August 29

Happy Monday, everyone.

Sometimes when I walk our big dog early in the morning, a praise song will pop into my head. We’ll be walking along and suddenly, without notice, there it is. I like to think that it is the Lord blessing me through the work of the Holy Spirit as I walk along experiencing His revelation through the beauty of nature.

This morning the song that I found myself singing in my head was “What a Beautiful Name It Is.” Here’s the first verse:

“You were the Word at the beginning
One with God the Lord most high
Your hidden glory in creation
Now revealed in You our Christ.”

These lovely words call to mind the opening sentence of John’s Gospel. Recall that John and Jesus were close friends. John was there throughout Jesus’ life and was there at the crucifixion. They were such good friends that as He was dying, Jesus commended the care of His mother to John. Many years later, John would describe in words his life with Jesus. This is how he starts:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (1:1-3).

These are amazing, profound words, especially given that before being called as a disciple, John was a common fisherman. And yet here he is revealing the divine reality that Jesus, the man John knew so closely, was also God and was present with the Father and the Holy Spirit in eternity and at the moment of creation: “In the beginning.”

Here’s how it might have looked when John wrote these profound words:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5E3527LWwhA

My prayer for you today is this: that you experience the beautiful, holy name of Jesus. The Name above all names. The Name who one day will cause every knee to bow, and every tongue to confess, that He is Lord.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
August 30
Grace and peace to you this day.

Continuing today with the song that came into my head the other morning, “What a Beautiful Name It is,” here is the second verse:

“You didn’t want heaven without us
So Jesus You brought heaven down
My sin was great Your love was greater
What could separate us now?”

Think of it: Jesus so desires to spend eternity with us in Heaven that He brought Heaven to us because we could not bring ourselves to Heaven. And the way He did that is through His self-sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. This is how the apostle Paul describes it:

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The love of God, as expressed in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son is so deep, and so profound, that it overcomes sin and darkness and allows nothing to separate us from that love. Again, this is what the apostle Paul said:

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

God’s love bridges the inseparable. God’s love overcomes the impossible. God’s love shines the light of His glory into the darkest corner. And that love is found in the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus, who simply “didn’t want heaven without us.”

IHS,
Pastor Lou
August 31

Greetings, DGCC Family.

Here is the “bridge” from the song we’ve been looking at this week, “What a Beautiful Name It is:”

“Death could not hold You, the veil tore before You,
You silence the boast of sin and grave
The heavens are roaring the praise of Your glory
For You are raised to life again
You have no rival, You have no equal
Now and forever God You reign
Yours is the kingdom, Yours is the glory
Yours is the Name above all Names.”

Since the dawn of time, people have feared death. The ancient Greeks followed elaborate burial rituals, so they didn’t offend the gods lest they suffer eternal torment. Some Eastern religions believe in reincarnation, and what form you take in your next life depends on how “good” you were in your current life. The Hebrews believed that when you died, your spirit went to a place called sheol, which was a place of death and darkness. And, of course, atheists believe that when you die, life is truly over. You simply cease to exist.

Not so for those of us who have the Truth. Death is no longer to be feared. Death is no longer a mystery. The light of Jesus shines into the darkness of the tomb. This is what Jesus Himself said:

"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die" (John 11:25-26).

Not too long ago, someone said to me, “I’m not afraid of death, but I’m afraid of dying.” I think that is well-stated. For some, dying can be a long and difficult journey. It can be most difficult not only on the person in the final season of their life, but on their family and loved ones as well.

And while we often pray for healing, or maybe even a miracle, that prayer at times seems to go unanswered. To that, I have come to believe that while our healing may not take place in this life in order to prolong our days here, nonetheless, our prayer is, indeed, answered, and a profound healing and miracle truly does take place. And that miracle is this: when we close our eyes for the final time, we experience the grace, and the miracle, of eternal healing, eternal peace, and eternal life in the presence of the One who paid the price for us.

And so my prayer for you today is this: as you go through your earthly life, be assured that it is only the first chapter of a love story that has no end. A love story written from eternity by our God for His people.

IHS, Pastor Lou
September 1

Happy September everyone!

Here’s the chorus of our song of the week, “What a Beautiful Name It Is:”

“What a beautiful (wonderful, powerful) Name it is,
what a beautiful Name it is
The Name of Jesus Christ my King
What a beautiful Name it is, nothing compares to this
What a beautiful Name it is, the Name of Jesus.”

The name “Jesus” is actually derived from the Hebrew *Yeshua*, which means “to rescue” or “to deliver.” In English we would translate this name as “Joshua.”

In any case, many of us who have had children likely have spent considerable time and thought on what to name them. Neither Mary nor Joseph had that opportunity. Here is how Jesus received His beautiful, beautiful name:

“In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, ‘Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.’ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end’” (Luke 1:26-33).

The Father names the Son: “Rescuer.” “Deliverer.” “Son of the Most High.” “King Forever.” “Name Above All Names.”

What a beautiful name, indeed. The name of Jesus Christ, my Lord, and yours.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
September 2

Happy Friday, everyone!
Here’s your musical devotional for the week. Turn up the volume and enjoy.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQWFzMvcLE

IHS,
Pastor Lou