

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SERMON: *The LORD, The LORD...*
SERIES: *What's in a Name?*
SCRIPTURES: *Exodus 34:5-7*
SPEAKER: *Shaun Kipe*
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**Credit to John Mark Comer (God Has A Name); Eric Seibert; "Old Testament Word Studies" (William Wilson); The Bible Project (Word Study - LORD)*

Well good morning and happy Father's Day. Thanks to Chris for that great lesson, honoring fathers today.

It is so great to worship with you today. And it so good to see many of you today. And I also want to just welcome everybody tuning in on the livestream as well.

This morning we're beginning a new sermon series. I'm really excited about. But before we get into the message for today, I want to begin with a little bit of trivia.

How well do you know literary quotes? I'm gonna put a famous quote from a book, up on the screen and you see if you know what book it comes from or which author.

"Toto, I have a feeling...we're not in Kansas anymore." DIFFERENT SLIDE: **L. Frank Baum, The Wizard of Oz**

"To be or not to be: that is the question:" DIFFERENT SLIDE: **William Shakespeare, Hamlet**

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..." DIFFERENT SLIDE: **Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities**

“Who said anything about safe? Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you.” DIFFERENT SLIDE: **C.S. Lewis, The Chronicles of Narnia**

“So do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.” DIFFERENT SLIDE: **JRR Tolkien, The Fellowship of the Ring**

“You can't pray a lie – I found that out.” DIFFERENT SLIDE: **Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn**

Last one, because the title and concept behind our sermon series is found here...

“What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet;”

Do you know where this from? **William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet**...and happens to be our series title.

SERIES TITLE SLIDE

I'm not sure if you can remember, the whole way back to High School English class, but, in the play, Juliet is lamenting the fact that Romeo's last name is **Montague**, which makes him a sworn enemy of Juliet's family, she is a **Capulet**.

And so she asks: *“What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”* Does the name given to a person really matter? Does affect who they are?

There is truth to that, my parent's named me Shaun, but they could have given me any other name and it would not necessarily change who I am.

But there is another side to this argument, isn't there? Names are important, and they often do tell us something about the person.

What's in a name? There's character, history, lineage tied up in names.

"Keeping up with the Jones's"; Hitler; Ghandi,

Names are identifiers.

This is true all throughout your Bible, names carry great significance. The names of the characters often give you a window into understanding the character of the person.

For example, there's a character in your Bible, who was born covered in hair, thick red hair when he was born. So his parents named him "**Esau**"...which means...hairy one. His name describes him. His younger brother is named Jacob. Which means deceiver, which happens to be a great description of his character.

Did you know, God has a name? And it's not God.

Over the next 5/6 weeks we want to take a closer look at God's name in the Bible. His personal name and then how He is described, what He is called, tells us what He is like.

And the reason this is so important is because what we believe about God, will ultimately impact how we live in the world.

AW Tozer once wrote, "**What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.**"

“The images used to speak about God not only decisively determine the way one thinks about God they have a powerful impact on the shape of the life of the believer.” (Fretheim)

What you believe about God, impacts how you live.

From the African Tribal religion, to the atheist, to the Buddhist, to the follower of Jesus. People do what they do, because of what they believe about God.

Is he near to us or far away or simply a figment of your imagination? Does He care about the world and humans or not? Is He patient and forgiving or vindictive and cruel? Does He listen to humans or ever change His mind or is His mind already made up? Does he have feelings...does God experience joy, happiness, sadness, anger or is He without emotions at all? Is he more like a concept/idea or is He more like person...intimate/relational?

What you believe about God will ultimately impact, who you become.

And as it turns out there's a lot of misunderstanding in our culture about what God is like. And so that's what we're going to spend the next several weeks talking about. Who is God? What is God like?

And I'm highly indebted to author John Mark Comer for a book he has written called "God Has A Name" **(IMAGE OF BOOK COVER)** that had a huge impact on me.

Now for this series, we are going to be looking at one specific passage of Scripture, where God tells us His name. If you have a Bible turn with me to the book of Exodus 34. There is fascinating story...

I. A conversation between God & Moses.

...that unfolds in Exodus 33 & 34. Moses has gone up on Mount Sinai to meet with God. And while they are up there, Moses says

Exodus 33:18 - ¹⁸“Now show me your glory.”

Essentially Moses is saying, “Tell me who you are.”

Moses and God have had this unique relationship for quite a while. All the way back in Exodus three, remember the burning bush story, where God is recruiting Moses to go and lead his people out of captivity in Egypt. Moses, says “who should I say sent me.” And God responds with this mysterious identity, “tell them I am sent you.”

Well in Exodus 34 we kind of get a more complete picture of what exactly God means.

Moses says “Show me your glory...” and God responds with this really fascinating couple of verses Exodus 34:5-7...this gonna be our key passage over the next several weeks. This is one of the few places in the Bible where God describes Himself.

Exodus 34:5-7 - ⁵ Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. ⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming,

Ready? This is how God describes himself to Moses.

“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

By the way, I just want to throw out a challenge for our church. I'd like you to consider memorizing this passage of Scripture with me over the next 6 weeks. I don't when the last time was, that you intentionally memorized a passage of Scripture. But this would be great to do together. It's only 3 verses, so that's one verse every two weeks.

Now, in the Jewish world this is a crucial passage of Scripture. And it is prayed during Jewish Holy Day festivals like Yom Kippur.

And it is known as "**The Thirteen Attributes of Mercy**"...Jewish scholars pull out 13 attributes of God's character from this passage. We're studying them as 5 over the next few weeks.

This is kind of like the Jewish version of John 3:16. Everybody knows it. Which is why...many scholars believe the Bible references, quotes these verses more than any other.

This is the most quoted Scripture in the Bible, by the Bible. (Comer)

Time and time again, the writers of the Bible use these verses to describe God...Moses, David, Jeremiah, Jonah...

Who are you God? What is your name? What are you like? And God answered...

And so each week we'll be looking at the significance of one these five descriptions of God.

For the rest of our time this morning...were gonna hone in on the first part...

⁵ Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. ⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD...”

It’s fascinating. God begins by telling Moses his name...his personal name.

II. God’s Personal Name.

Now did you ever notice when you’re reading your Bible sometimes, “God” is referred to as the **LORD**? And LORD is spelled out in all caps. Did you ever notice that?

And it creates a little bit of a misunderstanding because in English, Lord is a title. It kind of means the same thing as master. (Master Yoda).

I am “Pastor Shaun”. Pastor is my title, but Shaun is my personal name.

And so we might think God is beginning by declaring His title. Call me Lord. Call me Doctor. Call me professor. Call me Sir/Madame.

But that’s not actually the case.

The OT was written in what language? Mostly Hebrew.

In Hebrew, the word that we translate as “LORD” is not a title...it’s intended more as a personal name, it looks like this: **YAHWEH**

Have you ever heard anybody refer to God as “Yahweh”? It’s God’s personal Hebrew name. So why do we have LORD in our Bibles?

Follow me on this for just a moment.

In ancient Hebrew, they didn't write vowels. Imagine a world with no computers, paper, pen...most written communication is carving everything in stone or clay tablets. You simplify writing as much as you can. So you eliminate the vowels. That's Hebrew. No written vowels.

“pstr shn s s mzng.” = DIFFERENT SLIDE: **“Pastor shaun is so amazing”**

In Hebrew God's personal name looks like this: **YHWH**

Just four letters. Sometimes in scholarly circles this is referred to as the **Tetragrammaton**. God's sacred name, four letters.

Now the Hebrews had these 10 commandments. That's why Moses is up on the Mountain anyway. He's getting their sacred rules. And one of those sacred rules is, **“You shall not misuse the name of Yahweh your God.”**

Jews became so afraid they would “misuse or mispronounce” God's name, they decided not to say it at all.

And so instead of saying God's personal name, they began replace **YHWH** with other names for God. The most common one was **“ADONAI”**...which is the Hebrew word for LORD, something a servant would call a master...a title. They replaced Yahweh with the title.

Which is why, every time you read the word LORD in all caps, in your Bible, it means that in the original Hebrew, it was actually God's personal name (Yahweh), NOT his title.

III. So what?

Why does all of this matter in Waynesboro, PA, in the year 2020?

Now this is where it gets really neat for you and me...think about this...in Exodus 33 and 34, when Moses asks God “show me your glory” and God responds. He responds by telling Moses his personal name! This is mind-blowing!

He is telling Moses, I will reveal to you my character, my identity, the core of who I am. Let me just suggest three practical reasons this matters...

Well, for one, sharing your personal name with someone signifies a personal...

A. Relationship

What you call somebody reflects the kind of relationship you have with them right?

For example, Jenny does not call me Pastor Shaun. Usually she calls me knucklehead or meathead...no I’m just kidding. She calls me Handsome, Sweetie Pie, Master, Lord...no I’m just kidding she doesn’t do that either.

She calls me Shaun or some other term of endearment that symbolizes the closeness of our relationship.

I don’t call Jenny teacher or Mrs. Kipe or “the wife”, spouse, woman...because she has a personal name.

My kids do not call me Mr. Kipe. They call me dad, or daddy.

In our modern western world, when we talk about God, when somebody asks us what God is like...we often first describe him using titles and cold theological words. Sometimes we’ll start with a list of definitions about him.

Omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent.

While the concepts behind those words are valuable and worth talking about, the truth is...they are conceptual not relational. They seem stale and cold.

When God talks about himself, He doesn't talk about knowing everything, or how "he is everywhere. Instead he starts with his first name, isn't that awesome?

It's kind of like God says to Moses, "Just call me by my first name."

Remember when Jesus was teaching his disciples how to pray. Sermon on the Mount. How did he address God? This then is how you should pray... "our Father"...daddy...

Exodus 33:11 - ¹¹ The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.

God is not just an idea or concept or a force, which is in fact how many people think about or view or relate to God. Even many Christians. But the understanding we get from Moses conversation is that God is a person, who wants to be on first name basis with you and me.

This is why here at Five Forks Church we believe personal names matter. We need to learn each other's names.

Have you ever said, "I'm not good with names." It's kind of like an excuse to not have to remember someone's name or to have to put in the effort to try and learn someone else's name. But names matter because they are indicator of personal connection.

Can I just suggest something for us, that I believe will enhance your connection to Five Forks? Start by learning names.

And look, I know how it is, you feel like you should know someone's name and you forget. Or they told you last week and they might be offended if you have to ask their name again. Or if you come in and you're fairly new, you think everybody already seems to know everybody else and it feels awkward to ask people their names.

So we avoid learning each other's names altogether. Happens to me all the time!

Problem is those personal names, that's often where community begins. That sense of belonging, you know me. I know you. You learn my name. I learn yours.

Let's make it our point as a church. Start learning each other's names. And we're all going to agree to never be offended when someone asks our name. We're giving everyone the freedom to forget someone's name and be able to ask again.

And I'll encourage you to take this concept and apply it everywhere else in your world. You want to show your co-workers, and your neighbors, and parents on your kids sports team...learn, remember, train yourself to remember personal names.

If God thinks knowing personal names is a good place to start, then let's do that here.

Second, because God is in personal relationship with us...

B. God Responds To Us

Our relationship with God is interactive.

There's a fascinating example of this in the book of Exodus, another conversation between God and Moses.

God leads the nation of Israel out of Egypt. The miraculous 10 plagues, the Red Sea story, he feeds the people with manna from heaven and water from a rock. And still the people turn their back on Him and build a Golden Calf Idol.

And so God decides He's going to destroy them. Now listen to what happens...

Exodus 32:9 - the LORD said to Moses, “and they are a stiff-necked people.

¹⁰ Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.”

Gerry Breasher says, “**This is God processing his feelings with a human partner.**” God has feelings. He's not a concept or an idea. He's personal.

¹¹ But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. “LORD,” he said, “why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people.

So what happens? Ready for this? Hold on tight.

¹⁴ Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

Hebrew word there **relented = naham**. By the way through the course of this sermon series you'll be going to become Hebrew scholars and learn some Hebrew words. So say this with me. Naham. If it feels like you just spit on your neighbor, you probably said it right. And that Hebrew word means **to change one's mind or repent**. Take a different course of action.

Isn't that fascinating? God responds to Moses plea. God takes a different course of action after his conversation with Moses.

Our relationship to God, the lives we live are not something that happens to us or that God does to us.

He doesn't arbitrarily make decisions about us and for us and impose them on us. We are not pawns or actors in some divine drama. Instead He includes us in the decision making process.

God speaks and we listen. Then we speak and God listens. He's that personal with us.

Dallas Willard – **“God’s response to our prayers is not a charade. He does not pretend He is answering our prayer when he is only doing what he was going to do anyway. Our requests really do make a difference in what God does or does not do.”** (Comer 151).

James 5:16 – “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”

The prayers we pray and the decisions we make have an impact on what happens in our world.

Finally, we said that in the in the Bible...

C. Names reveal character

God's personal name, Yahweh reveals something neat about his character. The name **Yahweh** literally means **“He is.”**

Back to the burning bush, in Exodus 3. God says tell them **“I am sent you.”**

That phrase, “**I am**” in Hebrew, looks like this: **EHYEH**. And if you say it out loud (go ahead and say it with me)...it sounds very similar to Yahweh.

That’s because in Hebrew ehyeh means – I am. So when God is talking about himself, he says, I am. That’s his name.

Yahweh literally means **He is**. When we talk about God we say “He is.” Ehyeh.

Yahweh literally means...He is.

The idea behind or at least one of the primary ideas behind this name is:

God’s character never changes! “I am who I am. He is who he.” Yesterday, today and forever...you can count on it.

You know how sometimes you think you know someone and then you find out they weren’t who you thought they were and you begin to wonder if you can trust them, rely on them. (Before Jenny and I got married. I thought she was perfect. No flaws. After we got married, I realized, Jenny squeezes the toothpaste tube right in the middle. If only I had known.)

God is saying, “You don’t have to be concerned about that with me. You can trust I want change. I am reliable.”

God is compassionate and gracious, always. He is slow to anger always. It’s who He is.

This was so important in the ancient world, where the Gods were often viewed as capricious and fickle. You were always afraid they might wake up on the wrong side of the bed or discover they really were evil.

And perhaps we are inclined at times to wonder the same thing:

In the middle of a worldwide pandemic. In face of economic insecurity. In the face of racial tensions. In the midst of political animosity. A changing world...there is one person you can count on. Yahweh. "HE IS WHO HE IS!" You can trust Him. You can count on him.

Pray.

Benediction:

I just want thank all of you for joining us today. In person and on-line. Everyone has been so gracious this morning. So let's not blow all our efforts as we leave today. So I just want to remind you...

We want to avoid a mass of people at the exit doors and in the foyers. If you can picture in your mind a wedding or funeral and exit from the back and as one row clears out, the next can get up and go, that will help us to maintain safe distances.

If you are able to place your mask back on as you exit we would appreciate that as well, as we seek to be courteous to one another.

In addition, we're asking that you carry any conversations and fellowship on outside as you head to your cars. This will again eliminate congestion in the foyers and also help us as we need disinfect and prepare for the next service coming in to the auditorium.

As you go about daily life this week...may you be reminded of the Great I am, Yahweh...who wants to be close, near, walk by your side. May you live your life in that reality. Thank you so much for worshipping with us today and we look forward to worshipping with you next Sunday!