

God-Given Name

Eyes to See Your Significance

March 12, 2023

Today we're talking about coming to be known by our most intimate name.

With that said: **What's your God-given name?** Don't answer just yet.

In regard to a very *specific* and *significant miracle*, which we'll get to in a moment, Jesus said:



"[The Shepherd] calls his own sheep by name and ... I am the *Good Shepherd*; I know My sheep and My sheep know Me" – John 10:3, 14 NIV



The first time I met Matt Damon was in this crowded hotel room in LA; and as I *nervously* made my way to *introduce* myself, he suddenly *sees* me and says, "Bruce! Where's Ken?!" Talk about a *shock!* They'd flown us to LA, in the top 10 of a film-making competition created by Matt, Ben, and Miramax. So, Matt *glances* around the room, *spots* Ken, *calls* him over, and *tells* us how excited *he* is to meet *us*, and kind of *giggles* about how, when we *entered* the *lobby*, everyone got a *notice* in their *earpiece* that "Ken and Bruce are *in* the building." It's weird, but having someone so well-known, *know your name*, brings a *strange sense of secular significance*.



So, if you have a tendency to feel *insignificant*, *irrelevant*, or somehow *spiritually marginalized*, keep in mind that **the Creator and sustainer of eternal time, space, and dimension, knows your name!** And He's *genuinely excited* to see you *face to face*. Just imagine *His greeting* as you enter *His presence!* I can *hear* it now: "Bruce! Where's Ken?!"

Now, once upon a time – in real life, 2,000 years ago – a Jewish baby boy was born *blind*. **He was told he was cursed by God;** and as an adult, he resorted to begging. And yet, **he leaned into God, and learned His Word, and stored it up in his heart,** all the while no-doubt *struggling* with his seeming insignificance, and **wondering why a good God would overlook him.** How could he know that God had actually *chosen* him and *prepared* him to play a *pivotal* role in the *Gospel* regarding the *foremost proof* of Jesus' *claims* to be the *Christ* – **the one Messiah-establishing miracle, according to Scripture: opening blind eyes.** (Is 29:18, 35:5) Let's start with the *punchline*.

Now it was a *Sabbath* day when Jesus *made* the *clay* and *opened* his eyes. – John 9:14 RSV



And believe it or not, you could be *stoned* for making *mud* or *clay* on the *Sabbath*. (Ex 35:2) Even if it was to obey the greater commandment to love. *Nobody* could work *during* the *day*; but that *night* the market came to *life*. You need to *know* this to get *Jesus' Sabbath word-play*, just before He *heals* this man, *while* on the *run* from being *stoned*.

They picked up stones to stone Him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds. [And] As He went along, He saw a man [known to be] blind from birth. [And He stopped and stared, and] His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” [The religious rulers taught you could sin in the womb, to explain how you could come out cursed ... legalism at its finest!] “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. [Here’s the word-play] As long as it is day, we must do the work of Him who sent Me. [Sending out this guy on this day] Night is coming, when no one can work. [Just before He’s betrayed, tried, and crucified, Scripture says: “It was night”. (In 13:30) But] While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” – John 8:59-9:5 NIV

[As opposed to all those] ... having their understanding darkened ... because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart – Ephesians 4:18 NKJ

These people come near to Me with their mouth ... but their hearts are far from Me. Their worship of Me is made up only of rules taught by men. ... [Woe to those] who do their work in darkness [of heart] and think, “Who sees us?” ... as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! ... Out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. ... and all who have an eye for evil will be cut down – Isaiah 29:13-20 NIV



[Now] When He had said these things, [to His disciples, and called to the blind beggar] He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing. – John 9:6-7 NKJ



To put it mildly! In 2004, sewer repairs led to the discovery of the one and only Pool of Siloam! This is the place where the blind man waded in and washed his eyes! Because this was the gathering place for Jews to ritually cleanse before going up to the Temple over a quarter-mile away! Jesus bathed here when He was twelve! And guess what they found on the far end, there: the steps going up to the Temple! The entire quarter-mile length has now been excavated, though they’ve only uncovered 6’ of the 25’ width of the steps. Notice how they’re not only set askew, but have differing depths. This was done to keep people from rushing, and to remind ‘em to bow their heads as they approached the Temple. But it sure made it tough for a blind man, called near the Temple and sent to make his way to that pool.



Nothing about this is ADA approved! But the mud turns the man into an attention-grabbing, Sabbath-violating megaphone as he stumbles down that long flight of steps. Cuz no one’ll help him for fear of excommunication. So imagine the commotion of this ever-growing Jesus-made-parade of the blind (literally) leading the blind (spiritually), drawing everyone along this 25’ wide, precarious quarter-mile descent, to see if God’s gonna reveal the Messiah by curing the man He supposedly cursed from birth, whose eyes are now caked with clay that’s supposedly part earth and part Potter! Know what’s not a Sabbath violation? Yelling out: “Short step! Short step! Long step!” And then, the pool. And then, they see: the Messiah-proving miracle!

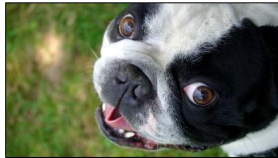




But, while blindly descending those steps alone, what's going through his mind? "God *finally* shows up ... just to rub mud on my face and leave me tripping down a treacherous religious stairway?" Now, **he wasn't abandoned by God, he was sent**, which, to be honest, can *feel* the same. Which is why **you need to know that He knows you by name**. So the next time you're sent *blindly groping* for answers, **know that you're part of a grand plan**; and **glorify God as you make your way along**. Cuz, *after* the pool, it only gets worse for this guy. And yet, his *countenance* is so **radically changed**, he has a hard time *convincing* his friends it's him.

But he himself insisted, "I am the man." "How then were your eyes opened?" they demanded. He replied, "The man they call *Jesus* made some *mud* and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see." "Where is this man?" they asked him. [Cuz they have to report the violation for fear of excommunication] "I don't know," he said. ["I was blind!"] [So] They brought [him] to the Pharisees ... [who] *also* asked him *how* he had received his sight. "He put *mud* on my eyes ... and I washed, and now I see." *Some* of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for He does *not* keep the Sabbath." [Cuz according to *religious hypocrisy, making mud is much worse than picking up stones to throw!*] But others [thought He was from God, and] asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" So they were [a house] divided. ... They sent for the man's parents. "Is this your son?" they asked. ... "We know *he* is our son ... and we know *he* was born blind. But *how* he can see *now*, or *who* opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask *him*." ... His parents said this because they were *afraid* of the Jews, [Jesus said, "You will be *betrayed* even by *parents* ... and you will be *hated* by *all* for My *name's sake*." (Lk 21:16-17)] for ... *anyone* who *acknowledged* that *Jesus* was the *Christ* would be put *out* of the *synagogue*. [Blind religion denies his parents the joy of their own son's sight!] ... A *second* time they summoned the man ... [and] said. "We *know* this man is a *sinner*." [Cuz He *made mud*] He replied, "Whether He is a sinner [for *making mud*] or *not*, I don't know. One thing I *do* know. I was *blind* [at the *time*] but *now* I see!" [This *beggar* is no *pushover*! But they couldn't hurl *stones* at *him*, so] ... they hurled *insults* at him and said ... "We know that *God* spoke to *Moses*, but as for *this* fellow, we don't even know where He comes from." [Being divided whether He's from *God* or the *devil* – even though He did the *undisputed Messiah-proving miracle*. And *this is moment* the un-blind man was *born* for, cuz he's *living proof*! And he *knows* God's *Word*! And as *every peer* pressures him to *denounce* *Jesus*, he *instead* *defends* Him!] The man answered, "Now *that is remarkable*! You don't *know* where *He* comes from, yet He *opened* my eyes. [Fulfilling God's promise to *Isaiah* (29:18, 35:2-5)] We *know* [from *Isaiah* (1:15); *Jeremiah* (11:11); *Ezekiel* (8:18); and *Mica* (3:4)] that *God* does not listen to *sinners*. He listens to the *godly* man who *does* His *will*. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. [Come on!] If this man were *not* from *God*, He could do *nothing*." To *this* they replied, "You were *steeped* in *sin* at *birth*; how dare you *lecture* us!" And they *threw* him *out*. [And when] *Jesus* *heard* that they had *thrown* him *out*, [He *sought* out His *brave little lamb*] and when He *found* him, [instead of *telling* him *He's* the One who *healed* him] He said, "Do you *believe* in the *Son* of *Man*?" [a name for God-the-Messiah, in *Daniel* 7:13-14] "Who is He, Sir?" the man asked. [Not "What is He?" but "Where is He?" as in, "*Point Him out*"] "Tell me so that I may believe in Him." *Jesus* said, "You [Mr. *Living Proof*] have *now* *seen* him; in fact, He is the one *speaking* with you." Then [recognizing His *voice*] the man said, "Lord, I *believe*," and he *worshiped* Him. – John 9:8-38 NIV

And *this* is when Jesus said, “I tell you the truth” ...



“The **watchman** [which is an OT name (Is 21:6) for prophets like *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Mica*] opens the gate for [the shepherd], and the sheep *listen to his voice*. [in His Word; and] He calls his own sheep by name and *leads them out* [of *vain, rules-based religion into a living relationship*] ... and his sheep follow him because they *know his voice*. [from His Word] ... I am the Good Shepherd; I *know My sheep* and My *sheep know Me* – John 10:3-4, 14 NIV

This is me at my Grandma-Mom’s house. All that’s missing, to complete the picture, is an empty carton of Pall-Malls ... and three somewhat hideous, flatulent bulldogs, that my grandma *loved, and cared for, and cooked for*, and named: *Lacy, Jo-Jo, and Tami*. And in Jesus’ day, **flocks were small and individually named, like pets**. But **their names corresponded to their traits**. Instead of Fluffy, Puffy, or Tami, it’d be a name like Stubborn, Timid, Feisty, or Dumdum. And **Jesus does the same with each of His sheep**. Cuz the Lord loves Him some *nicknames!* He called Simon, the *zealot*; Thomas, the *twin*; James and John, the *sons of thunder*; and Peter, the *rock ... and Satan*. (Mk 3:16-18, 8:33; Jn 21:2) The question is: **What’s your God-given name?** Grumpy? Happy? Dopey?

By the way, the next time you see Ben Affleck you can tell your friends he kind’a knows you; cuz, *here’s* a video where he’s kind’a *bragging* about our Ark! It’s one thing to know a *celebrity* knows your *flock*; it’s another *entirely* to know **our Creator knows you by your most personal pet name**. Whether it’s *Ol’ Faithful, or Crusty, or Cowardly, or Living Proof!* After calling himself the Good Shepherd – one of *His* many nicknames – Jesus went on to say:

My sheep listen to My voice ... and they follow Me. ... [And] Again the Jews picked up stones to stone Him, but Jesus said ... “For which of these [miracles] do you stone Me?” “We are not stoning You for any of these ... [but] because You, a mere Man, claim to be God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have *said* you are *gods*’? [Ps 82:6] ... He called them ‘gods,’ to whom the Word of God came – John 10:27-35 NIV

Well, good morning little *gods*. **Has the Word of God come to you – and into you?**

The Lord knows those who are His, and, everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness. – 2 Timothy 2:19 NAS

For the Lord God will ... call His servants by another name – Isaiah 65:15 NKJ

“No longer do I call you servants ... I have called you friends” – John 15:15 NKJ

And friends use special names. Which is why Jesus *still* asks each of us: “Who do you say I am?” (Lk 9:20) Because, **the Lord can’t be your Shepherd, till the Shepherd is your Lord**. And you *learn* to *listen* to His voice in His Word – which is **the one gift you open with your eyes**. Cuz *that’s* when He calls you *friend*. No matter how long you might have to blindly grope along.

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.