

Sermon for Holy Trinity Sunday

Text: Matthew 28:16-20

Focus: Its all about God's name.

Function: So that my hearers would rejoice in their inclusion in God's family and that their names are written down in the book of life.

In the name of our triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.

*On this Holy Trinity Sunday, let's talk about names.*

Now, as I am getting geared up and ready for vicarage, I have already been thinking about names. However, what I have been mostly thinking about is the task of remembering names. One of the daunting challenges that faces me as a soon to be vicar this coming year is that I will need to learn all the members names of the congregation of St Stephens in Hickory, NC! **Some of my friends and I have had a laugh about this because of the lopsidedness of this task.** I will have to learn hundreds of names, while the congregation only has to learn one, mine! This has led me to try and learn different strategies to remember names. Now, if any of you out there have any tips or tricks that you know to help remember names, I would definitely be open and willing to learn them if you want to share them with me after the service!

However, this afternoon we are not going to be focusing on how to remember names, rather we are going to focus on the power and significance of names. If you have ever thought about or reflected on names and their significance, you might come to realize just how important names really are.

Today, I want to invite you to explore with me, 3 ways that names powerfully impact each of our own personal lives:

Number 1, a name gives you the ability to belong to someone or something.

Number 2, a name gives you the opportunity to be known

And Number 3, a name gives you meaning and purpose.

So first, a name gives you the ability to belong to someone or something. This one is especially simple. For almost all of us, the very first thing given to us as a newborn child was our name. And then, when you are given your name, it makes you more than just a human being, it makes

you a person, a person who belongs, and in this case, belongs to your parents. But a name also gives you the ability to belong to something, like a group or a cause. For example, I think its safe to say that all of you [(tuning in to) or (here present at)] this service would call yourselves Christians. But not only that, I think it's safe to say that others would also call you a Christian. And that name "Christian" given to you from yourself and by others gives you belonging to other believers who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Now number 2, a name gives you the opportunity to be known. A couple of years ago, a wise friend in college at Concordia Chicago once told me that a person's favorite word they can ever hear is their name. And I had always wondered why that is, but in one respect I believe it is because when you call someone's name, they know, that they are known by you! And as a pastor in my future ministry I hope to take that advice and call people by their names as much as possible to let them know that they are known and valued by me!

And lastly number 3, a name gives you meaning and purpose. As I mentioned earlier, when you are given a name after you are born, it changes you into a person, it differentiates you from every other person on this earth. From that moment on you begin to build your identity around your name and who you are as a person. Many people also really try to focus on leaving a legacy with their name. They want to be remembered by others a certain way, probably in a good way.

But even with these great importances of names in our earthly lives, our names really actually fall short in a lot of ways. You see no matter how hard you might try to leave a legacy to your name, eventually one day your name will probably be forgotten by others. No matter how hard you try to leave a legacy of good, there will still be some pain and sorrow mixed in because of sins and mistakes you have committed in your life. And even no matter how much you base your life around your personhood, you are probably still left feeling empty and asking questions such as "who really am I?" or "what is my purpose in life?"

Moreover, sadly many times we don't just use names to let people know that they are known and loved. Many times, we use people names for evil. We talk bad about someone's name and reputation behind their back. We might gossip, slander, and defame someone and their name.

Sometimes, we might even insult or curse them and their name right to their face. You see, we are so infected with sin that we still hurt others, *and their names*, immensely and our sin even and especially ruins our own names.

*But, there is one name that changes all of this.* It both changes the sin we commit against our named brothers and sisters and also even transforms the importance of our own name! This most important name is the name of our triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So, now let's revisit and talk about three ways that we are *eternally* impacted by our triune God and His name.

First and foremost, because of your baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, *you belong to God.* As a baptized Christian, you were washed in life-changing waters with the very name and Word of our God. Because of that name, not only do you belong to Him, but God now also *claims* you as His own and you now enter into His family! By God's grace through faith, You now are His child and nothing can ever change that.

And now second, you are known, and loved, by God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God says to us in **Isaiah 49:16, "I have called you and engraved your name into the palms of my hands."** God will never forget you, no, God knows you and He dearly loves you more completely than we could ever know or love anyone else. And the simple reality is both that He is with you unto the end of the age and also that nothing could ever separate you from being known and loved by Him, not life, nor death, not your past or your future.

And lastly, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you have meaning and a purpose. In the Gospel text from Matthew 28, the famous Great Commission text, we see where our true and eternal meaning and purpose really come from. For as baptized believers, if you ever ask the question "who really am I?" **God declares to you that you are His child, eternally!** And whenever you might ask, "what really is my purpose in this life?" **we know as disciples of Jesus Christ that we are to share the good news of His grace and forgiveness of our sins.** Likewise, we are to continue to teach and make other disciples in the triune name of our God. Jesus himself sends out all his disciples, both the first twelve, and also us today, in the name of

the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and He commands us to grow His kingdom through that name. That is our purpose.

You see it's all about the name, His name! And I get to tell you today fellow Christians at \_\_\_\_\_, **rejoice!** because you have eternal meaning and purpose as a child of God and a disciple of Christ. **Rejoice!** *today*, because of our triune God's Holy name, **your names are written in the book of life in heaven!** **Rejoice!** *today*, for because on that last day we will be raised and will forever sing praises to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. *It really is all about His name, forever, Amen!*

**Now may the peace of our triune God keep your hearts and minds in His Holy name, Amen.**