

His Name Matters

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[0:00] Well, thank you so much for tuning in today. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. As always, if you'd like to learn a little more about us, you can go to FCCgreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, today we are excited to get into the Word of God. But most of all, we want this Word to get into these hearts, to truly change us so that we live all out for Jesus.

Now, today's message is from a series called Good News. As we are walking through the book of Luke, it is week number five in our series. And the title of this message is His Name Matters.

Now, as the 1960s were ending, there was a certain area of San Francisco where many of the self-proclaimed hippies lived. And when their part of the city wanted to kind of change its public image away from the hippie culture, the landlords decided to raise their rent to levels that these people just couldn't pay.

So there was a large exodus of hippies down the coast to Santa Cruz. Many of these couples got married and they had kids, but they didn't usually give them common names like Brett or Melissa.

[1:16] Instead, a child may come home and tell their mom they played Frisbee with Time Warp or with Spring Fever. And eventually, little Moonbeam, Earth, Promise, and Love ended up in school.

And that's when the kindergarten teachers met a little boy named Fruit Stand. Yes, Fruit Stand. And in this school system, parents would place a name tag on their child, kiss them goodbye, and put them on the school bus.

So his little Fruit Stand stepped off the bus, walked down the hallway, and entered his classroom. The teachers were a little taken back by his name, but they didn't care. They wanted to love him like all the rest.

Would you like to play with blocks, Fruit Stand? Fruit Stand, would you like a snack? And he kind of looked at them strangely and hesitantly, but by the end of the day, his name didn't seem much odder than Heathers or Sunrays.

At dismissal time, they were released to head to the bus, but Fruit Stand just kind of stood there. And one of the teachers saw this and said, well, do you know which bus is yours?

[2:19] But he didn't answer his name. But to his credit, he'd been shy all day. So the teacher walked up to his name tag, kind of flipped it around to the back where parents were instructed to write the bus stop.

And as she flipped it over, it read, Anthony. Anthony gets dropped off at the Fruit Stand. No wonder he looked at him strange all day because his name mattered.

See, back in 2013, after being married for over five years, my wife Bethany and I announced to an impatient church family that we were going to have our first child.

They'd been bugging us about it for years, but we were on a five-year plan. And a couple months later, we revealed his gender and the church celebrated with us again. But when we named him, I got to be honest, we got a few crooked eyebrows because his name is not common.

In fact, my wife had heard his name from a little Amish boy when she was a kid, Joas, J-O-A-S. And as we studied that name more, we were thrilled to learn that it comes from the biblical name Joash, as it simply took sort of a German and Dutch spin, and it means fire of Yahweh.

[3:36] And we thought, man, that's pretty cool, as we prayed that God would light a fire in his belly to burn for Jesus. And it's hard to believe that he'll be 13 this year, but we're so proud of him.

See, your name matters. And the reason it does is because of his name, Jesus. See, his identity matters to ours.

Or, as this anonymous quote says, when you grasp who Jesus is, he begins to reveal who you are. So welcome back from a one-week break from this series called Good News.

It was great to hear from Tony, the director at Mahoning Valley Camp outside of Rushville. This is where we send our kids and many of our youth to church camp in the summer. And as we heard, God is doing an incredible work in and through that ministry.

But today we want to talk about that Greek word that we introduced the first week of this series, euangelion. It means the gospel or the good news of Jesus that changes everything.

[4:43] And if you're a guest with us today, we're really big on our church getting into the word of God for ourselves and letting the Holy Spirit transform us through that God-breathed word.

So grab your Bible. You can even grab the Holy Glow of your Bible app. And let's start heading towards Luke 9, starting in verse 18. Luke 9, 18.

And about, if you're not kind of familiar with the Bible, it's about four-fifths the way through. Third book of the New Testament. You got Matthew, Mark, and then you come to the gospel of Luke. Luke 9, 18.

And as you're kind of getting there, I like to set the stage because context really is key. Luke makes me feel better about myself, by the way, because he's also a very detail-oriented person as the Holy Spirit is speaking through his pen as he writes this letter.

And as we come to our passage today, it really marks a critical pivot in this gospel where Jesus moves from mainly revealing his identity to them, which makes sense early in his ministry.

[5:49] But now in the heart of our passage, we see sort of a pivot from revealing his identity to then showing us the cost or the commitment that is required to be Jesus' disciple.

And today our outline is going to look just a little different. As the Holy Spirit is simply leading me to ask these two questions. Here's the first one. Who's Jesus to you?

You know, I thought I'd start off with something pretty light. Yeah, right. That's one of the deepest questions known to man, right? Who's Jesus to you? In fact, it's the most important question that the fruit of our lives will ever have to answer because our lifestyles are the sincerest response that we can give.

Who's Jesus to you? And I'm not suggesting you do what many have done, where they repaint the identity of Jesus in their mind to suit a lifestyle or even for personal gain, even to cater to the flesh and worldly desires of others and make them feel okay about themselves.

No, you and I must, keyword, must get hungry for truth as we go on the greatest journey of our lives where we dig into the scripture, discovering the power and the authority of Christ.

[7:05] Even how that can flow from your Savior into these broken vessels that have been mended by grace. So, let's dig into God's word here in Luke 9, starting in verse 18.

God's word says, And then, if we look at the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 16, verse 16, it kind of fills in that picture even more for us.

Simon Peter answered, You are the Messiah, but then he adds, The Son of the Living God. Now, let's back up just a bit, okay? If we look at chapters 8 and 9 that lead up to this story, Jesus has been revealing himself in massive ways, showing his identity to the people.

In chapter 8, he's with the disciples in a boat. A storm so bad that they think they're going to die. I mean, these are professional fishermen who know how to handle themselves on the water, and they think they're going to die.

And Jesus nonchalantly wakes up from his nap, calms the storm, and shows power over his creation. Even the wind and the waves obey him.

[8:32] And then he casts a legion of demons out of a man, restoring his life, giving him hope that he willingly shared. Next, he heals a woman who's been sick for years, as she simply touched the edge of his garment by faith.

Meanwhile, he was on his way to Jairus' only daughter's bedside, when they get word that she's not just sick anymore, but she's actually died. But that didn't stop him from going in, taking her by the

hand, and restoring life to her lifeless body.

Now, in the first part of chapter 9, we see Jesus send out the 12, calling them the 12 disciples. Disciples means learners. But when they come back from their God-empowered trip, where he actually gave them the ability, by his power, to preach and to heal, this is when Jesus actually calls them apostles.

Those are those who are sent with authority and a message. And I love how they, just like us, they were learning to trust his power and his provision every step of their journey.

And Jesus follows that up by feeding 5,000 men, along with their wives and children, up to maybe 20,000 people. And he feeds all those people with five loaves and two fish, as he prays and he multiplies it.

[9:50] And he shows, once again, that he cares. And he has the power and the authority to meet all our needs. You know, it makes sense, after all they had seen with their own eyes, that he'd follow up that with this question.

Who do the crowds say I am? Now, do you think he really needed to know that? Or do you think he just wanted to get the wheels in their mind turning?

Yeah, second one. And how do they respond back? Well, some say John the Baptist, who was a herald of national repentance. But guys, still just a man. Some say Elijah, who, by the way, like John, also stood up against corrupt leaders and performed miracles in God's powerful, wonderful, godly man.

Some thought Jesus was one of the prophets come back to life. Just a man. There's no question. They were looking for a political Messiah who would overthrow the corrupt powers of Rome, restore Israel to its rightful place.

They had created their own selfish picture of the Christ, a military leader. And yet Jesus came for a much more important reason, to forgive sin, to bring true spiritual freedom.

[11:00] And if you had any doubt who would speak up, it's erased when the boldest of the apostles, Simon Peter, gets this right. He says, you're the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Now, Messiah, that means the promised redeemer that the scriptures foretold, the one who would come to save his people from their sins, the one they had longed for generation after generation, hoping they could see him with their own eyes.

Or as 1 Peter 2 says, for there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

But listen, Peter doesn't leave it there. He follows up the name Messiah with Son of the living God. And I know in our culture, when we hear the phrase Son of God, we immediately take it through 21st century American lenses and we think, okay, God's up here, Son's down here, so God the Father is greater, Son is lesser.

But that's not what this phrase means at all. The Son of God, the Son of the living God, meant Jesus was more than a man. He was God in the flesh. Humanity and deity at the same time, it also shows that he is equal in value to God the Father.

[12:22] It was putting them on the same level. Why do you think the Pharisees got so mad when things like this were being said? See, Isaiah 6, 9, a very familiar prophetic passage, hundreds of years before Jesus came.

It makes it clear. For to us, a child is born. To us, a son is given. And the government will be on his shoulders. That's sort of the humanity side. Now comes the deity, the God side.

And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. So, who's Jesus? Well, he's fully man and fully God at the same time, as hard as that is to wrap our minds around.

He's Messiah. He's miracle worker, creator, head of the church, holy one, judge, king of kings and lord of lords.

He's the light of the world, the prince of peace. He is the word of God. Alpha and omega, that means beginning and end. He's Emmanuel, God with us. He is the great I am, the true God, the author and perfecter of our faith, the bread of life, the living water, deliverer, good shepherd, lamb of God, the rock, the savior, the true vine.

[13:40] He is the way, the truth, and the life, the only way to the father. And we could keep going here, but let me ask again, who's Jesus to you?

Is he the awesome God that we've been talking about today? Or have we sort of pigeonholed him into this wimpier, religious, man-made, rules-based version, or even a selfish version?

You know, I remember earlier in ministry, I was at the home of a guy in our church who I always got along with really well, still talked to from time to time. But if I'm honest, his faith appeared to be more about rules and more about how this country church always did things, more so than true biblical convictions.

And I remember us talking one time, and he made the statement, God can only do so much. And it kind of took me back. And to be fair, I think I was trying to make the point that our behavior matters, or that he was trying to make the point, our behavior matters too.

And I agree. But I don't agree that God can only do so much. And so I politely said to him, well, not my God. He can do anything. And when I say my God, it's not my made-up picture of God or even what our church teaches.

[14:55] It's what the Word of God proclaims about Jesus. So when we ask this simple yet fundamental question to our faith, it can also be really convicting.

Of course, there's the theological answer from the Word that we can share, and that's important. But what about the practical side as well? Who's Jesus to you? Well, if I'm honest, I don't always let him be the great I am who can move mountains, heal the sick, raise the dead, and transform every part of me.

I often choose comfort over submitting to his perfecting of my faith. I sometimes fill my mind with junk instead of eating of the bread of life. I can try to blaze my own trail instead of just following the good shepherd wherever he leads.

Church, am I the only one who gets in God's way too much? No. I bet you you do it too. And yet, I don't want to be Debbie Downer with these powerful and encouraging words that Peter spoke as Matthew tells us the Father revealed to Peter that on the rock, which by the way is not Peter, the rock was what he just said, the rock of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Son of the living God. That's what the church, that's what you and me build our lives upon, not upon a man, but on the rock of Jesus Christ and the gates of hell will not be able to overcome it.

[16:16] Yes, Jesus is the Christ, the mediator, the mediator I need in my life to reconcile me with the Father, covering my sins by his innocent blood. Yes, he's the Son of the living God that I can know personally, that I can know daily, that I can know eternally through the power of the Holy Spirit.

He is and embodies all those names that we mentioned earlier, wanting to come into every square inch of our lives, of our hearts, bringing hope and joy and peace and love and freedom.

That's who Jesus wants to be. But you know what? That begs the second question. What am I going to do about his identity? What am I going to do about it? Who Jesus really is, who he wants to be in your life and my life?

See, C.S. Lewis, one of the greatest theological minds in history, is famously paraphrased as saying Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic, or he's Lord. So here's the part of the larger quote from his book, Mere Christianity.

He said, you must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God or else a madman or something worse. He said, you can shut him up for a fool, that'd be the lunatic.

[17:31] You can spit at him and kill him as a demon, that'd be the liar. Or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. Listen, his name matters.

And it's my prayer that each of us can make him Lord. Now let's kind of pick back up in our story here in Luke 9.21. It says, Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone.

And we might say, why? Why wouldn't he want his truth to be proclaimed? Well, because you've got to realize that this was all in God's perfect timing. So all this is is a timing issue.

Trust me, he wants the name of Jesus to be proclaimed for salvation for everyone. But this was all about God's timing. And then it says, and he said, the Son of Man must suffer many things and be

rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law.

And he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. So this was the first time that Jesus predicted his death, burial, and resurrection. Now let's focus on verse 23.

[18:34] Then he said to them all, whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow me. Now if you take your relationship with Christ seriously, this should bring pause because this is where casual Christianity and deluded discipleship go to die.

I don't mean that you earn your salvation by good works because it is only by the grace of God through the finished work of Christ on the cross that we can be set free. And because he conquered death by rising again on the third day, right, it's by those things, it's by faith that we accept the most amazing gift of God's agape love.

So I'm talking about what that faith commitment to Jesus looks like practically. And so was Jesus because he says in verse 23, if you want to be my disciple, you must deny self, pick up your cross daily, and follow me.

So what's that even mean? Okay, here's what it means. It means if he's truly Lord, then I'm sincerely all in. And that starts with self-denial.

And the word that's used here to deny self means to disown one's sinful, depraved self. See, there's a phrase that's become popular here lately in our kind of positivity movement world.

[19:50] it says, you are enough. And I'll be honest, it sounds great. And I see that it's being used to try to instill confidence and belief in oneself, but I still don't agree with the statement.

Because the more I live, the more you'll live, the more you work and depend on yourself, the more you realize, uh-uh, I need Jesus and I'm not enough in and of myself.

That's why Jesus came. That's why he died on the cross. So I would simply add two words to make that statement true. In Jesus, you are enough.

And that changes everything. That starts by denying self, denying the flesh that wars against the things of God. And I really just love how we got an example, Saul of Tarsus, who we now know as the Apostle Paul, showed us this as he left behind the lofty position of a rising religious star, a Pharisee, to follow Jesus into a life of persecution, suffering, and ultimately perfect hope.

See, in Philippians 3, Paul says, but whatever regains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.

[21:11] I consider them garbage, he says, that I may gain Christ and be found in him. I consider them rubbish, right? And when we say yes to Jesus, that means we start denying self, denying the flesh, denying selfishness, and saying, Jesus, you are number one.

And that leads to this. That's cross-bearing. Jesus says, take up your cross daily. Now, too many, and I saw John Christ kind of do a comedian skit on this.

I'm going to play off of that a little bit. But too many Christians today go to Starbucks and they get the wrong order. They put mocha in instead of caramel and it's like, oh, I guess I got to bear my cross today, right?

Uh-uh. That is not bearing your cross. That is being spoiled rotten. See, when Jesus was speaking in this intimate setting with the 12, bearing your cross meant one thing and one thing only to these guys.

Today, it's a symbol of grace and forgiveness and hope. Not in the first century Jewish culture, it wasn't. One of the cruelest forms of punishment the Romans forced upon too many of their countrymen.

[22:18] It'd be like us wearing an electric chair around our neck. It meant suffering. It meant pain. It meant death. In the words of John MacArthur, Jesus was calling for a willingness to endure hatred, hostility, rejection, reproach, persecution, shame, even the most horrible death to say no to self and no to safety for his sake.

And that's a daily choice. I will bear my cross and I will follow you, Jesus, no matter what. Like the famous hymn, no turning back.

And then Jesus calls us to obedience. He says, follow me. So, do you remember what he said, what we said, that verb meant a few weeks ago when we talked about Jesus calling Peter, James, and John out of a fisherman lifestyle to follow him?

It means, get this, are you ready for this? It's really powerful. Follow means to follow. To go where he goes, do what he does, act how he acts, be like him.

All of that, only by the Holy Spirit's power in our lives as we submit to his leading, to his power, to his authority. Jesus put it very simply in John 14, 15. If you love me, keep my commands.

[23:30] But let's be very clear here. Self-denial, cross-bearing, obedience are not a means to salvation. They are evidence of it. Evidence of the hope you have in Jesus Christ.

Now, let's look at how Jesus ends this passage. And I'll be honest, for anyone who's rejected Jesus with their words, their actions, even with their silence, this should be scary and hopefully lead to a true heart change, to repentance in him.

But for those of us who find our identity in Christ, who unashamedly say, Jesus, you are the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God, this is an amazing promise. And we should be grateful for this.

Luke 9, starting here in verse 24. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it. But whoever loses their life for me, Jesus says, will save it.

What good is it for someone to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit their very self, their very soul? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

[24:35] You know, my wife said something really impactful the other day as we were talking about eternal life. She said, I really want to be alive when Jesus comes back. And the more I thought about that, yeah, me too.

When the trumpet sounds, when the Son of Man comes in his glory, when we're called up to meet him, when he separates the sheep from the goats, whatever, all that exactly looks like, we have no reason to fear that day as true followers of Christ because we are covered by his blood.

We are sealed with his Holy Spirit for all eternity. And I'll tell you, a few weeks ago, my family truly grieved a dear friend of ours.

Dexter was only 49 years old, one of my closest friends from our ministry in Morristown, Tennessee. We had gone to three University of Tennessee football games together at Neyland Stadium.

We had gone to an Atlanta Braves game together, perfectly fine health-wise until October of 2025. See, he had just received a promotion two or three months earlier at work.

[25:39] He was now the director, the head over 24 counties or 1,200 employees in East Tennessee. He worked for TDOT, kind of like NDOT, but TDOT, Tennessee Department of Transportation.

He was one of the most gentle, humblest guys you'd ever meet. And I bet 1,000 people came through that receiving line to show their love and respect as we were able to go and I was able to speak at that funeral.

See, one day, Dexter was fine and the next, his body started to fail him as he eventually learned that he had a rare cancer of the central nervous system. And three months later, he's gone.

And while our hearts grieve for his incredibly strong wife of 24 years, Melanie, and his sweet teenage girls, we don't grieve for Dexter. We're kind of jealous because his faith has now become sight and he's now worshipping his Savior who he loved and served on this earth and he wouldn't come back if he could.

And I don't blame him. And most of you know this, when you lose a dear friend at such a young age, especially, it really stops you in your tracks. It puts everything into perspective, doesn't it?

[26:49] And today, as we look inward and we answer these tough questions, who's Jesus to you and what are you going to do about his identity, we can do so with hope knowing that if our faith is sincere, if our hope is truly in Jesus Christ, then we have absolutely nothing to fear.

So church, let me leave you with this. good news, his name matters as he is the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

Will you pray with me? Father, thank you for these words of hope and these words of life. Thank you for who Jesus is and who we are as his children, bought by his blood, redeemed, set free, washed clean and put on the rock to live a life in the power and the authority of Jesus Christ. Thank you for this hope, this joy, this peace, this love that you give us. Father, we just pray right now that you will just stir these words in our hearts that when we consider that question, who's Jesus to me, that it can be the true, biblical, awesome God of the universe that he is and we will never settle for less, that we will never settle for a life led by our own power and our own determination, that we will live in the power of Christ and accomplish all for the glory of God that you have called us to accomplish, Lord, for your glory and by your power.

So Jesus, speak to our hearts, draw us closer to you, we pray, and we pray this in your holy and precious name. Amen and amen. Hey, real quick, just want to give you this invitation.

[28:35] Once again, I'm Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana and if you have any questions about faith, about our church, about following Jesus, you can reach out to us in a couple different ways.

We can start that conversation this way, 812-663-8488, that's 663-8488 or you can email us at rayatfccgreensburg.com.

Hey, thank you so much for tuning in today. I pray that God's word has just strengthened you in awesome ways and I hope you have a fantastic week. God bless you and have a good week.