

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Fred Weimert "What's in a Name?"

January 2, 2011

When I write a prayer of confession
I usually try to include
some words of assurance.

I am, of course, not the only person to do that...
it is what's traditionally done
by religious leader and prayer writers.
When a confession is made...
religious leaders are expected
to let people know that the confession
of the people
is both heard and accepted, by God.

But I didn't choose today's words of assurance
simply by chance.

I have always liked those words,
but I also had a plan when I included them.

You may notice that today's words of assurance
have with them a scripture reference:

Hebrews 13: 5

Now, If you were to turn to page 1053,
in the Bibles in the pews,
you would see

that at the bottom of that page

there is a footnote for verse 13: 5

and that note cites Deuteronomy 31:6, 8

as well as Joshua 1:5

as the source of that quotation.

It is interesting

that even though the book of Deuteronomy
two verses from its ending

had said:

*Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel
like Moses,*

whom the LORD knew face to face.

Even though the Bible makes that claim of exclusivity
for Moses...

We still find that in the beginning of the book of Joshua
God speaks to Joshua and says:

*No one shall be able to stand against you
all the days of your life.
As I was with Moses,
so I will be with you;
I will not fail you
or forsake you. Joshua 1: 5*

There is this sense of continuity
from Moses to Joshua...

a consistency...

while Moses lead Israel
across the Red Sea
and out of captivity...

It was Joshua that lead Israel
Out of the wilderness...
across the Jordan River
and into the Promised Land.

While Moses did many great things.
greatest perhaps among those being
the establishment of the covenant at Sinai,
the ten commandments...

Still it was Joshua
who brought the people
to their destination...
the Promised Land...
the land flowing with milk and honey.

So if you wanted to give your new born son
a striking name...
a name that would signal
the potential for great accomplishments
that were expected from this child...
which name would you choose?

Moses?
a name traditionally believed to have been given
by Pharaoh's daughter
whose brother's name happened to be Ramesses...
Ra the Egyptian sun god
combined with a word *mosis*...
meaning "child of"
Ramosis...
It was probably also the root
of pharaoh Thutmose – *Thutmosis*...
King Tut.

Although Jewish people had come
to associate this name Moses with

the words "I drew him out of the water" ...
 Mosheh. (Exodus 1: 10)
 That name would have probably worked better
 for John the Baptist.

No, the name Mary and Joseph chose for their son
 at the time of his circumcision/
 on the day of his naming,
 was Jeshua... Joshua...
 which has been anglicized into Jesus.
 It comes from the Hebrew root...
 yoth, shin, ayen.
 yasha –
 a root that means
to save, to deliver.
 I kind- of thought his name was going to be
 Immanuel...
 But the angel had been clear...
 "you will name him Jesus... Joshua"
 The angel in Matthew had added:
*"You are to name him Jesus, (Joshua)
 for he will save his people from their sins."*

So after eight days...
 on the day of the circumcision
 according to Jewish custom...
 Mary and Joseph
 named this child Joshua, Jesus...
 as they had been instructed by the angel.

Luke 2: 15 - 24

*When the angels had left them
 and gone into heaven,
 the shepherds said to one another,
 "Let us go now to Bethlehem
 and see this thing that has taken place,
 which the Lord has made known to us."
 So they went with haste
 and found Mary and Joseph,
 and the child lying in the manger.
 When they saw this,
 they made known what had been told them
 about this child;
 and all who heard it
 were amazed at what the shepherds told them.
 But Mary
 treasured all these words*

*and pondered them in her heart.
 The shepherds returned,
 glorifying and praising God
 for all they had heard and seen,
 as it had been told them.
 After eight days had passed,
 it was time to circumcise the child;
 and he was called Jesus (Joshua),
 the name given by the angel
 before he was conceived in the womb.
 When the time came for their purification
 according to the law of Moses,
 they brought him up to Jerusalem
 to present him to the Lord
 (as it is written in the law of the Lord,
 "Every firstborn male
 shall be designated as holy to the Lord"),
 and they offered a sacrifice
 according to what is stated in the law of the Lord,
 "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."*

Here ends the reading.

What is in a name anyway?
 Hollywood people have a lovely way
 of giving their children the most horrible names...
 I always thought Frank Zappa's children
 Dweezil, and Moon Unit
 were the worst,
 Still actors of late are giving Zappa a run:
 Gwyneth Paltrow – has a child Apple
 Ashlee Simpson-- Bronx Mowgli
 Rob Morrow-- Tu Morrow.
 Jason Lee-- Pilot Inspektor,
 Penn Jillette --Moxie Crimefighter
 Christie Brinkley -- Sailor Lee.
 and possibly my favorite, or least favorite...
 Dan Cortese --Tabooger.

Some people should probably not be allowed to have children...
 Some people appear to give little or no thought
 to what they name their children...
 But most people
 give it lots of thought...
 On several occasions
 I have been called over
 to Greater Baltimore Medical Center...
 to visit with a family

about a child's future.
 Certainly the idea of her child
"saving his people from their sins"
 would have been improbable...
 what could that have meant...
 to her?

More importantly, what does it mean to us?

Does it mean that we can get away with doing bad stuff?

We get off the hook?

Get out of jail free?

We're saved from our sin?

Or does it mean that Jesus/Joshua

helped us cross over

from a religious wilderness

of a privileged few

made to feel righteous

because of rule following?

Does it mean he helped us to cross over

into a religious promised Land...

for everybody...

a place where God's grace and love—

was to be for all

no matter what they were named?

For in crossing over

we have learned that our names

have always been known to the God...

The author of the Revelation (2:17)

tries to capture the significance of names

when in writing

to the church at Pergamum

he wrote:

and I will give a white stone,

and on the white stone is written

a new name

that no one knows

except the one who receives it.

In the world to come

a new name was envisioned,

on a white stone,

a name known only to the recipient

and certainly

also to the One

who gave the stone...

and the name.

who has known us
by that name always.

What's in a name...

Most importantly there is Hope!

the hope of being,
and belonging...

The hope of being loved
as Jesus was,

as he was looked down on that day,
by his adoring mother.

May our hope find name this year. Amen.