

What's in a Name?

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

These words from Shakespeare's play, Romeo and Juliet

- a. not only ask an important question,
- b. but also imply an interesting answer.

The answer which Shakespeare assumed is probably the same answer you would find prevalent today.

Most people would say that there is really not much in a name.

After all, a rose would smell as sweet no matter what you called it.

That may be true if you are a flower.

But if you are a person, names do make a difference, especially if you have gone through life with a name you didn't like. In fact, a psychologist did a study of the names of 15,000 juvenile delinquents and found that those with odd or embarrassing names were in trouble four times as much as the others. Names can make a difference.

In biblical times, names actually meant something.

Often a child would be named in honor of an event that took place at the time of his or her birth, or for a unique physical characteristic. Adam's name meant "earth" because he was taken from the dust of the earth. Esau's name meant "hairy," as in a hairy person, because he was hairy. Esau's twin brother Jacob was born hanging onto his brother's heel. His family named him Jacob, which means "heel-catcher."

In our reading this evening, we read how Jacobs name was changed to Israel.

Tonight I want to think about the name that is above all names, the name of Jesus. The prophet Isaiah tells us some important things, not only about the name of the Messiah that was to come, but also about His character:

A reading we usually hear just at Christmas says - "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be

upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace..." ([Isaiah 9:6-7](#)).

Each of these descriptions gives us a different aspect of the work that God wants to do in our lives.

His name is Wonderful. This word comes from the root word "wonder," which means "a sense of awe." Jesus wants to bring a sense of awe and wonder to our lives. No longer do we have to look to the cheap substitutes this world offers to bring fulfillment, because Jesus Christ makes life wonderful.

His name is Counsellor. Did you know that God Almighty, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father wants to give you a personal relationship and direction?

As Psalm 77 says,

I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord; I will remember your wonders of old.

I will meditate on all your work,
and muse on your mighty deeds.

13

Your way, O God, is holy.

What god is so great as our God?

14

You are the God who works wonders;
you have displayed your might among the peoples.

15

With your strong arm you redeemed your people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

No longer do you have to be baffled by the problems you face, because with Christ as your Counsellor, you can know that God will reveal His will to you.

His name is Mighty God. This means that Jesus has unlimited power for you as you encounter the demands of life. There are times when you probably have thought that it was very hard to live the Christian life. I have thought that as well. In fact, I think it is impossible to be a Christian apart from the help of the Holy Spirit. I am so thankful that the Mighty God is there for me to give me the strength to do what He wants me to.

Next, He is called the Everlasting Father. Because Christ came to die on the cross and pay for your sins and rise again from the dead,

you have an Everlasting Father, One who will be with you forever. He will never forget about you. He will always be there to guide and help you through life.

His name is the Prince of Peace. Certainly we live in frightening times. We look at our world and see so many things that have gone wrong. How we need peace in our lives. If you look at the wars and problems we face today, they are, for the most part, the result of people who are breaking God's commandments. But God will bring peace to the person who is well-pleasing to Him.

What's in a name? That all depends on whose name it is. Jesus Christ can be your Prince of Peace. He can be your Counsellor. He can be your Mighty God. He can be your Everlasting Father. You can experience life to the fullest because His name is Wonderful. Medical science tries to add years to your life, but only Jesus Christ can add life to your years. Amen