

## *For His Name's Sake*

Psalm 23:3

November 28, 2022

Please open your Bibles today to Psalm 23. I know I just preached on this not long ago. Don't worry, it's not a rehash although it does remind me of the preacher who preached the same sermon four Sundays in a row...

We are going to leave the Kings of Israel and Judah for now and may revisit them at some point, but today we want to go in a different direction. To get us started, I want you to ask you a question. What's in a Name? Of course you can do an internet search and find out what your name means, that's not hard. George means farmer in English and so does Bowers in German. So my name literally means farmer farmer. But that doesn't tell you much about me. My name carries my reputation from having been involved in FFA as a student, later as a teacher, and now as a pastor. It includes my interests and hobbies as well as my shortcomings and failures. When someone says **your** name, it carries with it a lot of unspoken information about you and your reputation.

The Bowers name carries the reputation of my father and grandfather. People not only ask me if my dad was the taxidermist, but even if my granddad ran the B & B market. Which he did. And Granddaddy Beecher's been dead for over 50 years. The Bowers name also connects me with my brothers and son and now their families. It even associates me with other Bowers' in our area to whom I am either not related or not closely. Even if a Bowers in another state does something either very good or very bad, others may connect him to me, even if we're not related at all. All who bear the Bowers name share the responsibility of upholding it well. Some do a better job of it than others.

But I say all that to help us think about another name today. **The** Name. The Holy Name of God. We want to begin with just one of the phrases in Psalm 23 and use it as our jumping off point. The part we want to examine is in verse 3. Repeat after me. He leads me... in paths of righteousness... for His name's sake.

As we mentioned when I preached on this some weeks ago, too often we recite this well-known passage without any thought about what we're saying, kind of like we can do with the Lord's Prayer if we're not intentional about it. Even when we are, we often don't consider the part we're going to examine today. Yes, we may talk about paths of righteousness. Right paths. Pathways of doing the right thing. We did that a few weeks ago. But why? For HIS name's sake. Not ours. Not for our own benefit, although His righteous paths do benefit us.

Far too often, we concentrate on what's in it for me. Sadly, that's part of the culture we have been shaped by, a culture that is very self-centered and where God is very absent. But notice David's desire to walk in purity is for God's name sake. What does that mean? It means that David's actions represented God. God entrusted His reputation to David and it got a bit tarnished. What David did reflected on his God. For good or ill, many people form their opinion of God based on how we live and the paths we follow. When we do what's right and holy we uphold God's reputation. And when we sin, we defame it.

God cares about His Name! Because it represents Him! In Ps 138:2 we are told that God has exalted His Name and His Word above all things. I wish that we were as concerned about God's Name and His Word as He is! If we're His people, we should be! We're all very familiar with the commandment not to take God's Name in vain. We normally understand that to mean not to use it as profanity. I tell the BLAST children we should never say God's name unless we're talking to Him or about Him. How would you feel if someone used your name as a byword. In Leviticus 24, a person blasphemed God's name and they stoned him to death. God told Moses, "Anyone who blasphemes the name of the Lord must be put to death." God cares about His Name because it carries His reputation.

The Jews were so careful about not misusing God's Name that they stopped using it altogether. They even forgot how to pronounce it. Since their written language didn't include vowels, they only wrote consonants and they even replaced the ones for God's Name with Adonai, meaning the Lord so as not to profane His real name. When they attempted to put vowels back in many years later, they thought it was pronounced Jehovah, but most scholars now believe it was Yahweh. Of course in English, we normally just say God.

But there's so much more to not profaning God's Name than just using it as a byword. God's Name involves His reputation. How He is known. What others think of Him when they hear His Name. And although the Jews were careful not to verbally take God's name in vain, they profaned it very much. Every time they disobeyed Him, they profaned His Name. Every time they ignored, rejected, or violated His Word, they profaned His Name. They brought dishonor to His reputation. Today, when we obey God, we honor His Name and when we disobey Him, we bring dishonor and disgrace to His Name and to His reputation.

Originally, God chose one family, the family of Abraham to give **His** name and His reputation to. The Israelites were it. If the Egyptians misbehaved, it was no reflection on God for they weren't called by His Name. When the Moabites sacrificed their children to Molech, it didn't taint God's name any, they weren't His people. But when the Israelites did any of this, it did matter to God because they were His people. They carried **His** Name and **His** fame. Micah told the Israelites (4:5) "All the

nations may walk in the name of their gods; we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.”

Remember when we told our parents, “Everyone else is doing it?” And their answer was what? You’re not everyone else’s child. You’re my child. You represent this household. I’m not responsible for their behavior but I am for yours! Remember who you are! That’s what God repeatedly told the Israelites. The name of Yahweh meant something and in Deut 28:10, He told them, “Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they will fear you.” God cared about how the Israelites represented His name.

Different times when they disobeyed, God was ready to destroy them except for His name. He knew that if other nations saw the Israelites perish, they would think that He couldn’t take care of them. In Ezekiel 20:13-14 He told them, “Yet the people of Israel rebelled against me in the desert. They did not follow my decrees but rejected my laws ... So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and destroy them in the desert. 14 But for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out.” If God gets a bad reputation, who wants to follow Him? If a product causes a problem, it affects the whole company. Passages in Isaiah and elsewhere reflect the same. God would have cut them off except that what happened to them would be a reflection on Him so He spared them for His own name’s sake, not theirs. In Ps 106:7-8 we are told, “When our fathers were in Egypt, they gave no thought to your miracles; they did not remember your many kindnesses, and they rebelled by ... the Red Sea. 8 Yet he saved them for his name's sake, to make his mighty power known.” Which is why we should make our appeals to Him for His Name’s sake. Not because of our own righteousness. Ps 109:21 But you, O Sovereign Lord, deal well with me for your name's sake and Ps 79:9 deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake. Not because we deserve it.

God’s Name represents His power. When David faced Goliath, he said in 1 Sam 17:45 ... “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty...” Ps 124:8 tells us, “Our help is in the **name** of the Lord,” and Ps 118:10 declares, “All the nations surrounded me, but in the name of the Lord I cut them off.” And when Jesus prayed for us in John 17, He said, “(11) Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name.” God’s Name is powerful!

Speaking of Jesus, what did they say when he arrived in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, besides Hosanna? Blessed is He who comes what? In the Name of the Lord. In His character. In His line. To do His work. And Jesus did. Jesus represented His Father’s Name perfectly for He and the Father are one. Part of the great sin of the people was that they rejected the One who bore God’s Name.

After He died and rose again, those who followed Him became known by His Name. Everything they did, they did in His name. They baptized in His Name, as He commanded. They healed and cast out demons in His Name, not their own. They prayed in His Name. And they died in His Name. All that they did, they did for Him, and for His Name's sake. They wanted Jesus' reputation and that of His Father to be well represented, well respected. In Acts 4:10 they explained how they had healed the crippled man by saying, "... It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed." Not in the name of Peter or John, nor in the name of the church. But in the name of Jesus. After being released, Acts 5:41 says, "The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name." The Name. The precious Name. the Holy Name. Which represents His character and His reputation.

Today, if you've accepted Jesus as your Savior, you've been adopted into God's forever family and **you** now bear His name. **You** are identified and associated with Him. And He with you. He gave **us** His Name and took **us** into His family. He has entrusted **us** with His Name and His reputation. What was He thinking? When we claim to be a Christian, we represent Christ with every step whether in the paths of righteousness or not. Lead me in paths of righteousness for Your Name's sake but don't make it difficult. Don't let the path get steep. Don't let there be thorns. Let it be all unicorns and rainbows. Sometimes the paths of righteousness are anything but. But our obedience in following Him impacts His Name's reputation before others. How are we doing representing His Name? Is this even on our radar? As I mentioned previously, our culture has conditioned us to be so very self-centered. So for whose sake do we do what we do? For our sake or for His Name's sake? Col 3:17 tells those who follow Jesus, "... whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus," In His character, His power, and for His glory.

How we act at work, at school, on the ballfield, on the road all reflects on His Name. When Christians get married it is to be for His Name's sake. When we abuse or dishonor our spouse, we also dishonor God in whose name we were wed. Part of God's reputation rests on the marriages of believers. Sadly, we often never consider that when we treat each other harshly or worse.

How we behave in His church reflects on God's name. When we disregard His teachings and follow our own ideas of what is right or wrong, we depart from His paths of righteousness and His name's sake suffers sorely. Today, God is being defamed by many who claim to follow Him as they abandon His clear teachings regarding sexuality. But also regarding how we are to love one another and even love our enemies. When we fail to do any of this, it's not just about us, it's about Jesus, for we are His Name's sake!

When we give our offering, it is for His Name's sake. Or not. When we sing and make music to the Lord, it's for His Name's sake. When we teach or participate in a Sunday School Class, it's for His Name's sake. Which is why all this should be our best. A quote in your December newsletter by S. M. Hutchens says, "Incompetence in God's name is a form of blasphemy. If you can't do things right, take credit for it yourself and don't bring Him into it." How are we doing with God's Name? How are we doing at representing Him?

When I was an FFA Advisor, we cared about how our members behaved when we went to an activity. They were wearing the blue jacket that associated them with the FFA which has had a good name and we wanted to make sure that continued. That our students were polite, honest, and respectful. But their jacket also said Central and that tied them very closely to me and the other advisor. What they did reflected on us. If you were going to get into trouble at least take your jacket off! If you don't, you connect me and every member of the organization to your actions. There used to be a code of conduct members were expected to follow when wearing the jacket. I guess it's still in place. I hope so. When they wear the jacket, they bore the FFA name, and the reputation of the chapter, its members and its advisors. And all who claim to be Christians bear the name and reputation of Jesus and of His Church. Companies are very concerned about branding and occasionally some have to rebrand to completely start over.

And His name is above everyone else's. Phil 2:9 tells us, "... God exalted [Jesus] to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." We can wait and do it then when it's too late to be saved, or you can do it today while you still can be.

We've all failed at representing the Names of both God the Father and Christ His Son. We've failed miserably time and time again. And we need the saving power of Jesus' Name. Joel said, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved!" Have you called on Jesus Name? In John 3:18, Jesus said, "Whoever believes in [God's Son] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the **name** of God's one and only Son." We are already lost. That is our default setting after the Fall in Eden.

When I was just learning to drive I was going through Woodstock one evening and went through a yellow light there at the courthouse. It wasn't long till I saw red lights behind me and the officer pulled me over there about North Street. He took me into his cruiser (in my FFA jacket no less) and told me how I shouldn't run red lights. I tried to tell him it wasn't but to no avail. He wrote me a ticket and I was thinking how this would go with dad. Just before he gave it to me, he asked who was in the car with me. When I told him it was my brother Dale, his whole demeanor changed. "That's

Dale?” Yes. Most all the police officers knew Dale because he was in the fire department at the time. “If I tear this ticket up, will you remember what to do at a red light?” Yes sir. Dale’s name saved me some money and a lot of embarrassment. Mom and Dad still found out, but I didn’t get the ticket. But Dale’s name won’t do me any good at judgment.

After Peter and John healed the cripple, they said, “Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” There is saving power in Jesus Name! Power to save from sin, death, hell, and the grave! And no other name can do that! Call on His Name for your salvation today and if you have represent His Name well!