance and opens more doors than everything else. We are a people belonging to God.

Being God's people is something very special. Think about all the blessings that God's people had access to in the Old Testament that others did not. They saw God's power and protection first hand. They had access to the promises of the Savior. Jesus came and preached to the Jews to lead them to repent.

We are now children of God. We have access into God's special power and protection. We know that God says that He works things out for the good of those who love him. That is us. We know that we have been given the special gifts that Christ won of faith, forgiveness, life and salvation, only through God's grace. The Holy Spirit is even now working in our hearts to create and strengthen faith. These are very special blessings that are ours because God has chosen us, he has washed away our sins, and made us his own people.

God gives us all these names for a purpose. Peter says, "**that you may declare the praise of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.**" Have you ever thought of yourself as a pastor? I see the looks on your faces..... that might be the last thing you think of yourself as. Yet, Peter gives us that name. He says you and you and you are a royal priesthood. He doesn't mean that you have gone to seminary and will give the sermon today or lead worship next week. He does mean that you are carriers and sharers of the Word of God.

You are a royal priesthood because the Holy Spirit is working in your heart. The Holy Spirit has given you all the necessary tools that you need to be part of this priesthood. Without the Holy Spirit being at work, none of us would be worthy of sharing God's Word. But the Holy Spirit is at work wherever the Word is and whenever the Word is used. With the Holy Spirit working we are given the honor of being priests given that special job to share God's Word.

How do we do this? How can a sinner declare the praises of God? We see the answer to that question in a few more names. We are aliens and strangers and salt and light.

One of the ways that we declare God's praises is to thank and praise him by the way we live our lives. Peter tells us that we live differently from the world around us. He uses aliens and strangers. We don't want to be different, yet, we are to live differently from what the norm of the world says is good. We don't live by the sins that we commit, we live in the forgiveness, love and mercy that God has shown to us. Peter gives a good

explanation of what this looks like. **Abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.** ¹² **Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.**

Live a God-pleasing life to thank God for what he has done for you. We do not live this way, as Peter describes, to gain heaven for ourselves. Heaven is already ours.

During Epiphany, we have been talking about all the ways that Jesus is revealed in the Bible as our Savior from sin. What do we do with that message.

Now that we see that Jesus is our Savior has washed away our sins, has called us to be in his family, has blessed with special gifts and has given us the hope of eternal, now what will we do? We are salt and light.

The Epiphany term, revelation refers to us as well. As salt and light we are sharers and revealers of Jesus too. What will revealing and telling others about Jesus do. It will preserve people from the terrible rot of sin and hell much like salt preserves meat from going bad. We are to be a light which guides the way. We are the ones who guide people to the Word of God that they will not experience eternal death, but instead the joy of heaven.

What's in a name? There is a lot in a name, especially the names that God gives to us. We see who we are through Jesus by these names and we see the responsibility that we have as God's chosen people.

May we take see our responsibility as God's chosen and lead others to the wonderful light of our Savior Jesus.