

United Methodist Church

Elmore, Worcester

October 18, 2020

“God is with us. The Holy One knows us. The Living God shines through us.”

Prelude, Gathering and Announcements

Moment of Silent Preparation

*Call to Worship (*One - All*)

One: Brothers and sisters, we are loved by God.

All: The ruler of heaven and earth knows us by name.

One: God hears and answers our cries for help.

All: God shows compassion and kindness to us.

One: May our lives praise and magnify our great and awesome God.

All: We have come to worship the one whose image is imprinted within us.

*Hymn of Praise

(open) *Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty* # 64 (UMH – *red*)

*Opening Prayer

Magnificent and Holy One, we long to know you better. As we make our way in this world, we search for signs that you are with us. Give us a glimpse of your glorious presence, and show us your ways. May our

lives radiate the marvelous message of your goodness, your mercy, and your love? Amen.

*Gloria Patri # 71 (UMH)

Choir: *Rescue Me*

Readings:

Exodus 33:12-23

Matthew 22:15-22

Young Disciples Talk and Prayer

*Hymn of the Reflection

Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior # 351 (UMH – *red*)

Reflection

*Hymn of Response

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing # 400 (UMH – *red*)

Joys, Concerns, & Thanksgiving

Pastoral Prayer & *Lord's Prayer*

*Sending Hymn

Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing # 671 (UMH – *red*)

Benediction

Postlude

**Please stand, as you are able.*

Sermon

(October 18, 2020: *Exodus 33:12-23*)

What's in a name?

Dale Carnegie once said, "A person's name is to him or her is the sweetest sound in any language." I for one, have to really work at remembering a person's name.

Many struggle - especially when there is a relational power imbalance. Consider a professor with a large freshman class in an auditorium. Every student knows the professor's name, but he is faced with learning the names of a hundred or two hundred students; or a high-ranking business or governmental official who may not know the names of all who work for her. Then there's the pastor of a large church who runs into an occasional attendee in the grocery store. He may recognize the face but not know the name, as the church attendee enthusiastically yells out, "Pastor Jim!" as other people in the cereal aisle look askance.

Forgetting or not remembering someone's name can be a real disconnect. It adds to the social distancing of our time. We've all felt the sting of knowing someone whom we respect and admire, as they blow past us in the hallway without a second glance because they don't know our names. If Dale Carnegie is right, then the opposite must be true: not hearing our name must be the loudest, discouraging silence in any language!

What a difference it makes when that professor actually greets and names one of those nameless, faceless students when passing on campus. When that official pokes her head into a subordinate's office and by name tells him what a good job he's doing, it changes everything. And, when that pastor knows the name of the person putting Rice Krispies into her cart, it makes us feel more connected.

The discipline of learning names requires being fully present when meeting another person. Here are some techniques for retaining a person's name: repeat the name when you are introduced; use their name in a sentence; spell out their name; associate their name with something about them. Remember, it's the purpose, not the technique that matters. Knowing someone's name puts you on the fast track to knowing them and being known by them.

Moses meeting with God is a power imbalance at work. God is God, and Moses is just a human being; yet, Moses had an intimacy with God that is unique. The writer of Exodus puts it this way: God spoke to Moses "face to face, as one speaks to a friend."

Moses' and God's conversation happens at the Tent of Meeting - a place separate from the Tabernacle, outside the camp. This is significant because it implies mobility. Today's conversation will be about God's travel plans with the Israelites. Moses' familiarity with God is sufficient to remind God of his promises. "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people'; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' Consider too that this nation is your people."

Moses has found favor in God's eyes, and God knows Moses "by name." These phrases affirm God's choice of Moses as the leader of Israel, but they are also terms of endearment. Moses has proven that he won't separate himself from his people. While Moses was receiving the commandments on Sinai, the Israelites were dancing around a golden calf. Yet Moses pleaded for his people: "But now, if you will only forgive their sin - but if not, blot me out of the book you have written." Moses did not treat his people like a nameless, faceless horde. He knows them, and he uses God's recognition of Moses' name as capital for what comes next.

Moses is bold. He asks God for three things. First, is the question of God plan to continue traveling with the Israelites to the Promised Land. Moses learned the hard way that he couldn't lead the people by himself. If God didn't plan to go along, then, Moses said, "do not carry us up from here." Moses is testing God's name recognition. "For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth."

God's response is the assurance Moses is looking for - an assurance based in the fact that God has found favor in Moses and knows him by name. But, Moses decides to go even deeper, asking for the ultimate connection: "Show me your glory, I pray." It's an odd request since Moses has previously witnessed God's and communicated with God directly. It would appear that Moses wants to know more of God's character and person.

But God's response does not fulfill Moses' request in full. God promises to show Moses his "goodness" rather than his glory, for no human can see God's face and live. The "goodness" God will reveal is even more impressive than one more display of glory. Moses will be given a view of God's character - the goodness that he intends for Israel as he leads them into the Promised Land.

But Moses is promised something powerful as a reminder of their relationship: "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The Lord'." This harkens back to Moses' first encounter with God in the burning bush. Moses asked for God's name. God said, "I am who I am." Moses now hears the name Yahweh proclaimed as a revelation of God's goodness. God is not a nameless, faceless God - some neutral or indifferent force in the universe. God is at work on behalf of his people, and reveals to Moses that he is trustworthy and good.

The Moses and God connection - knowing one another's names, leads to a partnership that saves a people. God will go ahead of the Israelites. And though Moses wanted another divine revelation, God shows Moses his back as he hides Moses in the cleft of the rock.

The Scriptures reveal many names for God, but One True God - who created the universe, knows our names and is not indifferent to us; we will not be abandoned in the wilderness by a God who turns a deaf ear to suffering; we won't be

left to navigate our way in the world without a God who knows the way to life. God knows your name! All the hairs on our heads are numbered.

On the flip side, we know God's name. We know him not merely as a blindingly glorious figure, but we have come to know him in the face of Jesus Christ. We have heard his name and seen his glory, "the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." He promises to go ahead of us and be with us always, even to the end of the age. He is God with a human face and, because of that, we do not have to guess at the goodness of God.

In that God knows our names, then, we - his people, should make every effort to know the names of others and speak the Lord's name to them as well. Others will come to know God through those who follow Christ. Take time to learn their names, to value and connect with them, and others will begin to see a reflection of the God who knows them too.

What's in a name? Your name is the sweetest sound in any language. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

Thank you - Holy Spirit, we offer our prayers to you (...)

O Gracious, Persistent and loving God, you know our name and reveal your name to us. To call you “Lord” is to pledge allegiance to you and to your realm as ruler of our lives and our true habitation. To worship you means giving you the honor you deserve because you are our Lord and Creator. Help us to love you as we ought: to subordinate all of our affections and commitments to your demands and commands. Give us the wisdom to discern what belongs to you and the courage to bow to you. Keep us from giving to presumptive rulers what does not belong to them. Give us the grace to keep politics in its place. Amen.

We pray in your name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

...together, saying, *Our Father, who art in heaven... Amen*

Quotes

In surrendering to another, and ultimately to God in unselfish love, we reach the highest state of communication that leads to communion. In such intimate self-giving communion we expand into a conscious awareness of being one in a mutual sharing of the good with both the lover and the beloved, while at the same time we both discover how beautifully unique and free we are to live in goodness toward the other. (*In Jesus We Trust*, Maloney; p. 15.)

Experiencing God's love means experiencing that one has been unreservedly accepted, approved, and infinitely loved, that one can and should accept oneself and one's neighbor. Salvation is joy in God which expresses itself in joy in and with one's neighbor. (*Jesus the Christ*, Walter Kasper; p. 86.)

Prayer is not begging God to do something for us that he is reluctant to do, or begging God to do something that he hasn't time for. In prayer we persistently, faithfully, trustingly come before God, submitting ourselves to his sovereignty, confident that he is acting, right now, on our behalf. We are his "chosen ones," and don't forget it. God is, right now – the word is "quickly"...working his will in your life and circumstances. So keep praying. Don't quit. (*Tell It Slant*, Peterson; p. 144.)

Theme for the Day

We know God's name — and he knows ours. Many of us struggle with learning names, but knowing someone's name is a key in connecting to their identity and individuality. Knowing names helps people to feel known, understood and valued. In Exodus 33, God tells Moses, "I know you by name," and then proceeds to tell Moses God's own name, "the Lord." This mutual naming allows intimacy between God and Moses, leading to Moses seeing God's glory. There's power and intimacy in knowing God's name and knowing that he knows our names, too.

Text Related

When I first started going to my church 21 years ago, I was still drinking. So I would often show up with these extreme hangovers. But what I would hear is these very, very old people from the South, saying: "He's only as far away as his name, he's only as far away, call on the name of the Lord" and "He shall hear you, he shall answer, he's only as far away as his name."

So it might be a habit that if I said: "Jesus," or if I just said, "hi," there's only one person I'm reaching to. I got into the habit of calling for, reaching out to, and then experiencing this very, very dear parental response, as a mother or father might speak in the night when the child is afraid. Say, "I'm right here, what's up?"

—Anne Lamott, interviewed in "Anne Lamott on Jesus: 'I Didn't Want Him'", Beliefnet.com, May 2006.

Another Text Related

Santa Cruz, California, in the 1970s, was a very different sort of place. What made it different was a group of people who lived there in great numbers.

They were hippies — or, you might say, has-been hippies. The Summer of Love had long since faded into a psychedelic sunset. San Francisco's infamous Haight-Ashbury neighborhood had gentrified. The "flower children" who'd once inhabited its "crash pads" now held down regular jobs. Many of these has-been hippies had moved out to Santa Cruz, where the rents were cheaper.

This population of former flower children had a certain impact when their children hit the public schools. One of the things the teachers found difficult was the names of the kindergarten students.

Those classes had their share of Michaels and Lisas and Margarets, but there was also Sunbeam, Time Warp and Meadow. One teacher thought she'd seen about everything when it came to names, until the first day of school came round, and she met a boy named Fruit Stand.

The teacher felt sorry for little Fruit Stand, having to go through life with a name like that, but she decided there was nothing else to do but make the best of it. All through that first day of school it was: "Fruit Stand, can you bring me the chalk?" and "Fruit Stand, are you ready for your nap?" But this little boy seemed oddly distant. He participated in all the classroom activities, but he didn't seem very happy.

Finally, at the end of the day, it was time for the children to go to their buses. "Fruit Stand, do you know the name of your bus stop?" the teacher asked.

No answer. That wasn't so strange, the teacher thought, because the boy hadn't said much all day. One of those shy kids.

But no matter. The teacher had a trick up her sleeve. All the parents had been told ahead of time to write the names of their children's bus stops on the reverse side of their name tags. The teacher simply turned over the boy's tag. And there, neatly printed in block letters, was the word "Anthony."

Names are important. They're the labels we bear through life, the invitations we offer up to other people so they may know us better. Should somebody forget our name, or somehow misuse it, we feel hurt, even abused. That's probably how little Anthony felt, after spending his entire first day of school as Fruit Stand.

And Text of Matthew Being Related:

We preachers are in a tough situation when it comes to preaching about politics and political issues. On the one hand, our people are perfectly justified in believing that the gospel of Jesus Christ is relevant to contemporary issues. People are right to expect ethical guidance from their pastors and, when it comes to matters like voting, that is definitely an ethical matter.

However, we often find that the gospel's relevance to contemporary issues is different from the way that we expect the gospel to be relevant. And even more often the gospel prompts us to talk about these issues far differently from the way the world does. The world might speak of poverty in America as an economic issue, a question of how much we can spend from our national resources to help people in need. When it comes to the poor, the disadvantaged, and people in need, Christians are apt to see this as considerably more than an economic issue. It's a God thing.

Politics frequently concerns itself (not as often as politics should, but sometimes) with matters of justice and injustice. Christians are certainly concerned—because of stories like the Exodus and the parables of Jesus, about matters of justice. However, Jesus didn't only say, "Do justice to one another;" Jesus said to love one another. Justice is about the best we can hope for from secular political arrangements (and seldom is that wish fulfilled). But Christians, and the church, aim for a more engaged, relational, and humane standard even than justice. So that might cause us to think differently about social issues than the world thinks.

What is the difference between lord, Lord and LORD?

By **Jeff A. Benner**

If you have noticed, when you are reading your Bible in the King James Version (other versions will use these words similarly), you may have frequently come across the word "lord," but you may not have noticed that this word is

written three different ways: all lower case letters (lord), all upper case letters (LORD) and only the first letter in upper case (Lord). Each of these styles of writing the word “lord” identifies different Hebrew words.

Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? (Genesis 18:12, KJV)

And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: (Genesis 18:3, KJV)

And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; (Genesis 18:1, KJV)

lord

When you see the word “lord,” written in all lower case letters, it is the Hebrew word אָדוֹן (*adon*, **Strong’s #113**) and means “lord” or “master,” one who has authority over another. In the example above (Genesis 18:12) this word is a description of Abraham, Sarah’s “lord.”

Whenever this word is written as “lord” (all lowercase), this word is referring to men, but when this word is referring to God, then the first letter is written in upper case (see Exodus 23:17).

Lord

Besides the few times the Hebrew word אָדוֹן (*adon*) is written as “Lord,” the word “Lord” (first letter in upper case) is used for the Hebrew word אֲדוֹנָי (*Adonai*, **Strong’s #136**). While this word is translated as “Lord,” it doesn’t exactly mean “Lord.”

As previously mentioned, the Hebrew word for “lord” is אָדוֹן (*adon*). When this word is written in the first person, possessive (my lord), it is written as אֲדוֹנִי (*adoniy*, see Genesis 18:12). The plural form of the word אָדוֹן (*adon*) is אֲדוֹנָיִם

(*adonim*, see Exodus 26:19). The first person, possessive, plural form (my lords) is written as אֲדֹנָי (*adonai*, see 1 Kings 22:17).

אֲדֹן *adon* lord

אֲדֹנָי *adoniy* my lord

אֲדֹנָי
ם *adonim* lords

אֲדֹנָי *adonai* my lords

If the Hebrew word *Adonai* literally means “my lords,” why is it only translated as “Lord” so many times (see Exodus 4:13 as an example)? Most names attributed to God are in the plural including *Elohiym* (literally meaning “powers”) and *Shaddai* (literally meaning “my breasts”). The word *Adonai* (a plural word) is another name used for God that means “my lords.”

LORD

When the word “lord” is written in all upper case letters (LORD), the Hebrew behind this word is **the name of God**, יהוה (YHWH).

Lord God and LORD God

And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? (KJV, Genesis 15:8)

In this verse Hebrew phrase Lord GOD is written in Hebrew as; אֲדֹנֵי יְהוָה, which transliterates as; *Adonai YHWH*. The word *Elohiym* is the Hebrew word for “God.” But in Genesis 15:8 the word “god” is written in all uppercase because it is the KJV’s translation of the name *Yahweh*. Because the word *Adonai* means “lord,” they couldn’t translate this as

“Lord LORD,” so they chose to use the word “god” for *Yahweh* and written it in all upper case letters (Author’s Note: Just another case of a translation disregarding the actual Hebrew text).

And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. (KJV, Genesis 2:15)

In this verse the phrase "LORD God" is written in the Hebrew as; יהוה אלהים, which transliterates as; *YHWH Elohiym*. The name *Yahweh* (whose pronunciation is debated) is the name of the God of the Bible. Throughout the Old Testament, the KJV, and most other translations, translate the Hebrew name *Yahweh* as “LORD,” in all upper case, and this is the case in Genesis 2:15. Following this word is the Hebrew word *Elohiym*, which is often translated as "God."