

Connect & Reflect

week of 1/13/19

SERMON SUMMARY

Reach Up and Call on His Name

Sheep are some of the dumbest, most helpless animals on the planet. They have to be led to food, water, a place to sleep, etc. One of the most interesting things about them is that if they fall down, they cannot get back up on their own. A shepherd has to come and “restore” them (Psalm 23:3) with the crook of his staff. It is this dumb, weak animal that the biblical authors often use to describe humans. We are sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36). The one thing sheep do having going for them is the ability to make an annoying sound to cry out for help from the shepherd. It is no wonder, then, that Biblical authors also referred to the process of salvation as “calling on the name of the LORD” (Psalm 116:1-9; Joel 2:28-32). This phrase is used three times in the New Testament in connection to salvation.

The first occurrence of this phrase is in Acts 2:14-21. Peter quotes Joel 2:28-32, noting that the days when God would save all who call on his name are here. He then tells them what this means in verses 37-38. Calling on the name of the LORD involves repentance and baptism resulting in remission of sins and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The second time the phrase is used is when Saul recounts his conversion in Acts 22:12-16. A man named Ananias is sent to Damascus and says to Saul, “...Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.” The construction of this verse is such that “calling on his name” is describing “rise and be baptized.”

The final place this phrase is found is in Romans 10:9-13. Paul connects “confess with your mouth” and “believe with your heart” with “calling on the name of the LORD.”

It is clear, when taking these occurrences together, that calling on the name of the LORD is much more than saying a Sinner’s Prayer. It’s literally the decision to stop trusting ourselves and start following Jesus, the good shepherd. And in following, we follow him up to the cross where our sins are nailed and down into the grave where we are washed from our old lives of wandering.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Start Talking

1. How has God blessed you this week?
2. What is something we can be praying about? (write these down and pray after everyone shares).
3. Have you ever had to scream for help because of a dire situation you were in? What happened?

Start Thinking

4. Read Colossians 2:12. Why do you think baptism is the action that best shows our faith in God’s powerful work of salvation in our lives?
5. *1 Peter 3:21: Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What does “appeal to God for a good conscience” mean? How does it relate with “calling on the name of the LORD?”*

Start Sharing

6. Describe the moment at which you realized your life was heading in the wrong direction, was in a downward spiral, and you recognized you needed God’s forgiveness, mercy, love, and guidance to pull you out of that downward spiral. Can we truly appreciate the salvation of God without understanding just how lost we are without him?

Start Praying

7. **Reflect On** Ephesians 2:1-10.
8. **Praise God** for his gift of salvation in bringing us back to life from our spiritual death.
9. **Confess** the times that you have forgotten what he has done for you or taken it for granted.
10. **Ask God** to give you opportunities to share the truth of this passage with others.

Start Doing

11. If you’ve never called on God for salvation by trusting him, vowing to turn from your old life, and symbolically burying your sins in the grave through baptism, would you consider it? Do you know someone who needs to do this?