

Sermon Title: What's in a name?

Scripture: John 1:35-48

August 8, 2010

Introduction: What's in a name? We all have one. Some of us have nicknames, earned as a result of actions in our youth or from some goofy thing we have said or done at one point. Some names cause us to instantly think of things good or bad as soon as we hear them. I remember digging through my Dad's albums as a little kid and coming across an Animals album from 1966. What made it so interesting was on the back of it was written more times than I could count two names: Michael David. I remember thinking: 'hey that's my name!' It had been decided on a good two years before I was born.

So a test this Sunday morning: Who are these people:

Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr. --- Muhammed Ali
Melvin Kaminsky --- Mel Brooks
Curdoyer Calvin Broadus --- Snoop Dogg
Lastly, Stephani Joanne Angelina Germotta --- Lady Gaga

Names invoke a response—it identifies who we are. For Nathaniel, this man that his friends found coming from the backwoods of their country couldn't amount to much. "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Yes, it can, and Nathaniel was about to have an encounter with one who would call him to things he never dreamed of. But the process of knowing who this rabbi was started with his friends a little while before.

I. The calling of the first two. **The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look the Lamb of God!' When his two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, 'What do you want?' *Better rendered: 'What are you looking for?'* They said: 'Rabbi' (which means teacher), 'Where are you staying?' 'Come' he replied, 'and you will see' [John 1:35-39a]**

- a. The two disciples of John the Baptist hear his proclaim that this Jesus is the Lamb of God, setting the stage for them to stop following John and begin to follow Jesus.
- b. John the beloved, as the writer of this gospel gives us no indication that they hesitated.
- c. As soon as they heard John the Baptist proclaim Jesus to be the Lamb, they went after him. They understood what that name meant.
- d. There was a desire to know and follow God and his will in the lives of these two disciples of John the Baptist.
- e. They had been drawn to believe in Jesus through the ministry of John. **[He (John) came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.] [John 1:7]**
- f. Raymond Brown puts it this way: "man wishes to stay with God; he is constantly seeking to escape temporality, change and death, seeking to find something that is lasting—Jesus answers with the all-embracing challenge to faith; 'Come and see'.

- g. These two men were seeking to find God's will and his desire for them.
- h. They had followed John the Baptist and instantly obeyed the call to follow Jesus when John said; 'Look the Lamb of God.'
- i. Can you imagine? Wanting so desperately to follow God that as soon as you hear the Lamb of God, you stop everything and head out after him.

This is the challenge to us today, especially as a body of believers here in St. Albans. Pastor Roland asked us last week, what we would do if we were told what Hezekiah was, that we have 15 years. Right now, as a church we are prayerfully seeking what God wants for us over the next ten years. Are we willing to pray for and toward that vision, regardless what it takes? Remember, the disciples were never the same once they began following Jesus.

God always has the uncanny ability to stretch us and bring us to places that we never thought we could go. He does his best work when we are at our weakest. Sometimes we have to let go of all that is comfortable and ask: "OK God, what do you want me to do for you?" That's really what Andrew and John, whether they knew it or not, were asking. Yet by the time they got to Nathaniel they had picked up two more who heard the name Jesus and obeyed his request to follow him. **"Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas' (which when translated is Peter). The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Phillip he said to him, 'Follow me.'" [John 1:40-43]**

It's fascinating here in this narrative, and I think we have lost this sense over the years, that Jesus gave them no destination, no direction and no promise of anything. He simply said: 'follow me', and they did. Mull on that for a minute. These guys were just your ordinary guys, hanging out and working by the lake shore. There was nothing super-spiritual about them. Yet when Jesus, the Lamb of God spoke they dropped everything and followed him. Cephas even had his name changed to Peter. Understand; that for the disciples, that was a clear indication of the type of role Peter would play in the overall ministry. Jesus looked at him and saw within him from the outset the role this man would play. It is the same for us, he knows us by name! How do we handle a call like that? What if I came up to someone and said: "drop everything, leave your home and follow me." What would be your response? The answer to that question we really need to understand in our in most being.

- II. A true Israelite: **[Phillip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Phillip found Nathaniel and told him, 'We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and about whom the Prophets also wrote---Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.]**
 - a. Notice it's not Jesus who is recruiting these men, it's the new disciples!
 - b. The conversation starts off with Phillip finding his buddy Nathaniel and lets him know that they found the one the scriptures have spoken of.
 - c. Nathaniel doesn't buy it because of the place Phillip tells him Jesus comes from.
 - d. Nathaniel asks **[Can anything good come from there?] [John 1:46]**
 - e. As a firm believer in the Old Testament (much like the Pharisees and scribes), Nathaniel has a hard time believing anything of value can come out of the northern swamps of Israel.
 - f. Because the place of birth of the messiah was clearly defined in the Old Testament. So when looking for the 'one' where he came from meant everything. So how could a Jewish carpenter from there amount to anything? It was an honest question.

- g. You hear that question posed by the world today.
- h. Yet, God as usual does what he wants and calls who he wishes.
- i. Nathaniel is at least willing to humor Phillip and go see this Rabbi, who is now being proclaimed by the disciples as Messiah.
- j. His willingness to check Jesus out even in the midst of doubt, allows him to receive the truth of what is about to be revealed to him.
- k. It is the open, although doubting heart that God honors. He never looks for perfection, just honesty and openness to his will.
- l. Jesus honors this when he sees him coming. **[Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.] [John 1:47]**
- m. What makes a doubter a true Israelite? To understand we need to venture back a bit into the Old Testament.
 - i. Remember Jacob?
 - ii. Genesis 32:24-28a **[So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, 'Let me go, for it is daybreak. But Jacob replied; I will not let you go unless you bless me. The man asked him, WHAT IS YOUR NAME? Jacob he answered. Then the man said; your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel.]**
 - iii. Up to that point Jacob had been a deceiver, a dishonest man who had conned his way through life instead of trusting God.
 - iv. He stole his birthright and his Father's blessing from his older brother. So when he asks to be blessed before the angel leaves it is critical for him (Jacob) to know who he is! The Angel knew, but Jacob needed to know!
 - v. ***What is your name?*** Will you honor God by being honest and trust him for all of your blessings? If so: What is your name!
 - vi. At that point he received a new name: Israel. One who struggles with God, yet he is honest and trusts God from that point on. A true follower of GOD.
- n. Thus Nathaniel shows that he is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false. One who looks deeper than the surface and trusts even if it doesn't make sense.
- o. The final question: **[How do you know me?] [John 1:48a]**
 - i. Jesus answers with just what Nathaniel needed. **[I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Phillip called you.] [John 1:48b]**
 - ii. What a profound statement. ***ISA W YOU.***

To hear that from Jesus must have just stopped his world. Can you imagine? How about you? In the midst of day to day life and the goings on around you do you know that Jesus sees you? Do you know that wherever you are, whether it is a time of joy, a time of suffering, transition, pain, you fill in the situation, Jesus SEES YOU? He knows what's going on deep inside and wants to be a part of it. If it is rejoicing with you, he wants that. If it is suffering with you, he has done that and is ready to carry you. If it is in doubt about whether he is even involved, he wants to take away that doubt and reassure you that he sees you and knows you better than you know yourself.

III. He calls you by name. **[He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.] [John 10:3b]**

- a. He also says **[I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.] [John 10:11]**
- b. Throughout the scriptures God the Father and Jesus are called by many names.
- c. Dependant on the situation or circumstance.
- d. Isaiah 9:6 says the son given to us is called the **[Wonderful counselor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.]**
- e. In Revelation 19:11a John tells us **[I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, who's rider is called Faithful and True]**
- f. Revelation 19:16 he is called **[King of Kings and Lord of Lords]**
- g. With all of the names given to the eternal creator of the universe, the one who gives us life and breath and everything the one name that stands out at least for me is: **Daddy**
- h. He is my Dad! Little ol' me, he is my Father. And for someone who struggled with a very imperfect earthly dad that means EVERYTHING.
- i. Romans 8:15 declares this: **[For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of sonship. And by him (Jesus) we cry ABBA Father.] Daddy**

What's in a name? Salvation is in the name. Direction is in the name. Vision is in the name. Contentment, healing, mercy, grace and LOVE are all in the name. The name of Jesus is above all names. As a church we look to find what the vision of God is for our community. As individuals we seek to find what part God wants us to play.

Each of us is in a different place in our lives. Some are struggling for whatever reason. Others are in a good place right now. No matter where you find yourself in your personal walk, you are a part of this body. Identifying the truth of who you are in Christ will help illuminate everything for you. We are children of the King and he calls us by name.

Close in prayer.