

Sermon Outline

“LIFE IN HIS NAME”: THE PURSUIT OF WHOLENESS AND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JESUS THE CENTER: THE PLACE OF NEW LIFE (JOHN 1:35-51)

I. Introduction

- A. In verses 35-51, John the Baptist introduces his disciples to Jesus and two of his disciples leave John to follow Jesus. The two disciples are captivated by Jesus and eventually, one of the two, *Andrew*, goes out and calls his brother *Simon* to Jesus (v 41). Jesus renames Simon “Peter,” meaning “the Rock.”
- B. Jesus goes to Galilee, where he calls *Philip* (v 43) who, in turn, finds *Nathaniel* (v 45).
- C. While Nathaniel seemed somewhat sceptical at first, Jesus’ prophetic foreknowledge convinces him that Jesus is “the Son of God” and “the King of Israel!” (v 49)
- D. There is more to Jesus than royalty. His messiahship cannot be limited to one or two things. Chapter one ends with Jesus saying to Nathaniel, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (v 51).
 - 1. This language comes from Genesis 28, where Jacob saw a Ladder bridging heaven and earth.
 - 2. In Genesis 28, Jacob associates the Ladder with...
 - a. The Gate of heaven
 - b. The House of God
 - 3. Implication: Jesus identifies himself as the true Temple and Gateway to heaven.
- E. The bottom-line: Jesus is the new Center of Israel and consequently of the world.

II. Jesus, Giver of New Names

- A. Jesus becomes our Center by *giving us new identities or names* that shape and guide our lives.
- B. We saw a small example of this in how he renamed Simon.

1. By calling him “Peter,” Jesus was not only foretelling that Simon, would be a rock-like leader of the new Israel.
 2. Jesus was making Simon “Peter.”
—Just as Jesus called the universe to being with a word, he creates new destinies with a word. The new name that he gives Simon is Simon’s destiny.
- C. This concept of a new name is seen in different places across Scripture.
1. Isaiah 62:2: “The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give.”
 2. Revelation 2:17: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.”
 3. Each believer begins the Christian life with a new name that is placed on him or her at baptism. This is the name of the triune God himself, the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19).
 4. Another new name that we have each received is the name of the Lord Jesus himself.
 - a. Paul says many times in his letters that we are “in Christ.”
 - b. We are also to do “everything in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col 3:17).
 - c. The Church is called by the name of Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Chron 7:14; Is 43:7; Jer 15:16).
—“JESUS CHRIST” is the family name (surname) of the entire Church. Each individual Christian, each son and daughter of the Church, shares in the name of Jesus Christ.
 5. Other names given to believers include...
 - a. “children of God” (Jn 1:12).
 - b. “light of the world” (Mt 5:14)
 - c. “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16)
- D. While Jesus did not appear to give new personal names (holy nicknames!) to each of his disciples the way he did for Simon, each believer has received a new name (surname, identity, etc.) from God. That name is “Jesus Christ” and the name of the triune Lord God himself.
- E. Our response to our new names should include joy, hope, a new zest for life, a new reason for living, etc.
1. *Why joy?* Because it means that you are fully, deeply, and truly loved and accepted by the ultimate Reality of the universe.

2. *Why a new zest for life?* Because God is worth living for.
 - a. God's love gives you a new reason to live.
 - b. God's love gives you a new reason to do what you are doing—the sheer pleasure of God himself and to bring his love to others.
 - c. God's love may also give you reason to drop what it is you are doing and do something else.
- F. Summary: By lovingly re-naming us, Jesus re-configures our destinies toward God.

Can you imagine what tidal waves this mind-set would unleash in the church and the world?

II. Jesus, Our King (John 1:43)

- A. Jesus becomes our Center *by becoming our King*.
- B. Let's go back to Nathaniel's confession of faith in verse 49: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"
- C. God's gift of love takes the form of king.
- D. But the kind of king that God gives us is very different from the kings that we know.
 1. This is a king who guarantees our wellbeing.
 2. As long as he is on the throne at the right hand of God, his people will be well.
 3. The kingship of Jesus is a *servicing* kingship (cf. Jn 13:5).
 - a. It is a *sustaining, dignifying* kingship.
 - b. It is a kingship on behalf of his people, for the good of his people.
 - c. Jesus doesn't just take from us, like so many kings that we live under (unreasonable bosses, bossy husbands, etc.)
—He gives of himself. We live for Jesus based on the strength of his empowering, enlivening love. Even when we do not reciprocate his love as we ought, he still gives!
- E. We struggle in our discipleship, in part, because we believe the lies the devil tells us about our loving King. Lies such as:
 - "He *only* wants to take from you."
 - "He *never* wants you to be really happy."
 - "He is in this *only* for his own fame, not for your wellbeing" (cf. Gen 3:5).
 - "If you serve him, you will lose out on *all* the wonderful experiences that life has to offer and will be a much unhappier person."

-- Those are all lies.

- F. Jesus is the Servant King, the Lover King, the Good King. He created this world for his people to enjoy. Far from glorifying only himself, Jesus' kingship is the only hope that we have for our salvation and a fuller life.
- John 10:10: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."
 - John 17:22: "The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are..."
- G. The kingship of Jesus is for our good. We can entrust our lives fully to Christ.

III. Jesus, the Place of New Life

- A. Finally, Jesus becomes our Center by reconciling us to God through himself.
1. He is the Ladder to heaven, the Bridge to the Perfect Good.
 2. In Jesus, we come home to Perfect Love, Perfect Truth, Perfect Beauty, Perfect Life.
- B. When God says to the nations in Isaiah 45, "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other" (v 22), he is making it very clear to us that there is no other Perfect Goodness but himself.
- C. This is the God who meets us in Jesus Christ.
- D. When you are with Jesus, you are really home. Home is wherever Jesus is.
1. Our experience of home will be complete only when we come fully into the presence of Jesus. So, in that sense, we are not yet "fully" home.
 2. But the Spirit of Jesus dwells in us presently.
 - Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but *Christ who lives in me*. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."
 - Colossians 1:27: "To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory."
 3. Since the Spirit of Christ dwells within us, we can get a sense of home even now—maybe even a growing sense of home here and now.
 4. Trusting in Jesus' promises to us, keeping his commandments (however imperfectly), and spending more time with him in prayer—those are the ways we grow in our sense of home/peace in the midst

of our grieving, difficult situations. Even in our day of trouble, we can be home in Jesus.

Where are you searching for wholeness now? What are you depending on for your glory? Where have you placed your hopes for perfect wellbeing? Wherever it may be, whether it's in your grades, your career, the successes you have gained, we must heed the call to go to Jesus again. Let the things of this world be simply what they are. They are gracious gifts of God to cheer you on the way. They are little tokens of God's goodness. But they also serve as little signposts that point us to the Fount that never runs out—*Jesus*. So let us go to Jesus and follow him.

Questions for Reflection

1. Is there anything in particular about today's sermon that blessed and encouraged you?
2. God's love can have at least three effects on us. (a) It gives us a new reason to live. (b) It gives us a new reason to do what you are doing—the sheer pleasure of God himself. (c) It may even give us reason to drop what it is you are doing and do something else. Discuss.
3. What kind of kingship does Jesus have? How is Jesus' kingship different from the way other rulers rule us? How does Jesus' kingship woo us to himself?
4. What kinds of lies does the evil one speak to make us think hard thoughts of our Lord's kingship?
5. According to Galatians 2:20 and Colossians 1:27, where is Jesus now?
6. When we are in difficult moments of life, we long to be home with the Lord. How are we able to develop a growing sense of home in Jesus now?
7. How do those truths affect your relationship with God? How do they change your disposition toward God? How can you relate to God and show God your love? How does your new relationship with God affect your relationships with others?