

More Than Just A Name: Jesus and the “I Am’s” (Part 1)

This morning our attention is still on Yeshua, the “Lord who is salvation”. And as we continue our series, **More Than Just a Name**, I invite you to look along with me at one of my favorite books in the Bible, the Gospel of John. If you have spent any amount of time studying the ministry of Jesus, you know that He often challenged His listeners as He taught in parables and used metaphorical language to relate common objects or concepts to Himself or to the Kingdom of God. In each of these moments, Jesus was revealing something important about Himself. He was either revealing His character, or His identity, or His eternal purpose, or He was simply expressing His deep love for humanity. Regardless of the reason, each occurrence invites us to trust Him, to follow Him, to enter a relationship with Him, and to experience an abundant life with Him. I don’t know about you this morning, but all those things sound great to me.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus makes some metaphorical statements which help us see that Jesus is **More Than Just a Name**. These powerful proclamations help us better understand who He is and help us see God’s purpose for Him. Let’s begin with chapter 6. **Read John 6:25-35**. Remember that the previous day was when Jesus used just a few loaves of bread to feed several thousand people, but as you see here, some of them were still questioning His identity and continue to request a sign from God proving who He was. Don’t you just love Jesus’ response? Look at verses **32-33** and **35-38**. With bread being a staple of the Jewish diet, Jesus wanted them to know that He was more than just a physical sustenance. He was spiritual sustenance. He was their life and all they needed to do was believe in Him. The message then is still the message today. Just as physical bread fulfills our physical need, Jesus offers eternal life and spiritual fulfillment for those who believe in Him.

Next, let’s look at chapter 8. Just after addressing the crowd of religious leaders who were accusing a woman of adultery and hoping to use her situation as a trap for Him, Jesus spoke the words found in verse 12. **Read John 8:12**. This interaction with the Pharisees is where we get the phrase, “let he who is without sin cast the first stone.” It was after all the woman’s accuser had left the scene that Jesus reminded them that he was the source of spiritual illumination. He was the source which shed light on the darkness of sin in their life. We need to be reminded that light displaces darkness. Where there is light, there is no darkness. Those who follow Jesus no longer need to live in darkness, nor live without hope, nor live in bondage to sin. Instead, those who follow Him walk in light, where His presence brings clarity, purpose, and hope.

Go now to chapter 10. In this chapter we find two of these powerful proclamations from Jesus. **Read John 10:1-15.** Have you ever read these verses and found yourself just like the people mentioned here that didn't understand everything Jesus was talking about? Even now, I need to read it a couple of times to grasp what's happening. Let me just explain it this way; First, Jesus refers to Himself as the "gate" or the "door". But what is He the doorway to? Jesus is teaching about genuine salvation by explaining that He is the only way to salvation. He is the only way to gain access to God. Throughout history, many people have tried to make this same claim. Many today make this claim, and until Jesus comes again, there will be many others in the future who try it as well. But rest assured, just as Jesus states here, He is the only true way to the Father. All the others are "thieves and robbers."

Next, Jesus refers to Himself as the caring and protective shepherd who constantly watches over his flock. This was a concept which would have been well known in their culture. Jesus knew this, which is most likely why He uses this metaphor in this moment. What do sheep want? Food, water, protection. It was the shepherd who worked tirelessly to provide these things for the flock. A good shepherd was one who would do anything for the sheep under his care, even if it meant giving his life. Here, Jesus speaks metaphorically, but also prophetically as He describes His purpose. He wanted the people to know that He came to lay down His life, for their life, so that they could live forever in God's kingdom, where they would forever be protected and spiritually fed and watered. Do you believe Jesus is your good shepherd today? Do you trust Him for all your provisions? King David understood what Jesus was teaching when He said, "The Lord is my shepherd." As members of the flock, we must trust and follow their shepherd. We must follow and trust Jesus not only for our salvation but also for our safety, our provisions and for the restoration of our souls.