

13th Sunday After Pentecost

Exodus 1:8-2:10;

Psalms 124;

Romans 12:1-8;

Matthew 16.13-20

Rev'd Jamee Collard

(Taken from YouTube Transcript)

What's your name?

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who has made heaven and earth.

So, our psalm today and our vocations focus, which we are celebrating as a little end to August, is a short season where we reflect on how God is calling each and every one of us to service, but also calling us by name. We're going to have a little focus on names today.

So, what's your name? My name is Jamie. That is what I usually go by. It's a lot shorter than the name I was baptised with, which is Jamie-Lee, with a hyphen, all one word, not a second name. I also took on other aspects to my name as I grew and changed. One, in my ordination, added the Reverend onto the front. I can also use my married name if I choose to use that, because God has also called me into marriage with my beloved Damian. There are other names that I've also picked up along the way, some that are only special for one person to call me: nicknames, pet names. They might be names that are more widely used and known for a whole group to have as a pet name for me.

Here we see, just in a little example, that names are given to us. Often they're given to us at the start of our lives. We will have our birth name; we might have a different name that's added on at baptism. Some names are changed deliberately. We might even fill out paperwork to change our name legally. Some names we would be proud to use and to be known by, and others we might not enjoy so much.

God knows each of us by these names, and there's also a very special name that only Jesus can call to us using. That one might not even be known to us. It takes a lifetime for us to learn our true name and to listen for when God calls to us using it.

So let's delve into scripture. In our first lesson today, we hear of the story of Moses: his birth, the situation that he came into, and the way that he was lifted up out of a basket in the river. He was given a new name when that happened, being adopted into the Pharaoh's household, as the

princess gave him the name Moses. This name means lifted up, because she lifted him up out of the river.

Now, it's very significant that this is the name that he takes on, his adopted name, as he becomes a prince of Egypt, because it would be about 40 years after his flight from Egypt that he returns to then be the one who lifts up God's people, the Israelites, out of slavery.

Here we see that God plays a very long game with Moses. His story is one where we might see that it takes an entire lifetime for his name to unfold. Sometimes it takes just as long for us to unfold our special name given to us by God, and that vocation that we are all blessed with in order to fulfil God's call in our life.

Sometimes God also plays a bit of a shorter game when it comes to naming us and giving us a vocation, and allowing us to play that out in our lives as well. Here I'm going to bring up our holy hermit, who we remember today. She is one who had quite a short life, but in which her names were significant, and also her vocation and the legacy that she leaves the world, particularly for us as believers and those who would like to be inspired by others who have taken up their name and also their vocation.

So we know her as holy hermit Saint Teresa of Jesus of Los Andes. That might sound like a very long name. She was born in the year 1900 in Chile, but the name that she was actually given at birth is far longer, and I've been practising for this one, so here we go: Joanna and Josefina de los Sagrados Corazones Fernandez Sola. Now, that's a name I'm not going to say again, I think. Once was more than enough.

Now, she's significant. She was the first Chilean saint who was recognised, and she has been particularly recognised as one who can inspire young people to take up their vocations. It was only at the age of 14 that she discerned her call to become a Discalced Carmelite nun, and she pursued holiness for the rest of her days.

In 1919, only a few years later, she entered the order, and that's when she got to change her name from that very long one I just said before and took the name Teresa of Jesus. That was the one that she chose for herself, and that was the recognition of her taking up her calling.

We get a sense of why she might have chosen this name in one of her very well-known sayings. She wrote in one of her journals, which is where we find these beautiful quotes from: "Oh, I am happy, for I can truly say that the only love of my heart has been him, my Jesus. I have seen that only one thing is necessary: to love and serve you faithfully, to resemble you in everything. That will be all my ambition."

So that is her ambition: to be named for Jesus and to resemble Jesus. This is her vocation. Now, I say that it was a short game that God played in her life, unlike Moses, where it was a very long game, because she died of what they think might have been typhus. It could have been Spanish

flu; no one really knows. She died at the age of 19, just before she was to turn 20, near Holy Week.

So her legacy that she left behind, and also that God continues to use, is a huge movement of Chilean young people who go on pilgrimage every year, trying to get closer to God, inspired by her legacy of simply stating that her happiness was to be found in attempting to resemble Jesus.

She's remembered as a young saint, entirely normal and balanced. She was simple and cheerful, and rather athletic. She was sympathetic, and loved and lived life fully in the time that she had as a gift from God.

For a society like ours, that certainly is a legacy that we would like to hold on to. She convinces us that not only is the basis of spirit overcoming the things that would bar us from Jesus, but also that there are efforts involved in maturing and realising ourselves as who we truly are in Christ, taking up our names.

She had a consecrated life, one that was deliberately set apart, and she was named and celebrated and now remembered by us, as well as so many others inspired by her very short time living out her vocation to the full.

So, just in these two examples, we see that names are important. They sometimes can be publicly adopted as an outward sign of an inward covenant or promise with Jesus. Sometimes, they are private names between us and God.

The name of God is also really important. All through the Bible, we see how significant names are and what they can reveal to us about God and about ourselves. In our Gospel passage today, we see Jesus being named by Peter, and this being very significant. He names Jesus as Messiah.

Peter is well known as being someone who talked before he had really thought things through, so this was something of a revelation to him, as well as everyone else who heard him utter it. They had been, just a moment ago, answering Jesus' question, "Who do people say that I am?" with all of these very clever ideas about how Old Testament prophets might be living through Jesus. It was when that moment was on the tip of Peter's tongue — "You are the Messiah" — that, in a sense, Peter's own name was unlocked.

Jesus turns around and says, "Yes, and you will be called Peter," meaning rock, "and you'll be the rock on which I build my church." Here Peter's name changes from Simon Peter to just Peter, the Apostle, the one who begins the foundations. He then is told that he's going to be given the keys of the kingdom, and it's only after Peter was able to recognise who Jesus was and name him that, in taking up Peter's name, he was given the keys to unlock the kingdom of heaven.

So making a commitment and saying it out loud regularly often helps us, whether that be in naming ourselves or naming our vocation. We unlock our full potential with the keys of the kingdom if we are also naming God in that process.

HOLY HERMITS ONLINE

So what is your name? What has God called you? Your Christian name? Maybe you'd like to use that baptism name. Maybe that's the one. Or is it a more intimate name: Christ's own Christian, child of God? And what do you call God? What name do you use in prayer when you're drawing near to the one who calls to you? And how are you being invited to exercise your Christian name: Christ's own child of God?

Every baptised person has a calling. Every baptised person has a name to take up. Teresa of the Andes asks us all to turn our life into worship, into an offering, and she describes this as being a continuous melody of love for God.

So finally, we're just going to delve very briefly into the epistle, where Paul writes to encourage the Romans to take up their own leadership callings, vocations. There is a list of names that he uses at the end of this short passage to describe the gifts that are given, and also the names that come with them. He says, "We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; and the compassionate, in cheerfulness."

Do any of those names strike a chord with you? Are any of those callings sparking something within? We could certainly say that maybe the final part there, the compassionate in cheerfulness, was the vocation of Saint Teresa.

Just a few more quotes from her to really demonstrate that and maybe inspire us afresh before we finish our reflection today. She said, "I made it a resolution to live very cheerfully outwardly." "Where they take me, I am happy." "Always live very cheerful. God is infinite joy."

So can we cheerfully surrender ourselves? Can we take up our vocations through Jesus, saying that it is God who calls, who equips us with a name, and sends us, and keeps calling that name? Can we let God have a way with our lives, playing a long game perhaps, or maybe a short game, but always with abundance and always knowing us intimately by that name that only God calls us? So I invite you to continue reflecting: what is your name? Amen.