What's In A Name

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Date: 31 August 2025 Preacher: Jeff McVannel

[0:00] Oh, good morning, everyone. What's in her name?

When you hear somebody's name, thoughts come to mind.! A lot of times that depends on who it is, right?

How well we know them. And for me, it's like, well, if it's an acquaintance or somebody I think I've been introduced to before, you kind of, sort of get a picture in your mind of what they may look like, and you're like, oh, yeah, I remember.

Okay, now I remember who that is, right? Or it's somebody that you know fairly well, you've spent time with, you've lived life with.

Those kind of people, you tend to know a whole lot better. And likewise, they tend to know you a whole lot better, right?

[1:04] So, as you go through difficulties with people, more of our lives are revealed.

And when you walk through difficulties with other people, we get to know them on a deeper level, more intimately. So, again, names are interesting, right?

They bring up thoughts. Is this person a trustworthy person? Are they a person of character? Are they somebody to avoid?

Not share things with? Again, when you hear somebody's name, all of these different things start coming to our minds. And we make evaluations, again, depending on how well we know them.

Names are interesting. In the Scripture, in the Old Testament, towns, places were named after significant events, and the names related to those events that took place.

[2:15] People's names often have meaning. And when we read in the Scripture, a lot of times we find the meanings of the names given in those general passages.

For example, Isaac. His name means laughter. Now, interesting, when you go back and you're reading in Genesis, Genesis, his parents, Abraham and Sarah, both laughed, though in different circumstances, when God told them they were going to have a child.

And God even said, you're going to name this child Isaac, whose name means laughter. So God is affirming his name, but also acknowledging that you guys both laughed when I told you you were going to have a child.

So, again, go back and read, and you'll find some of those circumstances. Now, God also, through the Scripture, changes names of people.

And you read different places. Different people have various perspectives as to why he may have changed names. Personally, I think he's changing names oftentimes because he's changing the character of the people.

[3:33] Now, Isaac's son, one of his son's names was Jacob. The name Jacob means heel catcher or supplanter or deceiver.

Interestingly enough, God changes Jacob's name to Israel, which means governed by God or prince of God.

God would work in the man's life and change him. But again, interestingly, as you read through the passages on his life, you see God refer to him as Israel and sometimes as Jacob, depending on how he's acting at the time.

Right? So, again, this whole issue of names. In the New Testament, we've seen Jesus change Simon's name to Peter. We see Saul of Tarsus' name changed to Paul.

Again, God working in these men and their characters changing. So, all of that to say, what's in a name? Again, how well we get to know one another.

[4:48] Now, I want to stretch us a little this morning, at least for our norm here. But I would like to ask if you would stand with me.

I would like to read our passage for this morning. And then you can sit down and we'll get back into our study. So, would you stand with me, please? I'm reading out of the New King James, and it is Psalm 23.

It says, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.

He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For you are with me.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup runs over.

[5:54] Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Amen. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank you for who you are. And the fact that you love us and you know us oh so well. I just ask, Lord, that you would bless our time together.

That you would pour your spirit out upon us. That we would have the ears and the heart that are willing to receive what you would speak to us this morning. In Jesus' name.

Amen. You can be seated. Thank you for indulging me with that. Psalm 23. We're generally speaking, I think, probably all quite familiar with that.

But my question would be, do you notice David starts with a name? Did you catch the name? Wait a minute.

[6:58] David doesn't say the name. Anybody's name in here. And I would bear to differ with you on that.

When we look at verse 1, he says, The Lord is my shepherd. Now, if you look up there, the word Lord is all in capital letters.

Doesn't matter what translation you're looking at. It uses all capital letters when the scripture is speaking the name of God.

Okay. In the Hebrew, it would be, we refer to it as Yahweh or Jehovah. Okay. But that is the name of God.

So, David does start with using God's name. When you see the name or the word use Lord, when it's in a capital L and a lowercase O-R-D, that is the Hebrew Adonai.

[8:07] And it means master or ruler. So, it's more of a positional or a title term than it is the name of the Lord.

Okay. So, again, that's how he starts out. And if you notice, he says that the Lord is my shepherd.

So, we're getting that personal connection here. Now, the question for you and I is, is the Lord my shepherd?

Right? Is Jesus Lord in my life? Not the question, is he master or ruler? Because if we hold to the scriptures, that's a given.

He is the master. He is the ruler. Right? It doesn't matter whether I acknowledge him or not. It doesn't negate the fact that that's who he is.

[9:10] Right? It's not a question of his authority. He's sovereign. That's what the scripture tells us. Right? The question is, do I have a relationship with him?

Do I know him personally? Is there intimacy in that? Is he my shepherd? That's the question for us. Right? Again, it's not just knowing his name.

It's not knowing a historical character, historical figure. Right? It's not hearing the name and picturing some picture in my mind of what he looked at based on a picture I saw at grandma's house when I was little.

We all know Jesus had blonde hair and blue eyes. Right? Not. But that's what, again, the name brings up pictures in our mind. But is that picture in our mind based on the truth of the scripture and who he is in my heart and in my life?

Or some historical character? That's the question for us. And again, do we actually have that relationship with him?

[10:24] We can claim to know him. And the scripture tells us that's an issue. Right? In Matthew 7, the Lord Jesus says, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord.

And I stop and underline because, again, look at the word Lord. Not everyone who says, Master, Master. Right?

Because that's the positional. Adonai, that's the positional term. Not the personal term. But he says, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven.

But he who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name?

Then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness. Now, interestingly, Jesus said, I didn't know you.

[11:32] And the term is a very intimate term. If you look at it from the Hebrew perspective, back in Genesis, it says, Adam knew Eve.

And she conceived. So this is a very intimate knowledge. So we're not talking about a recognition of a name, an acknowledgement of a position of authority.

We're talking about intimate relational knowledge. Okay? And that's what Jesus is saying. People are going to practice religion. People acknowledge my name.

People say, Master. He goes, It's not relational. And if it's not relational, I don't know you.

And that's a scary thought. Right? But what's he saying? When it comes right down to it, what is most important is that relational knowledge of the Lord.

[12:38] Not practicing religion. Not doing great and wonderful things. He doesn't deny what they're claiming, that they've done great and wonderful things. He's saying, we don't have a relationship.

Right? That's what's most important. We don't spend time together. We've never gotten to know one another.

Right? And he says, in John chapter 17, verse 3, And this is eternal life, that they may know you.

The only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. The whole foundation of Psalm 23, as David is speaking, is knowing the Lord and the security that comes from that.

And Jesus is saying, that's the whole issue of eternal life, is that relationship with God. The reality is, if we know the Lord today, we have eternal life today.

[13:50] We always think of eternal life as after I die. Eternal life starts at the moment we have that relationship and come to that understanding of who Jesus is and acknowledge that before him.

So again, it's knowing the Lord personally and intimately. and that's the case that David starts with, is the Lord is my shepherd. Right?

Then in Psalm 78, the psalmist writes, He made his own people to go forth like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock and he led them on safely so that they did not fear.

A good shepherd leads his flock. Right? His flock. Not somebody else's flock. He only leads his flock. But again, they're his.

And that's that whole relational aspect. He guides them in the wilderness in times of uncertainty and in difficulties. But he does so and safely keeps them safe.

[15:06] So we have no reason to fear. again in John chapter 10, Jesus says, I'm the good shepherd and the good shepherd gives his life for his sheep.

His sheep. Right? So again, loving us so much as we sang about, willingly laying his life down on our behalf because he loves us and calls us his own.

Then in verse 27 in John 10, he says, My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me. So again, that intimacy of relationship, but that becomes evidenced in our lives as we follow his leading.

Then in verse 28, he says, I give them eternal life and they shall never perish nor shall anyone snatch them out of my hand.

And again, that's the confidence that we see come out in this psalm as David speaks. And all of that is wrapped up in this short phrase that the Lord is my shepherd.

[16:21] David continues, I shall not want. I shall not lack. Right? And that's what the Apostle Paul would say and he says, what?

My God, again, personal, my God shall supply all your need according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus. Again, the ultimate goal is eternity.

That is, that's it. that's the state, the place, the position, the ultimate that we all seek.

It's not the temporal. It's not the here and now. It's, as Paul would write, to finish the race.

And he's telling us that God has supplied everything that we need. As David said, we don't have want.

[17:24] There's no need to want. Now, those that know me, varying degrees, and the more you know me, then maybe, you know, your mind will change.

But anyways, but those that know me fairly well would know I'm a music head. Okay? I have no musical talent or ability other than to play the stereo and I do so very well.

Okay? But, but one of the things that, as I was looking at this, a phrase of a song came to mind and it says, there's only two ways to die.

Wait a minute, there's a whole bunch of ways to die, some of which I would choose not to do. But my point being, the song, the artists are not talking about physical avenues of this tent ceasing to function.

They're talking about there's only two ways to die. You are either in relationship with the Lord or not. Everyone who passes from this physical realm dies in one of those two states.

[18:45] There's only two ways to die. So, again, we're either in Christ or we're not. We're either going to enter the eternal realm with Jesus or separated from him.

there's only two ways. Eternity with the Lord in heaven, eternal separation and damnation in hell.

That's it. Right? So, again, the writer to Hebrews of the letter to the Hebrews says it's appointed to man to die once and after that the judgment.

at that point in time the decision is made. Our decision is solidified.

Okay? So, and it's kind of interesting how the Lord does this, but as Tom mentioned last week, the time to come to the Lord is now.

[19:57] Because as James would write, wait, what's your life? There's even a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

None of us are guaranteed tomorrow. So, you know, we can have the confidence in knowing the Lord personally as we've already read that we have eternal life with him as we move into that realm, we can have that confidence and assurance today if we've chosen again.

So, we don't have to worry. We don't have to want in any of that. Verse 2 continues in Psalm 23. he says that he makes me lie down in green pastures.

Now, again, my understanding is that in this whole issue of shepherding and sheep, they don't lay down and relax unless they feel very safe, fear, you know, fear not being an issue, they're not threatened, they got plenty to eat, then they can rest and relax.

And, again, it's the shepherd who provides those things for them so that they're able to relax and to be content and ultimately to flourish.

[21:34] Proverbs 18.10 says, again, the name of the Lord. I found it interesting as I was going through this how much God has emphasized this when we start to look.

But, the name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run into it, and are safe. Then in Psalm 46, it says, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore, we will not fear. so, again, look into the Lord, getting to know him, growing in that relationship with him, and experiencing his provision, it helps us to grow in our faith, to trust him, to feel safe and secure.

And the more we walk with him, the more he shows himself strong on our behalf, the easier it is to rest, to relax, to lie down in green pastures, and trust him.

Right? And the scriptures tell us, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. And I point to that because the Lord gives us promises, he gives us examples, and we can read them and know them.

[23:05] and he's the same yesterday, today, and forever. The things he's done in the past, the promises he's made in the past, we can hold fast to.

And he will, he will bring those things securely in our lives. But again, we experience that as we walk through the difficulties and those kinds of things, so that we then have lived the experience and know him, again, more personally for having gone through those things and seeing him fulfill his word in our lives.

Verse 2 continues, and he says, he leads me beside still waters. Revelation chapter 7, says, for the lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Again, for those that are his, those that follow him, he's provided forgiveness and peace, cleansing and rest, and he's saying we can find refreshment in that relationship with him.

David continues and he says, he restores my soul. As we looked at last week, as Tom pointed out, whoever calls on, again, the name of the Lord will be saved.

[24:49] Whoever calls on the name of the Lord, and it's like, that's pretty simple. It's pretty straightforward. I don't have a checklist of things that I have to do.

I got one thing to do. Call on the character, the person of the Lord Jesus.

That's it. Like I said, pretty straightforward. The apostle John would write and says, he who has the Son has life.

He who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

clearly states, do you know him? Do you not know him? Do you have him? Do you not have?

[26:00] It's straightforward and simple. But he says all of this because he wants us to have that assurance, to be confident.

Not confident in me, confident in him. If I have him, if I know him, if I'm in a relationship with him, I can trust him. It's not about what I do and don't do.

It's about who he is and do I trust him. Again, because it's all based on him, his character, his faithfulness, his sacrifice.

My part is simply to look to him, to trust him, to hold on to him, to take him at his word. Psalm 23, 3 continues, he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

The question is, how does he lead us? Well, he leads us through his word. Psalm 119, 105, your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

[27:17] Right? This is not a path that is well illuminated in the daytime, one that we're familiar with. This is about the places we've never been before through the dark woods in the middle of the night.

And guess what? No halogen headlamp. culturally, historically, what would they be talking about when they talk about a lamp?

A little dinky oil lamp with a wick. Right? You kind of hold it like this and don't spill your oil.

But how far are you going to see? One or two steps. So what's the Lord saying in that? My word will direct you one step at a time.

but if you're listening, if you're seeking, if you're desiring, I will lead you through the darkness one step at a time.

[28:33] It's not going to show us way out there because way out there is pretty scary stuff. And I ain't going there. But if he only shows me one step, and I can see that where I need to take that step, that's what he's calling us to, one step at a time.

And why? For his namesake. Because it's going to prove who he is. Again, his faithfulness.

David writes in Psalm 31, you are my rock and my fortress. Therefore, for your namesake, lead me and guide me.

again, he's trusting and being fully surrendered. He continues in Psalm 23, he says, yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

Excuse me. the world around us is the shadow of death. It's a dark place.

[29:52] I don't know if you've seen it or not, but it is. There's terrible times, accidents, chronic illness, loss of loved ones, loss of jobs, wars, natural disasters.

It's not a pleasant place. darkness. David knew darkness, right? David had some big time sin issues.

David ran for years with King Saul, chasing after him, trying to kill him. David lost an infant child.

David had a rebellious son who wanted to kill him. David knew darkness, but he trusts the Lord in all of it, right?

He says, I will fear no evil, right? But how do we say that? I will fear no evil. How do we deal with the dark times?

[31:10] Again, we take God at his word. David would write in Psalm 27, the Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?

Right? When we're looking to and trusting in the Lord, again, I'll point out, all caps, when we have that relationship with the Lord, when we can trust the Lord, we got no reason to fear.

It doesn't mean the trials and the difficulties and the pain aren't there. What's the ultimate?

Eternity. But he says, regardless of what happens, regardless of what life looks like, the Lord's got my back.

I'm there, right? I can trust him. Paul would write in Romans 8, if God is for us, who can be against us?

[32:19] It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter what the world thinks of us. It doesn't matter what they say. If God's for us, if we're on God's side, nothing else matters.

others. So again, for David, he can rest in that fact, right? He continues, why? Because you're with me.

It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter how dark it is, I'm going to follow. You're with me. That's all I need. Psalm 16, verse 8.

I have set the Lord always before me because he's at my right hand and I shall not be moved. Because the Lord is the priority of my life, I can stand.

I can trust. I can rest, no matter what things look like. Then he says, your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

[33:27] protection and correction. Again, in the hands of the trusted shepherd, the rod and the staff were tools used to ward off attackers, animals that would come to try to get his sheep.

And again, we're seeing that more and more in the day in which we live, the church, the followers, true followers of the Lord are being attacked.

God. But David's trusting in the Lord. But the reality is, as Jesus said, remember the word that I said to you, a servant's not greater than his master.

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. Again, the point for us is just because we come to faith doesn't mean things are going to get better.

Right? John 16, 33, Jesus said, these things I have spoken to you, that in me, you'll have peace.

But in the world, you will have tribulation. But be a good cheer. I've overcome the world. what's the end goal?

Overcoming. It's not about what the world says, does, or will do. It's about what the Lord has done, and we hold fast to, and we look forward to.

Right? Paul tells Timothy, yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

That's really reassuring. It's a reality. And like I said, more and more as we see the day of the Lord's return approaching.

Scripture tells us things are going to get darker, not better. Not a real happy message in that sense.

But the Lord's point is to reassure us, again, that He has us. Okay? Again, it's not about the here and now.

It's not about the temporal. the whole is about eternity. God's more concerned about our relationship with Him, people coming to faith, than He is me being comfortable in my daily life.

So if you're hearing a message that's contrary to that, read your Bible. Bible says, okay, that's not the way the Scripture lays things out.

So, Psalm 40 and verse 2, He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of a miry clay, set my feet upon rock.

We've all been in pits in various ways. The rod and the staff, the crook, was often used to pull the lamb or a sheep up out of a ravine, out of a place that it's gotten itself into.

[37:40] You ever get yourself in a mess? Yeah. But the Lord's faithful.

He lifts us up. He wants us to have our feet set on the solid rock of who He is. So, protection.

But I said two things, didn't I? Protection and correction. That's not so pleasant. Have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when approved by Him. What happens to that one sheep that continually wanders off that the Scripture tells us that the shepherd left the 99 to go chase the one down?

Right? The one that habitually keeps running away, what happens to it? The rod, the staff, sometimes broke that little guy's leg.

You're like, what? Mm-hmm. can't run away no more. But what did that mean? The shepherd then hoisted that sheep on his shoulders and carried it until it healed.

healed. Now think about that. How much time is it going to take for the bone to heal? How much time is that sheep going to spend with the shepherd?

How much intimacy will be developed? How much will they get to know one another? How much will that sheep get to recognize that shepherd's voice?

Correction and discipline is a good thing. Right? We think of our children.

The word in here discipline. We get our terms disciple and discipleship from this word.

[40:21] It means to be a student, to be taught. Right? For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives.

To chastise, to flog. King James, New King James uses the term scourge.

Corporal punishment. We've heard the expression, spare the rod, spoil the child. Scripture says, beat the child, he will not die.

What? That's what it says. But again, why? Why? out of love, correction, teaching.

So these things are all a part that David is recognizing. Again, Hebrews 12 and verse 8 says, if you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, who's participated in being disciplined?

[41:40] all of us, somewhere along the line, right? But if you're left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children, and not sons.

So, what's the writer of Hebrews saying? If you think you're a child of God, he will discipline you, unless you're not.

As much as we would like, we do not discipline other people's children. Right? Sometimes we think they need it, but we only discipline our own children.

And that's what the writer of Hebrews is saying, right? Previously we read, if you're his, you will be disciplined, you will be chastised.

Oh, but guess what? If you're not, you won't. A warning. Why Paul would write to the church in Corinth and say, examine yourselves as to whether you're in the faith.

[43:01] It's not my place to point at you and say, no, you don't, know the Lord, man, you can't do that and know the Lord. Again, I might think that that might be where we're at on a relationship level and that's all the better I know you and it's like, eh, that's pretty questionable.

But what matters is you and the Lord, me and the Lord. And what Paul is saying in relationship to that passage out of Hebrews is if the Lord's letting us get away with our shenanigans and it seems like there's never any consequences, we might ought to check to see whether or not we really know the Lord.

Most importantly, does he know us? Because we most certainly don't want to stand there on that day and say, Lord, Lord.

He's like, dude, I never knew you. To me, that is the scariest passage in the scripture.

But check, again, that's on us. Psalm 23 continues, David says, you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

[44:34] For those that are his, those that love him, those that follow, he's faithful to provide in spite of who's against us.

Remember the book of Exodus, right? How God provided for his people in terrible circumstances, manna from heaven.

as they're running after those who are trying to enslave them. But he provides.

Then we get the picture of the tabernacle, later the temple. He sets up a table inside there. table. And the table signifies fellowship, eating a meal together.

They had loaves of bread. Now, again, culturally, you didn't just eat with anybody. Because to eat with someone was very intimate and personal.

[45:47] Sound familiar? here. And the reason I say that is because when you took a loaf of bread and you broke a piece off, and you ate some and I ate some, guess what?

We're one. Because if this one loaf of bread, if you've consumed part and I've consumed part, that means we're now one with one another because we ate of the same bread.

So it's that intimacy, that fellowship, that word koinonia. And why it is the religious leaders of Jesus' day had such a fit that he would eat with tax collectors and sinners and prostitutes and drunkards.

Because he would align himself with them and be one with them. That's the whole point. He wants to. He wants to.

He wants to align himself with us sinful, broken people. He wants to. And that's what David is getting at, right?

[47:06] In the midst of everything that's against us, he wants that fellowship, that communion, with us.

Big deal. Again, God's ways are way different than ours. You anoint my head with oil.

Anointing. Practiced in that culture, they didn't bathe a whole lot. They walked in some really dry, dusty places.

When you went to someone's home, they would anoint you. They would pour oil on your head. It was a refreshment. It was a cleansing. It was often mixed with herbs, fragrance.

See, it smells so bad when you sat down at the table. people. But again, it's that refreshment that would come. A sign of hospitality, a respect.

[48:24] And again, you remember when Jesus entered the home, and the lady comes in and is anointing his feet, and the Pharisees, whose house he's in, is having a fit.

And Jesus says, you didn't give me oil for my head. But she's expressing her love in such a way, you didn't see me worthy.

And she's at my feet. Again, that contrast. But that's what David is saying, is you refresh me, you soothe me, you cleanse me.

cleanse me. my cup runs over. What more can you ask for?

Jesus put it this way, I have come that they may have life, and that you may have it more abundantly, to the fullest.

[49:32] that cup runs over. That's God's desire. The fullness of what he would have for us. Surely, goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

I almost said, the house of my friend forever. That's not even in my notes. goodness and mercy follow us all of our days.

Goodness takes care of my steps. Steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delights in his way.

One step at a time, according to his word, goodness for every step. God watches over our steps graciously.

But at the same time, his mercy is there for when we stumble. Though we fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholds him with his hand.

[50:58] God, we need his goodness and his mercy. His goodness to guide us, his mercy for when we trip and stumble. Again, the acknowledgement is we're going to trip and stumble.

But his mercies are new every day and they're for us. So, again, the Lord personally, intimately, my shepherd, my shepherd, provides for everything that I need, watches over me, pours out his goodness and mercy upon me, and when I come to the end of the days that I have here which he ordains, I'm going to do well with my friend.

What more can we ask for? Right? What's in a name? Depends on whose name it is.

Everything is in the name of Jesus. Let's pray. Father, thank you for who you are, for everything you've done in our life, and your goodness, your mercy, that we can rest assured in who you are, and all that you have provided, and that we are safe and secure in you.

Help us to hold fast, to look to you, to trust you, to walk with you, to grow in the grace and knowledge of who you are, to be students of your word, to be discipled by you.

[53:04] you. I'm grateful, Father, that you pour your spirit out upon us and enable us. In and of ourselves, we can't, but nothing is too difficult for you.

So again, thank you for your love and the sacrifice and provision you made through your son. It's in his name we pray. Amen.

Thank you.