

I want to invite you to explore with me during the next six weeks the names of God. In both the OT and the NT Testament the word for “name” is related to the word “to know.” By looking at the names by which God is known, we can more fully come to know our God.

God is called by 63 unique names in the Bible. We are only going to look at 15. Each week, thanks to a talented and servant-hearted group, we will have a new banner hanging in front of us with a name of God. The first banner will appear this Sunday morning.

Why a Sermon Series on the names of God? Because it is Lent, and Lent is the time when we are drawn closer to God. There is something about the journey to Jerusalem – the arrest and the trial and the suffering and death – the adversity that Jesus suffered – that draws us closer to this one who loves us so much.

In Isaiah God says, *“I am the LORD; that is my name!”* [Isaiah 42:8] Then a few verses later God says, *“I have called you by name; you are mine.”* [Isaiah 43:1] Knowing and treasuring the name of someone draws us into a deeper relationship.

Some foundation statements for this Sermon Series on God’s Names:

- **These names identify God.**

In OT times there were many false god’s who were supposedly rulers of trees or rocks or the rains or the crops. The names of God identify God.

The names tell us that God is not just a material god. He is God of our whole life. His names identify him as this one who cares if we are thirsty for a cup of water or if we are thirsty for a new life – he is God of our entire well-being.

- **These names reveal God’s characteristics.**

Imagine that you had to describe God to someone. How would you describe your God? Certainly it would not be in terms of clothing: You wouldn’t say, “My God wears a white robe and carrying a shepherd’s staff.”

Once we come to know God deeply we describe God by qualities: “His eyes flashed with holiness! His hands were calloused and soft as he lifted me up! His words! They gave me hope!” In the names we see the character of God.

- **These names were given to help people in times of great need.**

Place your hand over your hearts for a moment this evening. Your heart has been very faithful to you during the years of your life. If your heart is beating at 60 beats per minute, that faithful organ will do its thing over 86,000 times just on this one day.

But sometimes your heart is stressed. Things don't go as planned, life is rudely interrupted, doors are closed or roads are dead ended.

And the heart hurts. This past week two families have hurting hearts: the families of Hulda Peck and Greta Shawstad. Maybe your hearts hurt for them tonight: I can tell you that mine and Vicki's do.

Or maybe your heart hurts a little or a lot tonight for different reasons. And not only your physical heart, but your spiritual heart is hurting as well.

We will see that the names of God were often given to people whose hearts were troubled or broken or weary. And when God's name was given there was a new vitality given as well – the heart sometimes skipped a beat in joy.

As we go through these Names of God during Lent this year, I pray that these things will be true for you:

- That your true joy will increase.

The Bible says: *“Let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them sing joyful praises forever. Spread your protection over them, that all who love your name may be filled with joy.”* [Psalm 5:11]

- That your hope will grow.

The Bible says: *"I will praise you forever, O God, for what you have done. I will trust in your good name in the presence of your faithful people."* [Psalm 52:9]

- That you will receive help.

The Bible says: *"Our help is from the LORD, who made heaven and earth."* [Psalm 124:8]

Everyone needs help. When I was little I needed someone to tie my shoes for me. When I am old I will probably again need someone to tie my shoes for me. And in the years in between I need someone to help untie the knots of my life.

I resonate with the story of the little boy who missed his bus because his shoe was in a knot. He couldn't get the knot undone.

The little boy sits on the sidewalk crying. A man stoops down and says, "How can I help you?" The little boy looks up and says, "Do you untie knots?"

Sometimes that is our most pressing need. Sin – death – the power of the Devil: these things are great at tying knots.

Lent is here – the season when we see again and again how God unties knots. I invite you on the journey: Sunday after Sunday and Wednesday after Wednesday. Come on the journey and hear the names of God – the God who loves you very much and knows your name. Amen.