

Christmas 2017

Sermon #1 on the Names of Jesus

I'm guessing that most of you enjoyed a delicious Thanksgiving meal this past Thursday. Let me see a show of hands. How many of you had a prayer before your Thanksgiving meal? And probably most of those prayers ended with the phrase, "*In Jesus' name I pray, Amen*"? Why? Why do we end our prayers like that? Is the prayer not official or proper if it doesn't end that way?

I want to leave you hanging, considering the answers to those two questions for a few minutes while we jump into God's Word and discover the richness of what it has to say about the use of Jesus' name. And then with that background, we'll circle back around to answer those questions.

According to Dr. Hebert Lockyer, who wrote "*All the Prayers of the Bible*", counted 650 prayers in the Bible. And of those 650 prayers any guesses how many ended with the popular phrase, "*In Jesus name I pray, Amen*"? The answer would be ZERO!!

And yet doing something "in Jesus name" is mentioned at least 40 times in the New Testament. Let's spend a few minutes immersing ourselves in some of the teachings of what's done in the name of Jesus.

Jesus referring to the use of His name:

- Jesus said that whoever welcomes a child in his name welcomes Jesus as well (Mt 18:5; Mk 9:37; Lk 9:48)
- Jesus said that if we gather in Jesus' name, He will be there with us (Mt 18:20)
- The disciples & others were able to drive out demons in Jesus' name (Mk 9:38-41; 16:17)
- Jesus warned the disciples that they would be persecuted because of his name (Lk 21:12-13; Jn 15:20-21) and Paul experienced this (Acts 9:15-16)
- The Holy Spirit is sent by God to us in Jesus' name (John 14:25-26)
- Jesus also predicted that false Messiahs will come in his name (Mt 24:4-5; Mk 13:6; Lk 21:8)

Examples from the early church:

- At the very beginning of the church in Acts, those who believed in Jesus were immediately baptized in his name (Acts 2:38)
 - Peter and John healed a paralytic in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:6). And this became very interesting because the Jewish leaders were quite upset by this and had Peter and John arrested and during their interrogation Peter and John again proclaimed that *it was in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth who you crucified but God raised from the dead that this man before you is healed.* Of course this didn't set well with the Sanhedrin so, after conferring with each other, commanded Peter and John not to teach or preach anymore in the name of Jesus.
 - In writing to the church at Corinth, Paul declared that Christians are those who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:2).
 - God commands each of us to believe in the name of his Son and to love one another (1 Jn 3:23)
 - And Christians are justified with God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:11)
 - We should always give thanks for and do everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 5:18-20; Col 3:17)
 - The goal of life is that the name of the Lord Jesus be glorified in us (2 Thess. 1:11-12)
 - In the letters to the Seven Churches in Revelation, three churches are commended for not forsaking Jesus' name (Ephesus 2:3; Pergamum 2:12-13; Philadelphia 3:7-8)
 - When Jesus returns every knee will bow and tongue confess at the name of Jesus (Phil. 2:9-11)
- That's a very fast whirlwind overview of the use of the name of Jesus. The name of Jesus was key in the salvation process, in living our lives in connection with Jesus and in telling others about Jesus.. And in fact the summary of our lives' purpose was that we would do everything in the name of Jesus.

One could easily ask from all of that, what's the big deal about doing something in someone's name. It's just a name. But in that culture, and somewhat in our culture a person's name can carry authority and power.

For instance a **police officer** may yell at you in a foot chase – “**Stop in the name of the law**”. However, if you or I yell that, it probably is not going to carry the same weight or authority. Why not? Because they've been commissioned and empowered to carry out the stipulations of our laws and you and I haven't.

Similarly, a few weeks ago our furnace repair guy, Tony Loegring, instructed me to go purchase a part for the church's furnace. I went to three separate businesses and as I walked into the 3rd one just as they were preparing to close for the day I was asked, “*What business do you represent?*” because they don't sell to the public but only to contractors. Fortunately, I said that it was for my church and he allowed me to come in and sold me the part. And in commenting to a fellow employee as I was leaving he said, “**What was I supposed to do? I can't refuse to help God.**” I'm pretty confident if I had just been an individual looking for a part for my own furnace I would have been turned away. But since this was for God, he felt like he couldn't turn me away. Later, when I told Tony about my exchange he told me that he's in there several times a week so next time just tell them Tony Loegring sent me and they'll get you right in. But personally I kind of liked the God angle better. But either way, using Tony's name or the name of God or Jesus, carried extra weight.

Let me share one more example of the authority invested in a name. If someone were to give you their **power of attorney**, that means that you're authorized to conduct business on their behalf. Their authority has been delegated to you for that express purpose.

As Christians Jesus has delegated His authority to us in order to do His work through our lives. That's the significance of the Great Commission where Jesus said:
Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV) *Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*
Jesus starts off reminding his disciples that God the Father has delegated all authority to Him. Now, Jesus is empowering them with his authority to carry out His work.

There's a story that you might be familiar with regarding the attempted misuse of this power. There were seven sons of a Jewish priest who became fascinated with casting out demons in the name of Jesus. So, they decided to try this for themselves. So they went around casting out demons and they would say, “In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.” However, one day the evil spirit challenged them. “*Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?*” *Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.” Acts 19:15-16 (NIV)*
That's a misuse of Jesus' name and authority and power. Jesus' name is not just a magical formula that you can throw out and make everything work. Using Jesus' name is about operating on Jesus' behalf with his authority and power and accurately representing Jesus in everything we do and say. So, to live in the power and authority of Jesus' name implies that I'm attempting to show His character in what I say and do. I'm Jesus' legal representative. And it's only in that relationship with God's Son, that we have the right and privilege to invoke the authority that comes from that relationship.

Let me bring a little deeper background by mentioning the Hebrew background to 'name' since that's the mindset Jesus' disciples were raised in. In the Hebrew the word “name” is (**sheM**) which is derived from **ShiYM** which means “**to place**” and carries the meaning of “**position, rank, honor, fame, reputation and authority.**” So when we properly use Jesus' name we're standing as representatives of Jesus' power, authority, intentions and character (whether that's worship, or eat or do ministry in Jesus' name).

With that as a backdrop, let's return back to your Thanksgiving prayer and many others which Christians typically end with "**In Jesus name I pray, Amen.**" With this new understanding, this is more than just a proper way to end a prayer and prepare to get on with what you came here for. It's claiming that I'm praying with Jesus' authority, with His character and in alignment with His intentions. It's in that incredibly unique and special relationship that I offer this prayer to God. I like how one author put it. He suggested that it would be better to start our prayers with the name of Jesus rather than ending it. And he says, "It would be better to start your prayers by saying, "Father, I come before you, not in my own power, not in my own righteousness, not in my own capability. I come before you in the authority of Jesus, your Son, who gave me access in this faith in which I stand because of His blood. I come on the merits of Jesus, not on my own merits."

And remember how I said at the beginning that nowhere in the Bible does any prayer end with "In Jesus name I pray, Amen"? However Jesus did encourage us to use His name in our requests to God. Look at his instructions. Regarding this.

John 14:12-14 (NIV) *Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*

John 15:16 (NIV) *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.*

John 16:23-24 (NIV) *Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.*

Things were about to dramatically change as a result of Jesus dying on the cross for our sins and rising from the dead and receiving power and authority from His and our Heavenly Father. Now, what this doesn't imply, and the mistake many people make with Jesus' words, is that Jesus will give us anything we want and ask for as long as we ask in His name. Again, asking in Jesus name carries with it not only His delegated authority to us but also carries with it Jesus' character and His plans for our lives. And it's only when our asking in His name flows out of a close relationship with Him and we're wanting only His desires for our lives to be carried out, not our own agendas, that we can confidently ask for anything in his name and know that we will receive it.

Next Sunday officially begins the church's observance of Advent – which is the four weeks leading up to the celebration of Christ's birth at Christmas. This year, I'm going to lead us to discover more about the character and authority of Jesus as we study his various names and titles. Each Sunday I'll be preaching on it and throughout the week I'll send out to you mini devotions that will allow you daily to concentrate on the deep meaning of his various names. And hopefully when we prepare to celebrate Christ's birth on December 24th that we go into it with a deeper understanding and excitement of the name and character of Jesus.

Christmas 2017 *In Jesus' Name*

Jesus referring to the use of His name:

- Whoever welcome a _____ in his name welcomes Him (Mt 18:5)
- If we _____ in His name He will be there with us (Mt 18:20)
- His disciples & others drove out _____ in His name ((Mk 9:38)
- Jesus warned of _____ because of His name (Lk 21:12)
- The Holy Spirit is sent by God in Jesus' name (John 14:25-26)
- Jesus predicted false Messiahs would come in His name (Mt 24:4)

Examples of the early church:

- Believers were _____ in his name (Acts 2:38)
- Apostles _____ in his name (Acts 3:6)
- Christians are those who _____ on the name of Jesus (1 Cor 1:2)
- God commands us to _____ in the name of His son (1 Jn 3:23)
- Christians are _____ in the name of Jesus (1 Cor. 6:11)
- We do _____ in the name of Jesus (Eph 5:18-20; Col 3:17)
- Our goal is that Jesus' name be glorified in us (2 Thess 1:11-12)
- 3 churches are commended for not _____ Jesus' name (Rev. 2:3, 12-13; 3:7-8)
- When Jesus _____ every knee will bow and tongue confess at the name of Jesus (Philippians 2:9-11)

Hebrew word for *name*:

What does it mean to pray in Jesus' name?

What difference will this make in how you pray and live in Jesus' name?

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