



*“He Called Me By Name”*

## **2021 Lenten Devotional**

First Christian Church  
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February 17, 2021

## GOD KNOWS OUR NAMES

*But now, this is what the Lord says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. Isaiah 43:1*

Our names are very important to us. Each name has a special meaning or meanings that have been significant throughout the ages and become important to us. Some of our names have a family history that connects us to our ancestors.

I can remember growing up that my family had individual plaques with our names and meanings hanging in the entry way. While, they were decorative, they also were there as a reminder of who we are. I can also remember growing up in the time of the TV show, *Bewitched*, where I was called all the no-so-nice nicknames that the husband was called and more.

What I find so encouraging about this text and the theme for Lent is that God knows our names and calls us by them. God does not manipulate them or degrade us with them. God uses them to call us back into a redeeming relationship.

God knows our name, God loves us unconditionally, and God redeems us and calls us into a new life each day.

I pray that during this season of Lent, we will all take time to quiet our hearts and minds to be able to hear God calling our name once again. Let us remember that we are redeemed and loved by God who loves us and calls our name each day.

*Loving God, help us to quiet our hearts and minds and hear your quiet voice calling our names once again. Thank you for your love and care for us each day. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

Darren Anderson

February 18, 2021

## HE HAS ALWAYS KNOWN MY NAME

*Isaiah 49:1 “. . .The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name.”*

Unlike some people, I have always known that I belonged to God. Even as a child, when my Mom would take me to Sunday School, I knew that was someplace I wanted to be. I must confess that sometimes, when I hear someone's testimony about how they found God, I'm a little jealous that I never got to experience that. In the long run, however, I'm very thankful that I've always know that I am God's.

The question is, what have I done with this knowledge? Have I shown those around me that I am His? I'm thankful to be able to answer this with a yes. An example

is that when my grandchildren were teenagers. They grew up in a time when swearing was very common for young people, however, they were quick to tell their friends that when they were around me to watch their language because I was a Christian who didn't talk that way. It probably didn't change anyone's long term behavior, but maybe it planted a seed.

Now I have the opportunity to share my faith with another generation. Based on how important the church is to Brooklynn and Jayce, I have hope that they see my faith and understand how important it is for God to know our names.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for calling me from the womb and knowing my name. May I share your love with everyone I meet. In Jesus's name. Amen.*

Marsha Heeter

February 19, 2021

## MISTAKEN IDENTITY

*Isaiab 43:1: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine."*

Growing up I was the youngest of seven kids. We were very close in age and attended all the same schools. Five

of us were freckled faced red heads and looked very much alike. As the youngest child, I was often called the name of one of my older sisters by my teachers. I got used to it, and when I was called on by the wrong name, I simply answered to it. It was always a funny feeling to be "someone else" other than myself.

What a joy to know that in my Savior's eyes, I am just myself. He has called me by name! My own name, not any else's. Not only does he know my name, he has "redeemed me." Redeem is a wonderful word. When we redeem someone, we "rescue them." I remember rescuing a neighbor kid who had fallen in the water at our "swimming hole." He was trembling all over, and so was I. God has rescued us from being absent from Him forever. Instead, we can look forward to spending forever with him in Glory. He has called me by my name!

*Heavenly Father, your name is Wonderful, and I rest content that I belong to you. You know my name! You have redeemed me!  
Hallelujah! Amen*

Audrey Cameron, Elder

February 20, 2021

ONE

*Galatians 3:26-29 "Neither Jew nor Greek . . . slave nor free . . . male nor female. . . all one in Christ Jesus. . ."*

How we treat one another and how we think of one another violates the scripture's wisdom. There is a better reason not to abuse another. A higher calling not to be a racist, murderer, selfish, even indifferent. Our calling is to be in Christ and Him in us. In Him, we are 'one'. This oneness is more than just look-alikes or clones. We are one because in Christ we are covered in the very love of God for us all. Romans 8 tells us that nothing at all can separate us from His love. The psalmist tells us that His love is eternal and everlasting. My friends, enjoy your oneness.

*Loving Father, through Your son it is revealed our value and our neighbors' as well. Thank you. Amen.*

Gary Ivey

February 21, 2021

## I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

*When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12*

Today we begin the first of four sermons for Lent that focus on four of the I AM statements of Jesus found in the Gospel of John. Today we hear the second of the "I AM" statements Jesus uses to help identify himself and picture his mission and purpose here with us. Jesus



specifically calls himself the light of the world and says those who follow will never walk in darkness.

For me, this begins by revealing that without Jesus, we are in darkness. We may think that we walk in light. We may think that the world's direction shows light. We may think that even religion shows light. The truth is that whenever ANYTHING distracts us from Jesus and the love, grace and message that he shares and lives, we are in darkness.

Jesus' light that he shines is the only true light that we are to follow and to light our way. Jesus lived that light and showed us how we are to live in love of God and of others. I challenge us during this Lenten season, to really examine ourselves to see if we are following the true Light that Jesus shines, or are we following a very dim substitute.

*Jesus, show us the true light from you and help us each step of the way to follow faithfully. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

February 22, 2021

## HIS GRACE

When we have trials that seem hard to bear  
God comes to give us His love  
He says he'll be with us in our time of need  
with blessings from above.

He gives us grace for each trial  
He gives us light for the way  
Above all, we know He loves us  
and by our side He'll always stay.

It's an inner strength He gives us  
when we call upon his name.  
He promised to help to meet each need  
that's one reason why he came.

Often times it's hard to understand  
why trials came our way  
But if we daily keep faith in Him  
we'll grow closer to Him each day.

Jean Sarff



February 23, 2021

## HOW IMPORTANT IS A NAME?

*1 Thessalonians 1:2 We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers.*

When I have my prayer time in the morning, I have a long list of people I pray for. I lift most of them up to the Lord by name (I may slip in a “and family” here and there). As I was thinking about the theme for this year’s Lenten devotionals, I realized that listing these people by name is probably more important to me than to God. He knows who I pray for, even before I say a name.

I recently participated in an online Mission Connexion conference. One of the workshops on evangelism was led by Kevin Palau, son of Evangelist Luis Palau. Part of his message was how important it is for us to pray for people by name. This includes non-believers. I often feel that most of my friends are from church, so unless they are having a problem of some sort, they don’t need to be on my prayer list. However, I do know some people who are not believers and I need to commit to praying for each of them, by name. A name is very important.

*Lord, thank you that I have many opportunities to pray for people, both believers and non-believers. Help me to remember how important it is to pray for them by name. Amen.*

Marsha Heeter

February 24, 2021

## CONQUERORS

*Romans 8:31-39 “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him . . .”*

Christ imparts to us the foundation of true wisdom. As He was meeting the horrible event of total rejection and crucifixion, He lays down the path of victory. “Not my will but Thy will be done.” Doing the will of the Father takes us into very stressful and painful ways. The giving up of ‘self’ for going and doing ‘Father’s’ will is a very scary thing. The outcome, however, is beneficial to all we care about. The cross is not affirming of sin, only its rescue.

Because of what Christ does, we have a new name. It is ‘conqueror’. It happens because of our relationship with our Heavenly Father through Jesus, the Christ.

*King of all Kings, for the victory you share with us, we praise you and give you thanks. You have made us more than conquerors. Thank you in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

Gary Ivey

February 25, 2021

## MOSES

*Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”*

*When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.”*

*“Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. Exodus 3:1-6*

I really like this part of Moses’ story. After everything he has been through and seemingly living a nice, peaceful, out of the way life, God calls his name. God has big plans for Moses and they begin by calling his name.

When Moses approached the burning bush and heard his name being called, I can picture him looking around to see who is calling to him. When the voice identifies itself as God, there is an immediate recognition that this is a holy place and conversation that is about to happen.

When God calls our name, it too is a holy encounter with God. We begin to have that conversation with God in such a way that our life changes. Moses had a specific task given to him and while he argued and negotiated a bit with God, Moses accepted the task to lead Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land.

Is our task that big and grand? Probably not. It may be as simple as reaching out to a specific person or doing something that maybe outside our normal activities. Regardless, it is a holy calling because it comes from God when God calls our name.

Listen for God's voice today. Listen to God's calling. Listen to God' love.

*Loving God, let me hear your voice and calling today. Use what you need to get my attention and may it be a holy conversation and calling. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

Darren Anderson

February 26, 2021

WRONG NAME

Sometimes when my five kids were all playing in the family room, I would call one of them the wrong name. I was always sorry when I did that, because I myself had grown up one of a houseful of kids and I got called the wrong name a number of times. I remember one rather stressful day when kids were fighting and yelling, and I

thought I spotted the ringleader in the trouble and yelled out a name. My youngest son, who was very meek and mild looked at me in surprise. "Mama," he said, "It wasn't me!" The one who was being so naughty looked at me in surprise. "Am I him?" he asked.

Being called the wrong name can cause a great deal of confusion. Have you ev3r been waiting in a doctor's office when a name is called out badly mispronounced and you realize it is YOU. There is one who knows us and cares for us who always calls us by the right name. Unlike harried mothers and confused office workers, He always gets it right. Our Father, God, calls us the right name because we are His.

Do you remember singing an old hymn that goes: "When the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there." Roll calls in a classroom the first day of school are often hilarious. Teachers struggle to pronounce the unfamiliar names. Be assured, when that final Roll is called "up Yonder," your name will be right if you belong to the Savior.

*Heavenly Father, what a promise, that you will call me by name because you have redeemed me and I belong to you. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.*

Audrey Cameron, Elder

February 27, 2021

## SALT

*Matthew 5:13 “... you are ...”*

My doctor took my salt away. With all my heart stuff, I have been taken off salt. Things I've eaten the past have lost their flavor. Favorite things I can no longer eat seasoned with salt. Someone told me that salt substitutes are just as good. On the record, NOT TRUE!

In thinking about that, I find that in our world there is no substitute for our being 'salt'! We can choose other ways, but there is, in truth, no substitute.

Our name is 'salt'. Our task is to be seasoning to our families, friends and unto all the world. Our time, our present surroundings are not as significant and powerful as our actually being 'salt'.

*Dear Father, you have called us into a world in need of seasoning. Your salt in and through us is the calling to follow Christ. Help us to do that, we pray in Jesus' name. amen.*

Gary Ivey

February 28, 2021

## I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

*‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away.*



*Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me. John 10:11-14*

The image of the shepherd is not one that we are really familiar with in our culture today, but it was very familiar to those whom Jesus spoke too. Also, the image of the shepherd goes back into the Old Testament with the stories of David.

We will explore this image in more detail during worship, yet let me bring out some of the aspects of what Jesus says here.

As the image is described, Jesus does three things for us, his sheep. First, he's willing to lay down his life for us. A bit of foreshadowing to the crucifixion but also talking about the second that he protects the sheep. The imagery of Psalm 23 and the rod and staff of the shepherd come through strongly. The third thing and the basis of all is that Jesus cares for us and knows us and who we are. He knows our name and hopefully we listen to him.

Jesus as the Good Shepherd shows us the unconditional love and deep care that Jesus has for us sheep, and hopefully helps us to want to follow more closely.

*Thank you, Good Shepherd for your love and care for us. May we listen deeper as you call and lead us to green pastures and quiet waters. Amen.*

Darren Anderson



March 1, 2021

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD KNOWS HIS SHEEP

*Scripture: Isaiah 43:1 "Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine."*

As Easter approaches, I am getting ready for this year's lambs to be born. The cougars have taken away two lambs this year, and a number of ewes the year before, so I have a smaller flock this year. I usually keep the ewes and lambs in the barn in their lambing pens for at least two weeks, but when I let them out, oh what bedlam can take place.

You would think that after two weeks together the ewes would know which lambs are theirs (mine always have twins, sometimes triplets). There is nothing worse than to watch the ewes heading out to pasture and a tiny lamb is left crying just outside the gate. I hear myself saying, "What is wrong with you!" to the ewes. I pick up the poor little lambs and try to sort out which mother it belongs to. My husband came up with a wonderful system where we mark the ewes and lambs. That helps! I end up yelling, "Two dots, this is your baby," When "two dots" has a wonderful name, such as Trillium, or Daisy.

Hopefully, after a few weeks, everyone figures out who belongs to whom, but there are still chore times of anguish when ewes are eating their supper nonchalantly in their pens while three little lambs are crying pitifully and go under and around the barn looking for their mamas.

Scripture tells us, "All we like sheep have gone astray" but the difference between us and my sheep is that the Good Shepherd knows us. He has redeemed us and he calls us by our names. We are his! We can be confident that our Good Shepherd is watching over us. There will be no bedlam in Heaven when we are called home.

*Heavenly Father, we know you love us, have redeemed us, and will someday call us home to be with you forever. I am so glad you have called me your own. Amen*

Audrey Cameron, Elder

March 2, 2021

## I AM REDEEMED

*Isaiah 43:1 "Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine."*

What a beautiful word appears in this verse, "Redeemed." We use that word in everyday life. We "redeem" coupons for a special gift. I remember my mom saving up S & H green stamps and redeeming them for gifts for her grandchildren. Our Savior is referred to as "The Redeemer." One definition of "Redeem" is "to regain what might be due." The debt we owe as a payment for our sins has been paid for by the Redeemer. He paid the debt we owed and redeemed us.

On blustery days at the coast, I needed a warm winter coat since my "After school job" included walking down to the ferry landing to send finished photo's back to drug stores across the river from the photography shop where I worked. My teeth would be chattering, and I was shaking all over by the time I got back to the studio from the ferry landing at the river. I found a warm coat at a store on Commercial street and they let me pay \$5 a month toward the bill. I was earning 75 cents an hour at the time. Every month I went in to pay my bill, and when it was about half paid for, the clerk told me, " Your coat is paid for." "Oh no," I said, " I still owe more money." The clerk smiled at me, "Your dad has been coming in and making payments on it too. You don't owe anything!" What a wonderful gift that was. I was debt free!

When the Savior redeems us, our sins are paid for. I find myself remembering mistakes I have made, things I have done wrong. I don't need to do that. The debt is paid. Just as my dear father paid for my warm winter coat, my Heavenly Father paid the debt for my sins.

Our family is one that weeps easily. My oldest sister said once, "How can people see that picture of Christ on the cross without crying." I have told the Easter story to so many children over the years, and when I cry, many of them used to cry along with me." The tears are for the pain Jesus suffered, and tears for our sins, that helped to put him on the cross. But then come the grateful tears

when we realize what Christ did for us. He redeemed us. He paid the price for us, we are "debt free."

At Easter what a time of rejoicing we experience. We are redeemed.

*Heavenly Father, how can we ever thank you enough for redeeming us through your own son, Jesus' death on the cross. As He conquered death and arose we can sing "Because He lives, I too shall live." Hallelujah, Amen.*

Audrey Cameron, Elder

March 3, 2021

## JESUS GAVE

How can we ever comprehend  
how much Jesus did for us all  
He gave us our very being  
He only asks that we answer his call.

He gave our body wholeness  
He gave us each and every limb  
He gave us minds to think with  
And He gave us new life in Him.

He gave us feelings and desires  
He gave us families too  
He only asked that we follow Him  
In all we say and do.

He also made available for us  
wisdom, knowledge and peace  
Love and faith and honesty  
And joy that will never cease.  
He wants us all to witness for Him  
To be a light to all we see  
He is our Master, Teacher, Savior  
He gave His life to set us free.

Jean Sarff

March 4, 2021

## ARM WRESTLE WITH JESUS

*Isaiah 41:13 For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says do not fear: I will help you.*

During my young adult years, my friends and I would arm wrestle. This activity would prove the strength between us with no one getting hurt. Today we can continue this activity with Jesus. How?

Place your elbow on the table, pick up your Bible and read it. We gain much strength as we learn about hope, avoiding fear, guidance in our lives and so on.

Place your elbow on the table and pick up a devotional book. Now you can find strength in obedience, courage, discipline and so on. We have a possibility that one arm could be weaker than the other. In this case, we should “change up” and strengthen both.

Place your elbow on the table and with your hand open grip Jesus’ hand and pray. Pray for yourselves and others. Now with two people who love each other, we have developed a strong bond of strength.

Arm wrestle with Jesus each day and you will win the battle. Our trusting and obeying will become stronger.

*Thank You, Jesus. Here is my hand for you to comfort. In Jesus; name. Amen*

John Dodge

March 5, 2021

## THE FAMILY NAME

*Matthew 1:1-16*

Have you checked your DNA? If so, did you find out what people group you came from? Did it surprise you or just reaffirm what you already knew?

In Galatians 2:20, Paul reveals his insight about his DNA. “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me . . .” Think about this. Paul’s family name has changed to being ‘Christ living in me’. We are called to live accordingly ‘forgetting what is behind . . . pressing on to the upward call in Christ’ - Philippians 3:12.

Think about it this way. We represent our Lord and Savior. How can we reveal more clearly the purposes of Christ?

*Father, thank you for including us as your children. Remind us again whose we are. We are yours, Father. Impart wisdom to us as we live for you. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Gary Ivey



March 6, 2021

## TAKE SOME TIME TO PRAY

Once again, my mind turns to things in my life  
that I am thankful for...  
my food, my health, my family,  
and there is so much, much more.

My home, my church, my country.  
are all special to me.  
my friends, and also my neighbors  
can fill my days with glee.

And if I'm lucky sometimes a rainbow  
will appear up in the sky...  
and it's an added blessing  
Cause God feels more nearby.

Now the seasons go by so quickly  
and they always seem to say...  
to enjoy each day as it arrives  
And take some time to pray.

Jean Sarff

March 7, 2021

## I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

*Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." John 11:23-26*

Jesus finally shows up to Mary and Martha's house following the death of their brother Lazarus. In the midst of their grief, they seem a little angry that Jesus didn't come sooner, yet Jesus knew what was going on.

Jesus says he is the resurrection and the life. He says this in the middle of death and grief. Martha's response was one of trust and faith in Jesus in the face of what seemed to be the final answer. Jesus did raise Lazarus from the dead, calling him out by name and giving new life.

I wonder if that has hope for you and I? Jesus is the one who gives us life in the middle of the chaos of our world. Jesus brings new life when all around is falling apart. Jesus gives us a new birth through faith in Him. Jesus gives us everlasting life that begins today.

Wherever you are today with whatever you are facing, will you trust Jesus deeper and more completely that He

will bring new life to you and your situation? Martha and Mary did.

Can we?

*Jesus, the gift of new life that you offer us through faith is for today and everlasting. Bring new life into my life today and may I live for you. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

March 8, 2021

## SURVIVING FEAR

*Isaiah 43:1 "Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name."*

Fear is a terrible feeling. Whenever I get on an airplane, I fear for the worst. I always try to make sure the washing is done, the dishwasher is full of clean dishes and everything is in fairly good shape in case I don't get back home.

One spring my grandson was graduating from High School near Dallas, Texas. Oh, how we wanted to go there to be with this precious boy on his special day. We looked around for air fares and one airline had the lowest fares possible. It didn't take us long to get our flights booked and plan for the visit. We made a few jokes about this airline (whose name shall remain secret) but still my mind was filled with fear and trepidation.

Once we were at PDX and waiting for our flight things got worse. A worker in a mechanic's outfit with our airline's name on the back was getting a McDonald burger. He looked a bit unkempt and was not a person that I would say instilled confidence in a passenger.

The five-hour flight was horrible. My husband was actually snoring beside me, while for me it was a white-knuckle experience all the way. We hit terrible turbulence over the Rockies, and I was praying fervently for deliverance. After what seemed like a month we were finally there. I have never been so glad to get my feet on solid ground as I was that day. The visit was a wonderful one, but somehow in the back of my mind I never quite got comfortable because I knew we had to fly back home on the same airlines.

The day came to get back on the airplane, and as we cried and hugged our loved ones, the tears were for more than goodbye for my part.

We did get back home, the plane landed with a hop and a jerk, but we were, amazingly, alive.

Afterwards I realized how foolish I was. I was safe. My Savior said, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name." The name on my airplane ticket was known by the Maker of Heaven and Earth. With the pandemic in full swing, airlines are looking for customers. The airline we took to Texas appears quite often on my computer. Someday I want to fly back to Texas to see the

grandkids and great grandkids. I may leave that flight information on my computer. I need to "Fear Not."

*Heavenly Father, you are the ruler of the universe. Help me to not feel afraid, knowing that you know my name, and I belong to you.*

*Amen*

Audrey Cameron, Elder

March 9, 2021

BLESSED

*Psalms 139:1-14 "... You are there ... You are there ..."*

In troubled times we wonder and even question where God is in all this. Last year, we closed the door on the last of my parents. There was a pull to get lost on death and absence. The psalmist tells us that there is no way to hide from or be forgotten by God.

Jesus' words of 'being with us always' is stamped with indelible ink by the resurrection. The psalmist tells us God will always be there in our sorrows and in our joy. Because God is faithful to His word, we can find courage and strength for today and tomorrow. We are blessed.

*Most gracious and generous Father, we pause to find you with us. You have made us, and you know us. You are with us always. Thank you. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Gary Ivey

March 10, 2021

## BEING REALLY ME

*Isaiah 43:1 "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."*

When we were little girls, a favorite pastime of my best friend, Mimi, and I was to play "dressup." A pretty neighbor lady who liked to go out dancing on Saturday nights asked us if we would like to have some "dress up shoes." We were so excited. There were 8 pairs of high heeled shoes in all shapes and colors. Some were toeless, some were satin, some were red. We were so delighted! I grew up in the big old Victorian house where my grandma and even my great grandma had lived. I had four big sisters as well. My house had lots of old dresses to choose from.

Mimi and I got dressed up in our beautiful long dresses and high heeled shoes (which were a little too big, but "oh well," we said.) We had jewelry left over from our Halloween Gypsy costumes, and we even had on hats! After a tea party with Kool Aid (the drink of choice in the 1940's) we decided to take a walk down the block and show off a little.

Out we went, and it had just stopped raining. It was a little hard to walk in the high heeled shoes, but we were doing okay until it started to rain again and we decided to go to Mimi's house. We had to go down some steps off



Cedar Street, but we usually just went down the bank. That was not a wise choice in our tipsy shoes and first Mimi fell and then I did and we rolled down the bank and even hit a mud puddle at the bottom. I looked at Mimi and her hat was hanging over one ear, she was getting wet by the minute from the driving rain and her pink satin dress was covered in mud. I started to giggle and then she did too. She told me "you look goofy." Then I saw my fake pearl necklace had broken to pieces and "pearls" were scattered everywhere. I started to cry. "I think I will go home," I said.

I guess our problem was, we were trying to be something we weren't. As the years have gone by I have found that being just who I am is the best choice. My sisters and I love Opera. When going to a performance we always wear our best dresses, I wear the diamond earrings my husband gave me one Christmas, years ago. We enjoy the evening.

I feel that I am "really me" back home on my farm. I can wear my faded jeans and a ragged sweatshirt that says "Alaska" that one of my boys brought home 30 years ago from a fishing season on Bristol Bay. With my barn boots on my feet, I am ready for anything! Scripture tells us "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at our heart."

As Easter approaches, I can remember years past when I had so much fun dressing up my five kids. It was a nice



way to celebrate the excitement of our Savior's resurrection from the grave. It seemed like a way to honor our Lord. This year many of us will be home at Easter, watching a virtual service on our phones or computers. It won't matter what we are wearing, especially those of us who will be alone. This year it will be one where we can focus, not on ourselves, but on the gift of redemption, the debt that was paid for us by our Savior, the risen Lord.

Our Lord knows us by name. He sees past our outfits and our "persona's" that we have taken on over the years. All that matters is that He has redeemed us and we are His!

*Heavenly Father, what love you have showered upon us, to send your own son to pay our debt of sin. We are rejoicing as Easter comes and we celebrate His victory over death. Because He lives, we too shall live! Amen*

Audrey Cameron, Elder

March 11, 2021

## LISTENING

This is a summary of an online sermon that reminds us that while God continues to call us by name, we need to be actively listening to recognize it.

There once was a church gathering where people were taking turns giving testimonies about their religious experiences. One man stood and said, "I was a Christian

for 38 years before anybody told me about Jesus." What the man probably should have said was, "I was a church member for 38 years before I really experienced my faith and began to live it. The man was asked how he missed hearing God call him through all those teachers who put up with him while he was growing up in Sunday school? What about all of those preachers who tried their best to speak the gospel to him? What about all those Christians who tried to tell him about Jesus?"

No matter how bull-headed, open to listening, or gentle of heart and mind we are, there is One who calls our name and will continue to call our name until we finally are in a place to listen and hear.

*"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." Isaiah 43:2*

Nelda Holeman

March 12, 2021

CALLING SOMEONE BY THE WRONG NAME

*Isaiah 56:5: to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever.*

When I was growing up, my Mom often went through all three names before getting the right one for my sisters or

me. When I had Janet, I was confident that I would never have that problem. WRONG. I can still remember the first time I called her by the dog's name! I was astonished that that had happened. Now, after helping raise three grandchildren and spending time with my four great grandchildren I recognize that I definitely have a problem putting the right name with the right face.

Fortunately, I don't have to fear that God will forget me. He has known my name from before I was born and has promised that the name he has given me will endure forever. How blessed are we to have such a loving Heavenly Father.

*Lord, thank you for the peace that comes from trusting in You. Help me to always remember that and to share your great love with those around me. Amen.*

Marsha Heeter

March 13, 2021

HE KNOWS MY NAME

*John 10:1-11 "He calls His own . . . by name . . ."*

Webster states, "Name is a word or phrase that constitutes the distinctive designation of a person or thing."

In other words, our name makes it personal. Scripture tells us that God is making it personal. All His words,

redemption on the cross and hope in the resurrection. All these things have our names attached.

We sometimes become generic with what is specific to and for us. For Gary you died. You paid the cost that Gary was unable to pay. God has done this for each of us personally. He knows us in all our thoughts and deeds. He knows us by name. He gives redemption to us by name, personally.

*Father, thank you for forgiving me for all the brokenness in my name. Help me to hear you as you call me to your purpose. May your love shine through every moment of every day. Amen.*

Gary Ivey

March 14, 2021

## I AM THE VINE

*‘I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. John 15:5-8*

This image of Jesus being the Vine and we are the branches, seems at the surface to be pretty basic and self-

explanatory. Branches that are removed from the vine or the tree, may look good for a short period of time, yet are dead and eventually are good for nothing but firewood.

In order to remain alive and growing, branches need to remain connected. It is possible too, to graft branches onto a new plant and keep the growth going.

It may seem like you and I are connected to Jesus in this way. Yet how many of us currently feel drained, weary, empty, like the walking dead? This shows that we have become disconnected from the life-giving Vine. The good news is that we can become reconnected and return to life in a way that only the true Vine can bring to us.

Will you check yourself today to see where you are? Do you need to be reconnected to the Vine? Do you need to rest and allow the life to flow back into you?

May we all reconnect in some way this Lenten season and look for more growth in Jesus!

*Jesus, reconnect me with you. Let me know your life-giving presence and may you bring new growth and fruit to my life. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

March 15, 2021

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

*Ephesians 4:31-32 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and*

*compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you.*

I know what you are thinking, there is a possibility that the day you read this, it might not be about your Birthday. But I am not speaking to your earthly birthday, I'm referring to your spiritual birthday. This is the day you were formed from the earth to the ground, the day he breathed breath into your nostrils, and we became a loving soul. This is the spiritual birthday we celebrate each day and not just a yearly birthday, so once again Happy Birthday!

So how do you plan to celebrate this daily birthday God gave to you? Will it be spent with daily resentment and displeasure to others? Will you threaten people with bitterness, wrath, and anger? Will your tongue speak evil to other? That is not the way God wants you to spend your spiritual birthday and that was not what your spirit was intended to do.

What your birthday should hold for you is kindness and expressive love in your heart for all. God also wants you to celebrate everyday by always forgiving everyone.

God wants you to have the best birthday everyday by being compassionate and tender hearted.

Enjoy your 'special day' everyday with your Heavenly Father.

*Father, we celebrate your love for us each day. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

John Dodge



March 16, 2021

## NICKNAMES

*Isaiab43:1 "Fear not for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."*

I went to high school with a kid called "gum shoes." There were two boys in our class with the same name so they became "big Tommy Johnson" and "little Tommy Johnson."

Our family gave out bad nicknames. I was always "baby" in my toddler years. One brother called me "baby knothead." and that always made me cry. In grade school I became "Oddball." Letters from college home from the older kids made mention of "Oddball" and asked how I was doing. Luckily I outgrew that nickname, but unfortunately I gained another one.

My sisters and I had fun saying our names backwards. Our last name was a winner. "Moberg" became "grebom" (grey bomb). First names were fun too. My name backwards was "Yerdua." So my nickname in junior high was Yerdua. (Yerda). In seventh grade we had a substitute teacher. She must not have had a grade book or seating chart at hand, so she went around the room asking our names. When she came to me, my friends yelled out "Yerda". I protested, but she said sweetly, "Don't be ashamed, that is a pretty name." For the rest of the



morning I was "Yerda", and I was very happy when the bell rang for lunch.

Despite what others call us, Scripture tells us our Father, God, has called us by our names, we are his. I can imagine that when we meet him face to face he will know us and love us and there will be no mistake what name he knows us by.

*Heavenly Father, I am so glad that I am your child and that you know me by name. I belong to you, and have the blessed hope of spending eternity with you. Amen*

Audrey Cameron, Elder

March 17, 2021

## NAME CALLING

*1 Samuel 3:1-21 “. . . The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times ‘Samuel’, ‘Samuel’.”*

The story of Samuel tells us of God’s awareness of the individual. In this case, Samuel. Samuel recognized his own name. At first, he thought Eli was calling him. However, his whole life was changed when he became aware that God was calling. How significant was that call as Samuel learned that God knew his name. Are we aware that our heavenly Father knows our name? Becoming aware of this makes the cross and Easter more powerful. I believe that Christ know our names on the cross even as

he asked the Father to forgive us. Our relationship with the Father is very personal.

*Thank you, Father, for knowing me and loving me. Your forgiveness has made me rich. Your love gives me hope. Your will brings me purpose. Guide me in Your ways, O Lord. Amen.*

Gary Ivey

March 18, 2021

SAUL / PAUL

*Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Acts 9:1-4*

The story of Saul's encounter with Jesus is a powerful story of transformation and change of heart and action. He was on a mission to arrest and persecute all those who were believers and followed Jesus, followers of the Way. While on the road, he encountered Jesus through a blinding light and a voice that called him by name.

"Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?" One of the things that is happening right at this time is Jesus is not

directly calling Saul to do something that will come later. Jesus is challenging Saul's actions, heart and mind. Jesus began Saul's call by challenging his present.

I think and have experienced that before we are called to go and do, we have to be challenged to leave and let go of the things we hold dear that are not what God wants for us. Saul's attention and challenge occurred with a blinding light and a voice that came from the heavens.

The Psalmist in Psalm 139 reminds us that we can invite and be open to God showing us where we have walked away or hold on to things that are not of God. We can also invite God to lead us in the way of everlasting.

What are you holding on to in your heart, mind, soul and hands that God maybe calling you let go of in this Lenten season?

*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

March 19, 2021

FRIEND

*John 15:12-17 "You are my friends if you do what I command you."*

Who do we call ‘friend’? Is this a person we trust? Is it a status gifted us by the one who loves us? Do we have friends that are really just acquaintances? What is the picture drawn in your brain of ‘friend’? What is Jesus asking of his friends? Friendship is only a part of our relationship with Him. It involves more than a cordial and passing relationship. There are costs of friendship. What are you willing to give in this relationship? Jesus gave it all for His friends.

*Dear friend, we love you. Help us be good friends to you and to your children everywhere. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Gary Ivey

March 20, 2021

WHEN GOD GIVES US A NEW NAME

by Rebbekka Messenger (author at My Life Tree)

Have you ever noticed that the closer you are to someone, the less they use your given name? Nicknames, it seems, are a great indicator of relationship status. If someone feels comfortable enough with me to call me Bekkie, Bekka, or the many other variations of Rebbekka, I know that they’re probably close to me--even more so when they call me something entirely different.

It's this line of thinking that has led me to wonder what God calls me. Does God have a nickname for me? He, too, is in the business of changing people's names to indicate their new standing with him. Here are just a few examples:

- Abram, meaning “high father” — to Abraham, meaning “father of a multitude of many nations”
- Jacob, meaning “caught by the heel” — to Israel, meaning “God may prevail/he struggles with God/God preserves”
- Sarai, meaning “argumentative” — to Sarah, meaning “princess”
- Saul, meaning “prayed for” — to Paul, meaning “small/humble”
- Simon, meaning “he has heard” — to Peter, meaning “the rock”

If you are a follower of Christ, chances are God has given you a nickname as well. The truth is, God's grace changes everything about us. When we accept him, we are made new--no longer identifying with the person we were, but transforming into the likeness of Christ.

If you look into it, you'll find that the Bible already provides us with a wide range of nicknames. In Christ we are sons, daughters, conquerors, servants, leaders,

brothers, sisters, and more. Because of our relationship with God, he calls us something new--something that reflects his promise and our purpose.

What names do you think God has for you?

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” 1 John 3:1  
Nelda Holeman

March 21, 2021

## WE ARE CALLED BY HIS NAME

*If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*  
*2 Chronicles 7:14*

While this scripture maybe taken a bit out of context, I feel it has meaning and power for us today. Originally, this was part of the dedication of the Temple, saying that the Temple is the place where God’s people can go to pray, and God would bring forgiveness and healing.

Today, those who believe are God’s people and we are called by God’s name. I believe that when we humble

ourselves, seek God's face and turn back to God, there will be change and healing and grace in our communities. It starts with us and our hearts.

I encourage each of us, don't look to someone else and pick out their issues. Look at yourself and allow God to show you what you need to deal with. That's humbling yourself and seeking God. We will then change our ways as we have encountered God in a powerful way.

When we do that, not only will we be changed, but the houses and communities, the churches, and workplaces, will begin to see the power of God move in them as we live it out.

We are called by God's name, let's live it each day.

*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

March 22, 2021

I'M THE CHILD OF A KING!

*John 19:17 ..."Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.*



I loved telling my Bible school students over the years that they were "children of a king." If Jesus is the King of Kings, they are his children when they accept him as their Savior. There is a song we sing called "The Child of a King." I can still picture the look on little kids' faces as they realize this truth, that they are, indeed, children of a king. A number of little girls wear shirts that say "princess", not so much "prince" on a boy, but the meaning is still there. Seeing artists' portrayals of the crucified Christ, he does not look like a King. He is usually portrayed wearing a simple loin cloth and bare arms hanging from nail-pierced hands. His face is covered with blood from the cruel crown of thorns. It is a terrible sight. It becomes even worse when we realize that he died for our sins. He was in that humble condition because of US. We know he chose to make that sacrifice, he could have called "ten thousand angels" if He had chosen too, but he bore the punishment for sin.

Little children seem to understand the terrible price paid on that cross even more than adults. When I used to tell the story of the Crucifixion, I often broke down in tears, and my students wept along with me. How we rejoiced in the telling of the Resurrection! Seeing Jesus, alive again!" Death couldn't hold him, he overcame death and is alive.

We see pictures of Royalty with golden chariots and huge palaces! None of these earthly pleasures compare to what is in store for those who worship the King of Kings.

We can sing triumphantly, "I'm the Child of a King!"  
*Heavenly Father, help us to live our lives as children of your  
kingship. We are washed in the blood of the Lamb. What else can  
matter. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen*  
Audrey Cameron, Elder

March 23, 2021

ENEMIES

*Romans 5:10*

“What's in a name? that which we call a rose By any  
other name would smell as sweet.” — William Shakespeare,  
Romeo and Juliet

What does a name give to the person. I suppose it  
becomes part of the person's description. What is your  
name? When it is spoken, what is being said about you. Is  
your relationship with others being described? Paul shares  
with us one of our names – enemy of God. As the cross  
approaches, Paul describes our condition by name. As we  
come to know our separation from our Heavenly Father,  
perhaps then the gifts of mercy, grace and forgiveness take  
on a greater significance. To think God knows who we are  
and still loves us.

*Father, our hearts are filled with thanksgiving for the gift of your son.  
In His name we pray. Amen.*

Gary Ivey

March 24, 2021

## PLUNGING INTO THE SEA

*John 21:7 "Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment and plunged into the sea."*

After Jesus' Resurrection, there is a wonderful account in scripture of a breakfast by the sea. The story begins with Peter and seven other disciples fishing on the sea of Tiberias. They had fished all night and caught no fish. We can all understand how discouraging that would be. A children's chorus goes: "Fished all night and caught no fishes" and the children singing always look appropriately sad.

Then Jesus, someone on the shore who they did not yet recognize, tells them to put the net on the other side of the boat. Having spent my life around fishermen, I can appreciate how badly the advice of a stranger would go over. "Who does he think he is?" might have been one comment. We don't hear anything about that, just the fact that the net was full when they did this.

It was John who first realized it was Jesus and he told Peter "It is the Lord!" How can you not identify with Peter when you read "Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment and plunged into the sea!" What powerful words those are: "He plunged into the sea!" Who have we known in our lives who have "plunged into the sea?" Missionaries who left

home and encountered hardship and death on the mission field come to mind.

I remember a missionary family that stayed with us during my dad's ministry in Moro, Oregon. They had children about our ages, and they gave me a little warm Chinese quilted coat that their kids had outgrown. That coat kept me warm all that winter in 1944. We were all fascinated with the stories of China. As they went back to China my Dad was reading the Oregonian and came upon a list of missionaries who had been executed. That missionary we knew was on the list. He had "plunged into the sea," but we know he is in Glory now with his Savior.

I would like to think that if it is required of us, there are Christian warriors who would, like Peter, "plunge into the sea" to be near their Savior.

*Heavenly Father, Lift us up to do your work on this earth. Give us strength to "run and not be weary, to walk and not faint." Amen*

Audrey Cameron, Elder

March 25, 2021

SEEK HIM AND LIVE

*Matthew 5: In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

In the book of Amos, chapter 5, the message from God to the house of Israel was clear "seek Him and live." The people were corrupt and neglected to stop worshipping

idols. A lesson for us today to shun corruption and worship Jesus only. Scripture will tell us how to do this. One way for us to see Him and live is to do only those things that gladden the Lord. To do that, we show others Jesus' example in all that we do. It takes two – you and your neighbor – to keep Jesus number one.

Another important part of “Seek Him and live” in our mind and what we think. We need to keep our minds about the battleground of this world. The war in our minds must be won by Christ.

Recently, I read we should log the time we read our Bible and compare it to the time we spend on our phones and the internet. Does the world control our minds or does Christ?

Doing the things that give glory to Christ and keeping our minds on Him will be our mission to “Seek Him and live.”

*Lord, always help me to be a better person in my activities and my mind. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

John Dodge

March 26, 2021

I BELONG

*Isaiah 43:1 "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."*

I spent a great deal of time with my Daddy as a little girl. I can hear echoes of my mama's voice, saying "Take the baby with you." As my father went around visiting people in his rural congregation, I got to come along too. He always introduced me to people, as his youngest daughter, saying my name. I felt so happy to be with my Daddy and to feel that I belonged to him. It was a good feeling, because my big brothers and sisters were always anxious to "ditch" me and I think my first sentence was "wait for me," as they ran away, leaving me crying, left behind.

One thing always puzzled me though. When my dad was filling out the income tax, he would holler to us, "Audrey, when were you born", and we had to come up with our birthdays." He did it for all seven kids, and I remember wondering, "Doesn't he know when we were born?" Looking back, he probably knew the month, but wanted to get the day right. Still, it was a bit unsettling to think your own dad didn't know your birth date.

When I think of my Heavenly Father, there is no mistaking when I was born, and he will be there again, when I go to be with him forever. He knows me, he knows all about me, and he was there when I was not even born yet. Scripture tells us that he knew us in our mother's womb. He was there with me from the start, and will be with me to the end. What a comforting feeling. I belong to the Maker of Heaven and Earth!



*Heavenly Father, I love you for redeeming me through your son, Jesus. I am comforted by knowing I belong to you and you have called me by my name! Amen*

Audrey Cameron, Elder

March 27, 2021

## A GOOD NAME

*A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold. Proverbs 22:1*

The names we have been given are a gift that stays with us for our lifetime. Our name is what identifies who we are and how we are known. Sometimes our name has meaning and connection to our family history.

God knows us by our name and calls to us by our name. Not a “Hey you!” but a “Darren”. God calls us by name and in love to draw close to be loved and encouraged, forgiven, and sent. Our name is good because that God knows us and loves us.

*Thank you, God for loving us and knowing us. Thank you for your care and provisions for us. Amen.*

Darren Anderson



March 28, 2021

## PALM SUNDAY

*The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the king of Israel!" Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: "Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him. John 12:12-16*

The crowd gathered along the side of the road, shouting these praises and names for the Messiah as Jesus rode through. "King of Israel!" and saying that Jesus is coming in the name of the Lord. They were shouting these words based upon prophecies that they knew but even the disciples were not truly aware of these applying to Jesus until after Jesus' resurrection and ascension.

That maybe a strange order but not necessarily a wrong one. We may give praises to Jesus and God before we really understand their deep meaning. The gain in prominence as we draw closer to God and recognize how God continues to care and love us.

The crowd shouted these praises, a crowd yelled crucify, and the truth of who Jesus is will be shown on Easter morning at the empty tomb.

*Amazing God, thank you for hearing our praises and help us to draw closer to you. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

March 29, 2021

## STARS

*“To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. Isaiah 40:25-26*

Usually, we focus on verses 28-31 of this chapter of Isaiah, but these words caught my attention and are very important for us to hear. Verses 28-31 remind us to put our hope in God and God will raise us up on wings like eagles. The rest of the chapter tell us who God is, God’s power, love and caring. Verse 25-26 tell us the power and knowledge of God and that God calls the stars by name and makes sure everyone is there.

Have you ever sat outside on a dark night and just looked at the stars? If you are in a place where there is no ambient light and even no moon light, the stars are beyond what we can count. God knows and cares for them and calls them by name.

I think that if God does that for stars, God definitely knows our names and cares for us.

*Loving God, Thank you for the creation and care of the universe. It is so beautiful and a blessing to all. Thank you for caring for each of us through your love and grace. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

March 30, 2021

## CHANGED

*Galatians 2:19-21: I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.*

I have been changed. Such is life. Each day we long for the peace that God has promised. Christ tells us not to hang our hats on ‘an eye for an eye’. In Matthew 5:38-48, Jesus speaks of the way of life-changing peace. Read those scriptures and find what Christ says will bring peace.

Paul had in his previous life as Saul of Tarsus been angry, vengeful and, in truth, a murderer. Change comes to him as he takes on Christ, inside and outside. His surrender of himself to Jesus, as Lord and savior, allows his life to change. Paul’s life becomes purposed to be ambassador to and for Christ. He, in reality, became the very image of Jesus to all he meets.

In truth, this is the desire of our personal life. To be as Christ to all others is who we are meant to be.

*God, help us allow you into our lives in such a way that family and friends desire the same thing. Father, thank you, in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Gary Ivey

March 31, 2021

## THE EMPTY TOMB-2

I was there... in the Garden of Gethsemane  
And I went into the rock hewn room  
Words cannot describe the awe that was felt  
as I viewed the empty tomb.

I stood silently and gazed in awe  
In that sacred, holy place  
And reflected once again on His suffering  
as I recalled His saving grace

The importance of that empty tomb  
was once again made real  
And I drew much closer to my Lord  
His presence I could feel.

He has risen and is alive  
the Empty Tomb took away my breath  
And I knew for certain that He was Lord  
as I reflected on His death.

Jean Sarff

April 1, 2021

## HEAR HIS VOICE

*The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. John 10:3*

Although I have never experienced it in person, the videos of shepherds calling their sheep are incredible to watch. Over the noise of a sheep pen, over the distance of the field, over the calls of other shepherds, the sheep know their shepherd's voice as they are called by name to follow and they do. While sheep are not known to be very intelligent, they do follow their shepherd.

That is a comforting image to me that the sheep do listen and follow their shepherd. Why is it hard for us, for me to do the same thing? Maybe it's because I can't hear Jesus' voice over the loudness of the world. Maybe it's because I'm not listening or listening to something else. Maybe I hear but am stubborn and still want to do my own thing.

Psalm 46 tells us to be still and know God.

We all need that. To still our bodies, hearts and minds, as difficult as that is, to be able to really hear God's voice calling to us. We then need to be obedient to follow where Jesus leads knowing that the Good Shepherd is providing and protecting us. (Psalm 23)

*Calling God, may you help me to quiet down to hear your voice and to be humble and trusting to follow where you lead me. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

April 2, 2021

WHERE IS GOD?

1 Kings 19:11-15

Thought for today: *The Lord said, Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 1 Kings 19:11-12 (NIV)*

When I was growing up, one of my favorite games was hide-and-seek. I preferred playing the seeker, but when we played in our three-story house, I got frustrated. After a while, I would shout out for someone to give me a clue as to where they were. Usually one of my brothers would relent and let out a whistle, and I'd be surprised to see how close he really was.

We may not be able to see God, but we can learn to hear God's voice. When we focus on our daily Bible readings, God's words guide us. And if we take time to

listen, we can hear the divine voice. There's nothing quite like the sound of a soft whisper when it's the voice of the Almighty.

*Omnipresent God, I am assured that you are always near if I truly seek you. Open my ears to hear you speak to me. Let me turn to you daily for hope and joy. Amen.*

Christine L. Henderson -Cibolo, Texas (Devotional for February 5, 2021 in "The Secret Place")

April 3, 2021

## BELIEVING

*Scripture: John 20:29 "Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

Poor Thomas, who said upon missing Jesus' visit to the disciples after his resurrection "Unless I see in His hands the prints of the nails and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." Eight days later Jesus appeared before his disciples and Thomas was present. An interesting detail is that the door was shut and Jesus entered the room.

Jesus held out his hands and invited Thomas to touch them. Thomas said "My Lord and My God!"

Then Jesus said the words "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." When telling the story of Thomas to children, I was always so happy to tell them



that since they haven't seen Jesus in person, but yet believe in him, they are those blessed ones.

Poor Thomas, he has gone through history as "doubting Thomas." He accepted Christ's commission to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Jesus forgave Thomas as he forgives us for our sins. How wonderful to receive Christ's blessing as one who "has not seen, and yet have believed."

*Heavenly Father, stay near to us so that we will never, as others have done, doubt you. Thank you for redeeming us through your death and resurrection. Amen*

Audrey Cameron, Elder

April 4, 2021

MARY

*At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). John 20:14-16*

This is my favorite telling of the Easter morning. Mary had gone to the tomb and found it empty. She returned and told the disciples what she had found. Peter and John

ran to the tomb and found it empty and then returned home. Mary stayed. She saw and talked with angels. She saw Jesus and thought He was the gardener. But nothing made sense until Jesus spoke her name. A simple, “Mary, and her eyes and heart were opened. She recognized Jesus and that He was alive! She began to worship and then Jesus sent her back to the disciples to tell them what she had just experienced.

Maybe it was the sound of Jesus’ voice. Maybe it was the way He said her name. Maybe it was simply hearing her name. Whatever the reason, Jesus saying her name broke her out of the grief she was in following Jesus’ death. She experienced the resurrected Jesus and was brought into new life.

A simple calling of her name changed her life.

As we have seen during this season of Lent, God knows our name and calls us each day into a new life each day. May we continue to hear God’s voice lovingly calling our name each day as we live a new life in God.

*Gracious God, thank you for calling us by name into a new life in the resurrection of Jesus. May we continue to live each day in Your Love. Amen.*

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