**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 11-6-2022
Jesus, the I Am**

One of the biggest and most humbling privileges that many of us have in life is naming a child, or a pet for that matter.

Names matter. They reveal things about the namer and they also help to share or form the identity of the named.

I remember Kara and I had a book of baby names back in the day and we really took some time to discuss various names for each of our daughters. We consistently seemed to have more trouble picking boy’s names, for whatever reason. So perhaps it was God’s grace and providence that we were blessed with only daughters from the Lord. And what a blessing each of them are. I thank God for each of you. Leah. Anna. Kayla. Mya. You are precious and a blessing from God.

But again, names have meaning. Names carry significance. Our names can become part of our identity.

I remember when I was a child I went to a church service with one of my Grandmothers and they were talking about someone’s name getting changed in the Bible. I do not remember if it was Abrham to Abraham or how Saul became more known as Paul or what, but I remember that my Grandmother said after service that “I hope my name doesn’t get changed. I like my name.”

So names matter. **And of course, the most important name we share together – the Name of Christian, which means little Christlike one.**

**And this importance on names is not only true for us as people, but also for God as well.** In the Scriptures God has many names. Each of the names reveals something about who God is. Father; God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Adonai (My Lord); El Shaddai (God Almighty) Lahai Roi (The God who sees me); Jehovah Jireh (God my provider); and we would go on and on and on. It’s kind of like a beautiful diamond. However you turn it, you see more beauty in that diamond. And the different names of God reveal different aspects of His beauty and goodness and grace and love.

But back in the Book of Exodus there is a very famous encounter that takes place in chapter 3 between Moses and God. This is when Moses meets God for the first time. Do you remember the story? There was this burning bush that miraculously does not get consumed by the flames.

And Moses approaches the bush and out of this bush the Lord reveals Himself to Him. And during this amazing encounter, God gives Moses a mission - to Go to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let my people go.

But in the midst of this amazing conversation between God and Moses, Moses asks God “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to the, ‘The God of your fathers has set me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

God then says to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I Am has sent me to you.’”

And God also says to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob – has sent me to you.’

Of all the names that God could have chosen to be how He was to be known, God chose “I Am.”

The Name “I Am” – yod, hey, vav, hey – 4 letters. This put together became Yahweh. It wasn’t until I was in seminary that this was explained to me and I was like wow! The name The LORD or Yahweh means “I Am.”

And interestingly, whenever we have the word LORD, all in capital letters, in the Bible, it is the proper name of Yahweh or “I Am” that is being given.

God was telling Moses that I want you to know me and to have Israel and Egypt know me as “I AM.”

The living God was making it very clear that it was He alone that simply is. He is always existed and He alone is to be worshipped. Certainly, the gods of Egypt were not to be worshipped. Only Yahweh. Only “the I Am.” The God simply is, is to be worshiped.

Fast forward about 1400 years or so and we come to the time where Jesus comes to earth from heaven. Jesus is in the middle of His ministry. He had fed the 5,000 and had performed many miracles.

And Jesus had begun to make very high claims about Himself, including “I Am the Light of the world, found in the same chapter as the passage we will be looking at today.

And people are beginning to get their feathers ruffled by Jesus’ claims to be the Son of God and the One who can set them free from the slavery of sin. And as we arrive at our passage, they are about to call Jesus a racial slur and even demon-possessed? Things were definitely escalating.

Let us turn now to John 8:48-59.

**48The Jews answered him, “Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?”**

**49“I am not possessed by a demon,” said Jesus, “but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. 50I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. 51Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death.”**

**52At this they exclaimed, “Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. 53Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?”**

**54Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. 55Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. 56Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”**

**57“You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”**

**58“Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” 59At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.**

This is one profound conversation. Not a very civil conversation, with all the accusations they were hurling at Jesus, but profound nonetheless.

In fact, these accusers are actually trying to smear Jesus with what would have been considered a racial slur at that time. Jews and Samaritans had a long history of not liking each other and they are calling Jesus a Samaritan. But if that was not enough, they even call him demon-possessed. Not a good thing to say to deity.

Buy Jesu does not back down. First, in verse 51, Jesus says “**Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never taste death?”**

But those that were arguing with Jesus did not understand. They thought Jesus was speaking of physical death. But He was not. He was speaking about spiritual death --- which is eternal life separated from God. This type of existence is truly death.

To receive Jesus is to move from death to life.

But again, Jesus’ combatants were only thinking in the natural. They knew that godly Abraham and the godly prophets had all died in the natural. Is Jesus saying that He is greater than them because He is claiming that those who believe in Him will never die?

But Jesus does not back down. He knew who He was and He was only speaking truth.

And then Jesus makes this profound statement in verse 56, saying **“Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”**

What does that mean? How did Abraham see Jesus’ day? Scholars debate this. At the very least, it means that Abrham knew that God’s promise to Him was that through His seed all nations would be blessed. Abraham believed that this promise of God would be fulfilled. As God was faithful to provide Isaac, Abraham knew God would be faithful to bless all the nations through his descendants as well.

But additionally, I believe that Abraham saw the pre-incarnate Jesus several times. We read about Abraham seeing the LORD, in dreams, in visions, and even physical encounters, such as Abraham’s long conversation with the LORD about what was to happen to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

All this is to say that Abrham would have known that it would only be by the LORD Himself that this blessing of the nations would eventually come to pass. He rejoiced at what the LORD would do to bring about this blessing of the nations.

**And here, in Jesus Christ, the LORD, Yahweh, the “I Am,” has come. And He came to bring the nations to God through Himself. Amazing, isn’t it?**

Again, those speaking with Jesus did not understand. And they say “You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham!”

And this leads to our final “I Am” saying of Jesus. And I saved this as the last “I Am” saying of Jesus for us to highlight in this sermon series, because in some ways I feel that it is actually the most important. All the other “I Am” sayings focus more on things Jesus *does*, but this “I Am” saying really focuses on how Jesus *is.*

Jesus says **“Very truly I tell you, before Abrham was born, I Am!”**

The reaction in picking up stones to attempt to stone him reveals they say saw Jesus’ words as blasphemy. The man is claiming to be God, they thought.

And in fact, that is exactly what Jesus was doing. But it wasn’t blasphemy, because it was true. Jesus was God.

Truly, if Jesus just wanted to say that He was older than Abrham, He could have said “before Abraham was born, I was.” But instead, he says “before Abraham was born, I am.”

Jesus is identifying Himself as the “I Am.” Jesus is saying that He is Yahweh or One with Yahweh.

Friends, as we think about this final “I Am” saying of Jesus, what is the big takeaway for us today?

**And it is simply to remember that Jesus is God just as the Father and the Holy Spirit are God. And we are to obey His Word just as we seek to obey God the Father and the Holy Spirit.**

And when we do this, we will never see and taste death. While our physical bodies give out is a reality, that physical death is not true death. So we will never see and taste death if we live for Jesus. We have passed from spiritual death to spiritual life in Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God!

And He not only was, He has always been and He is today. Just as He was present as the “I Am” to Moses. He is the “I Am” to you today. He is the bottom line. It is only His opinion that really matters.

He owns us. He is our Creator. We are His. We are to live for Him.

 **Jesus is the “I Am.” Jesus is Yahweh as much as God the Father is Yahweh**.

It is so amazing to think that the God who made all of us and who made everything, that this God came to earth and lived among us as a human being in the Person of Jesus Christ.

And of course, Jesus didn’t come to force people to worship Him, He came to serve and to offer His life as an offering for our sins

**And because Jesus is “I Am,” because He simply is, we are to live our daily lives with Him as the foundation of everything**. Everything other than our Triune God is created, but the “I Am” is the Creator.

**Invite the “I Am” to be with you today**. He is not the “I was” or the “I will be,” He is the “I Am.” God wants us to live all of our present moments for Him.

In what ways do you especially need to know the “I Am” today? Invite Him to come and be present in a strong way in that situation and circumstance.

Resources:

D.A. Carson – Commentary on The Gospel of John

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Yahweh>

[www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com)