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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“INTO THE NAME”

Acts 19:4-7

- ☑ **“What’s in a name? That which we call a rose By any other name would smell as sweet.”**

Juliet speaks these lines in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. She is saying, in effect, that names are arbitrarily assigned and have no correlation to the things they designate, hence they are meaningless.

? This *might* be true of roses. But is it true of people?

¿ **“What’s in a name?”**

☆ Our last names connect us to preceding generations. In some instances, they identify our family’s ethnic heritage, their geographic starting place, and our ancestors’ circumstances.

☑ Take *Sheehan*. The Sheehan clan originated in County Clare on the west coast of Ireland before moving southwards to Cork, Kerry, and Limerick counties.

Sheehan is the Anglicized form of an Old Gaelic name I cannot pronounce (O Siodhachain). It means “peaceful” or “gentle.”

¿ **“What’s in a name?”**

☆ Our given names speak volumes about our parents’ ethnicity, family traditions, relationships, convictions, preferences, and cultural milieu. Not only so, nearly every one has intrinsic meaning.

☑ {Acts 17:5-7} *Jason* is the English form of the Greek Ἰάσων [Iasōn], which means “healer.” *Jason* is most

famous as a mythological hero; but there is also a *Jason* in the New Testament. He lived in Thessalonica and courageously gave shelter to Paul and Silas when a mob of rioters chased them.

☑ {Rev 12:7-9} *Michael* is a Hebrew name from the Old Testament. It literally means “Who is like God?” (The implied answer being: “No one.”) Michael is the archangel who commands the angel armies, and in the book of Revelation he drives Satan out of heaven.

¿ **“What’s in a name?”**

Names are critically important in Holy Baptism. They certainly have been this morning.

★ First, there is no generic infant involved. No! We have baptized *Jason Michael Sheehan*, a singular individual with his own name.

If there is another person called Jason Michael Sheehan, he carries the name differently. As he grows, this one will imbue it with his distinct identity.

★ Second, in keeping with Christ’s command in Mt 28:18-20, we have baptized Jason **“in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”**

{Is 55:11} This phrase is not a lifeless collection of syllables! It **“is God-breathed,” “alive and active,”** and bursting with power.

{Is 55:11} The Lord himself has promised,

My word that goes out from my mouth:

...will not return to me empty,

but will accomplish what I desire

and achieve the purpose for which I sent

it.

¿ **“What’s in a name?”** When it is the name of the Living God, it has the power of love, light, and life in it.

□ Please turn with me to Acts 19:1-7.

■ In verses 1-3 the apostle Paul arrives in Ephesus. He finds some disciples and asks them, **“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”**

“No,” they answer. **“We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”**

“What baptism did you receive?” Paul asks.

“John’s baptism,” they reply.

■ In verses 4-6 Paul explains that John’s baptism

⁴ **“was [one] of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.”** ⁵ **On hearing this, they [are] baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.** ⁶ **When Paul places] his hands on them, the Holy Spirit [comes] on them, and they [speak] in tongues and [prophecy].**

{Acts 3:19; 17:30; Lk 24:47} We are not to look down our nose at John’s baptism **“of repentance.”** Scripture calls us to **“Repent... and turn to God, so [our] sins may be wiped out.”** God **“commands all people everywhere to repent.”** The Risen Christ told his followers that **“repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations.”**

📖 Repentance is more than feeling sorry for what we have done. It is confessing our sin, asking God to forgive us on the basis of his mercy, rejecting our sin, and seeking to do what is good instead.

Becky and family, part of your commitment to Christian childrearing is teaching and modeling repentance to Jason. This is imperative.

However, repentance is not enough, in and of itself. Here is why: to stop at repentance, to repent and go no further, is to take on all the responsibility for doing right and changing ourselves. It is to rely entirely on our own resources to overcome the frailty, fallenness, and brokenness in and around us.

The consequences of doing so are disastrous. Either we achieve some measure of “goodness,” it goes to our head, and we fall prey to the deadly sins of pride and self-righteousness; or we screw up big time, give in to failure, and get eaten alive by soul-crushing guilt and shame.

Repentance is a starting point, not the finish line. It is a means, not the end.

{II Co 5:17ff} The true end, the real objective, is reconciliation to our Creator, that we might become a **“new creation.”**

{I Jn 3:2} It is reconciliation to the Father, that we might become **“children of God.”**

{I Jn 4:8; Mk 12:30-31} It is reconciliation to God, who **“is love,”** that we might love the Lord with all our being, and love our neighbors as ourselves.

{Jas 2:5} It is reconciliation to God the King, that we might **“inherit the kingdom he promised.”**

{Rev 1:6} It is reconciliation to God the Holy One, that we might be **“priests to serve”** him in holiness.

{II Co 5:16-20} It is reconciliation to God the Reconciler, that we might be his messengers **“of reconciliation.”**

Becky and family, part of your commitment to Christian childrearing is teaching and modeling this kind of reconciliation to Jason. This is indispensable.

■ Notice that verse 5 uses relational language. The Ephesian disciples are **“baptized *into* the name of the Lord Jesus.”**

This is a description not of procedure, but of effect. As a result of being baptized **“in the name of the Father, ...Son, and ...Holy Spirit”** they are initiated **“into the name of the Lord Jesus.”**

In Scripture, **“the name of the Lord,” “the name of God,”** and **“the Name”** (with an uppercase “N”) function as **“summary [statements] of his nature and of how he has revealed himself...; [they are] virtually synonymous with the word ‘God’ itself.”** The same is true of his particular names and titles.

So to be **“baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus”** is to be **“baptized into”** Christ himself. It is to be united with Messiah. It is to be so intimately bonded with him that our lives are wrapped up in his.

‽ How does this happen? It is not brought about by applying water. It is not achieved by reciting the pastoral words and parental promises. It is accomplished by the coming of the Holy Spirit.

■ Verse 6: **“When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them.”** This is the momentous

impact of baptism! It opens the door for us to enter into covenant relationship with God the Father through the

reconciling ministry of the Son and the transforming presence of the Holy Spirit.

As he matures, Jason will become personally accountable. He will receive reconciliation, or not.

Nevertheless, this baptism is valid. There is a great deal to say about this, but I will limit myself to two points.

✈ First, baptism is about God, not about us. This is equally true for infants and confessing believers alike.

{Jn 15:16} Baptism is a sign and seal, not that we have chosen God, but that God has chosen us. Christ Jesus speaks only what his Father tells him, and he says: **“You did not choose me... I chose you.”**

{II Co 5:18; Heb 9:15, 12} Baptism is a sign and seal, not that we have reconciled ourselves to God, but that God has **“reconciled us to himself through”** his Son. Christ **“is the mediator of [the] new covenant,”** not us.

{Jn 3:7} Baptism is a sign and seal, not that we are regenerating ourselves, but that the Holy Spirit is regenerating us. **“Flesh gives birth to flesh, but”** it is **“the Spirit”** who **“gives birth to Spirit.”**

{Eph 2:8} **“For It is by grace”** that we are **“saved, through faith – and this”** – this faith as much as this grace! – **“is not from [ourselves], it is the gift of God.”** Yes, faith is the catalyst by which the Lord’s work on our behalf is activated in our lives; yet we

cannot take credit for “our” belief and trust in the Lord. Even that is a gift!

Baptism is about God. It is not about us.

✎ Second, the sequence of baptism and the Holy Spirit’s coming is unimportant, as is the time between them.

In today’s text the Spirit is given at baptism. But sometimes the Spirit is given prior to baptism, as in Acts 10:46-47.

At other times the Spirit is sent well after the baptism. For example, in Acts 8:15-17 we read that though Philip baptized some Samaritan believers “**into the name of the Lord Jesus,**” they did receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John visited them. This was a matter of days at least, and possibly weeks.

There is no statute of limitations on the effects of baptism. It has no expiration date. The Spirit does as he pleases, in whom he pleases, when he pleases.

The order of baptism and the Spirit’s coming is unimportant. So is the duration of time between them.

All the same, the sacrament is not magic. It does not automatically bear fruit, not even when the recipient is a professing adult.

Almighty God is able to do anything he wants. Still, it appears that, by and large, he prefers to accomplish his purposes by working through people.

What we do matters for Jason. In the divine economy our character, conduct, and witness might be

what elevate his baptism from a formal ceremony to a life-changing initiation “**into the name of the Lord Jesus.**”

So it is of utmost importance that we follow through on the promises we have made. We won’t do it perfectly; yet, with the presence of God’s Spirit in and among us, we can do it faithfully and fruitfully.

This morning we have baptized Jason Michael Sheehan “**in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**” And we hope and pray that he is also being initiated “**into the name of the Lord Jesus.**”

? “**What’s in a name?**” Everything that matters, when it is the name of God.