

## You Bear His Name - Pastor Jon Shepherd

Well, hey, everybody, good to be with you. As Jess mentioned, I'm excited to finally finish up my MDiv here. Yeah, 13 years in total. I'm on the nine-year MDiv track. I heard some of you can do this dual enrollment thing and do it all in five. I'm on the nine-year plan.

It's great to be with you. It's great to be able to look at God's word together. But as we start, I want to ask a really important theological question for you. It's really deep, okay? Anybody a fan of the Toy Story movies? Okay, all right. That's as deep theological as we're getting this, I'm just kidding. But I love the Toy Story movies, they're some of my favorites. And for those of you who were deprived as children, let me quick summarize what the basic premise of this is. These are the movies that are responsible for making every single kid, as they leave their room, wonder what their toys are up to, right? Cuz the natural answer is they come to life and go on all kinds of adventures. That's just what every toy does. And the movies, there's four of them. They primarily follow two toys around, right? Woody the cowboy and Buzz Lightyear, the space ranger, who insists in the first movie, he is not a toy, he is a space ranger.

But when I watch those Toy Story movies, I'm reminded of actually a really important biblical theme that runs throughout the entire Bible. And I wanna show you that today. See, in the Toy Story universe, Buzz and Woody belong to a kid named Andy. And all throughout the movie, as they go through these different adventures, at some of the most key pivotal moments of the entire plot, something happens in which they've lost their way. They've forgotten their worth. The world's kind of falling apart around them. They have no purpose. They're really down. And it's in those moments that something directs them to pick up their foot and look at the bottom of their boot. Can you picture those scenes? What do they find at the bottom of their boot? They find a name. Because their owner, the one who loves them, the kid to whom they belong, has put his name on their foot. They bear the name of the one who loves them and to whom they belong. And everything changes, that's the pivotal moment in the movies. In fact, putting a kid's name on the bottom of trash like a spork, turns trash into a treasure. And that's exactly what we're gonna look at today. We're gonna see that what God does, one of the ways you can understand the salvation that's offered to us in Christ is that you, the people of God, all the people of God, have always been people who bear the name of God. And that changes everything about them. It gives belonging, and it empowers and calls them to represent the one whose name they bear.

Now, we're gonna do this a little differently than maybe most preachers or chapel speakers will do, majority of the time, I'd assume, and I think this is the right way to go for majority of the time. There'll be a passage of scripture that's read and kind of preached through, expositing what's going on there in one section. And that's how God often reveals his will in himself to us, right? But there's also certain times where what God does is he doesn't give an explicit block of teaching on an idea, but he weaves it through the entirety of Scripture, kind of below the surface, below the radar, but it's no less important. It's still God revealing his will and who he is, but it doesn't have a section of teaching, it's just woven throughout the whole thing. And that's what we're gonna do today. And so you'll notice Jess did not read one chunk of scripture, cuz

we're not gonna just camp out on one place today. And I have a PowerPoint that we're gonna kind of flip through, so you don't have to try to keep up in your Bible. You can watch along on the screen with me

But this story permeates all of scripture. And we're gonna do a little kind of biblical theology. One of the ways I think about biblical theology is like that thread that snag on your sweater, or on a sock, that if you grab it and pull it what happens? It just keeps on going, right? Don't do that with your clothes. Don't be lazy, right? Get up, get a pair of scissors and cut it, or you'll ruin your sweater. Biblical theology, when you see a thread that you think is gonna run through other places, grab it, pull that thread, and see where it goes. Cuz oftentimes God has intentionally woven things throughout his word that he wants us to understand, and that's what we're gonna do here today.

So if we're gonna find the thread you always have to start where everyone starts, which is the beginning, right? In the very beginning, God creates humanity in his image. Y'all know this part of the story, right? But immediately, we rebelled. Humanity said, I'll take the creation and not the creator. I'll take your stuff, God, I don't need you, which is ultimate high treason. And yet God, who is rich in mercy, compassion, loves to show grace and mercy, immediately upon our rejection of him and rebellion against him he steps in and makes a promise of a plan that he had before the creation of the world to redeem it, and he makes a promise that says, one day. I'm going to bring one who's going to squash the head of the enemy, and he's gonna undo all the curse that you just brought in, Adam and Eve, to the world and to the human race.

And through the book of Genesis, as you follow through you know that in order to bring that Messiah, that promised one. God chooses the family of Abraham to be the family through which that promised deliverer is going to come. But the family of Abraham grows and eventually is enslaved in the nation of Egypt, right? And they cry out to the Lord, the Lord hears their cries and he sends them a deliverer, not the deliverer, but a deliverer who comes. And this is what God says to him in Exodus chapter 6 verses 6 and 7.

He says to Moses, "Say therefore to the people of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you, I will buy you. I will purchase you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God."

Did you hear those last words? I will take you, you belong to me, and I will be your God. Even though it's not explicitly stated here this is the beginning of that thread where God calls to himself and brings to himself a people. They belong to him, he is their God. And after fulfilling that promise, he does that, he pulls Israel out of Egypt with incredible wonders. You all know this in the book of Exodus. He brings them to the bottom of Mount Sinai, and he reveals more of his heart for them. This is what you find in Exodus 19, ultimately three to six.

"The Lord called to him, Moses, out of the mountains, saying thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel you yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and

how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

Really important words. God reminds them, I just brought you to myself And he calls them, you're my treasured possession. Again, indicating belonging. This is what we do, right? What do you do when something belongs to you? In some ways, you label it. You mark it off as yours. You might label your lunch in the commuter lounge so somebody doesn't decide to help themselves. You label stuff in your room because you might not trust your roommate even though you're not allowed to say that out loud. You label your assignments because you want credit for it. Secretly, I always want to grab somebody else in my class and label their assignment with my name so I get credit for their work. But it's what we do, right? We label things that belong to us.

About three years ago, our family jumped from a family of four to a family of six overnight, because when we finalized the adoption of my youngest two children, something beautiful happened. We put our name on those children. They took our name. They became Shepherds. And everything in their world changed. They have hope. They have a confident, secure future. They are loved. Their identity shifted entirely. Why? Because their name changed. Because they now bear the name of a family who loves them to whom they belong. It's a huge source of comfort.

So God does, in a very similar way, the same thing. He puts his name on his people. He calls them to himself, brings them out of Egypt, brings them to the foot of Mount Sinai. And then what happens next is what we find in Exodus 20, which is what we would all call the Ten Commandments. Now the very first commandment actually comes in not as a commandment. The first words in Exodus 20 are a reminder that they belong to God. He doesn't start right out of the gate with commands. He says in Exodus 20, verse 2, “I am the Lord, your God who brought you out of the house of slavery.” He starts by reminding them who they are. And then he calls them to live in light of who they are. This is huge. So often we flip this idea in our minds and we think if we do enough right stuff, then maybe God will help us and rescue us. But the order is always important in Scripture. God does, he blesses, he calls, he shows mercy, and then he calls us to respond.

And he does the same with the people of Israel. And he begins to give them the Ten Commandments. And the first two commands, worship the Lord, your God, alone, no rivals, and no images, no idols. And then we come to the third passage, the third command. And it's one that, for me, always left me confused as to why in the world that would rank in the top 10. Verse 7, “you shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.” The NIV translates it, “you shall not misuse the name of the Lord, your God.” Now, I don't know how you kind of grew up thinking about that command, I always thought it meant, don't say, oh my God, when you got scared. Or don't stub your toe and use Jesus Christ as a curse word name. I mean, I'm not saying it's less than that. But I always

went, really, that's top 10 here? Like, that fits? And worship the Lord, your God, have no idols, no rival gods. Oh, and by the way, use my name nicely. Like, it's never matched for me. But there's far more in this command than that. To try to make Dr. Luther and Dr. Schnittjer happy, let's learn some Hebrew here, okay? I have to make them think I learned something. I did, I'm just kidding. I learned a lot. This is the Hebrew verb, *nasa*. Now, anytime you're learning another language, especially if you're learning Greek or Hebrew or something here in a class, you have to find those ways to kind of connect these words to something that you can remember what it means. The way that I learned this one was, I think about what NASA does. What does NASA do with the astronauts? It carries them, it bears them, it lifts them up into space. You're welcome. You just learned a Hebrew verb. So what God is saying here, he's not saying just simply watch your tongue. It's far bigger than that. He's saying, you carry my name, you bear my name. Bear it well in all of life. Don't carry my name on you as a people in vain. If I'm to summarize these first three commands all positively, it's worship God alone and represent him well as one who bears the name of God.

Dr. Carmen Imes, who is a professor, I believe, at Biola University and a scholar who wrote the book, *Bearing God's Name, Why Sinai Still Matters*. She says it this way, "As his treasured possession, Israel's vocation, their job, their calling, the thing they were born to do is to represent their God to the rest of humanity. They function in priestly ways mediating between Yahweh and everyone else."

See, God's intent from the very beginning is that Israel would obey him fully. They've been called by his name. They bear his name. He's put his name on them. They belong to him. And then he says, represent me to the world around you by your obedience to my commands. Let people see, like a priest would, as a nation of priests, let the rest of the world see exactly what it's like to live in relationship and submission to the God of the universe. They're a kingdom of priests. Because why? Because they bear his name. You heard that passage earlier. You are to be to me a treasured possession, a holy set-apart nation, a kingdom of priests.

I have a friend who has a family business that he's kind of taken the reins of, so to speak. And it's a mechanical company, plumbing and HVAC. It's a family business, and the name of the business is their family name. Which means every time they go to hire, it's a risk. Why? Because that employee, they have like 40 or 50 of them now. Every employee they hire, they hand keys to a truck that has their name, family name, plastered on the side. They give them a uniform that has their family name. And however well they do their work reflects on who? The family whose name they bear. Every employee represents the family who runs that company. You realize it's exactly what God does with his people when he puts his name on them. When he calls them to himself, he puts his name and he calls us to then be representatives. Representing in priestly ways to the rest of the world exactly what it's like to be those who bear the name of God, who are called by him his people.

So we see that to bear the name of God means you belong to him and you represent him. And we are called then to represent him well as the people of God. Really interesting thing. We're going to go, next place we're going to go, if we kind of just grab that string and give it another

tug. Where else does this theme pop up? Pops up in Exodus 28. Exodus 28 is rarely -- I don't think I've met a single person who has a favorite verse in Exodus 28. I'll bet the majority of us, when you get to this in your assignments or your Bible reading plan, just kind of glaze right over. Because Exodus 28 is the instructions for the high priest's clothing. Riveting chapter, I'll tell you, right? Most of us get to those types of passages and we're like, I don't know why I care. Let me tell you why you care. Exodus 28, verses 36 to 38. This is part of the instruction for the clothing for the high priest. Starting in verse 36, "You should make a plate of pure gold. And engrave on it like the engraving of a signet, Holy to the Lord, Kodesh Yahweh. Holy to the Lord. And you shall fasten it to the turban by a cord of blue. It shall be on the front of the turban. And it shall be on Aaron's forehead."

Do you see what's happening here? Holy to the Lord. What is the high priest literally doing? He is in a very physical, literal way, bearing the name of the Lord on his body. On a plate of gold on his forehead. It's as though he serves in his person as an object lesson for the rest of Israel to be reminded, this is what you do as well. What he does in a very physical, tangible way, bearing the name of the Lord. He's reminding the people of Israel, you also bear the name of the Lord. You are also called to be holy, set apart to Yahweh. This is your calling. This is who you are.

Now one of the roles of the great high priest is to bless the people. So if we kind of give that string another tug, we end up in Numbers chapter 6. Numbers chapter 6 is a place where Moses gives instructions to Aaron as to how he's to bless the people of God. And he says to them, when you bless them, you bless them saying, "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. And lift up his countenance upon you and give you his peace." Anybody heard that before? You've probably all heard that before. But most of us don't know the purpose of that. Look at verse 27, the one right after it. God says, "And so shall they, the priests who do this blessing, put my name upon the people of Israel and I will bless them."

At Cheltenham and at probably many of your churches, our services conclude with the benediction. The benediction means that God gets the last word as you leave. The benediction is a form of reminding you as you go that God has put his name on you. That you go, you belong to him. No matter what voices you hear, no matter what comes at you from the outside, you belong to God. And since you belong to him, you're called to represent him in the way that you live, leaving this place.

This is an incredible, incredible thread, right? As you kind of pull this, you'll find more of it in Isaiah, you'll find it in Amos, you'll find it in the New Testament, you'll find it in the book of Daniel. It's all throughout the Scripture. It's an incredible promise, and yet there's a little bit of a little problem here. If you go back to Exodus 19, there's actually a condition on this covenant for the people of Israel. He says, if you obey me, then you will be to me these things. Now, let's just run our Old Testament theology out, our knowledge of Old Testament Scripture out. How does the nation of Israel do in their obedience to God? Not super swell, right? Prophet after prophet, warning after warning, stage wave of exile after wave of exile. And they refuse to return. Instead of being a representation of the Lord to the nations, they become like the nations. They were

almost anything but a holy people set apart under obedience for the Lord. And even the high priests who were called and physically to be set apart to the Lord. Again, if you trace the lineage of the high priests, it's just as messy as the rest of the nation. As Moses is on the mountain getting the instructions from God, what is Aaron the high priest doing? He's leading the people in idolatrous worship. He's breaking the commandments one and two before he even gets commandments one and two. And this is the high priest. And the whole story of the Old Testament leaves us longing for a better high priest and a truer Israel. Which is exactly why Jesus comes, right? The book of Hebrews goes to great lengths to over and over again remind us and tell us Jesus is the true great high priest, who didn't come to offer the sacrifices of animals, but to offer himself. He doesn't come just wearing the name of God on his forehead. He is the very word of God. He is God himself made flesh.

And the gospel writers, if you pay attention to it, go into great detail to help you see. They tell the story of Jesus in such a way that parallels the walk of the people of Israel. What are they trying to say? Jesus is the truer Israel. He is the great high priest you've been longing for. Jesus is so confident that he and the Father are one, that they belong to one another. He does that with his words, but then he does it with his life. Perfectly representing the Father in every possible way. He was so secure in that love that the Father had for him that he entrusted himself fully, unreservedly, into his Father's hands. He says, Father, "It's not my will, but yours. Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

But there's another reason that Jesus came. Jesus came to fulfill what Israel failed to do. Jesus came to bring his name, the name of God, to the nations. Because God's desire was always that more than just the nation, the people of Israel would bear his name. In the book of Acts, chapter 15, one of the early church leaders, James, is quoting the book of Amos, and he says this. He basically says that the reason Jesus came was to fulfill Amos' words. so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name. And Peter goes one further. The Apostle Peter in 1 Peter, chapter 2, verses 9 and 10. See if these words sound familiar to what we just looked at earlier. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." Sound familiar? But he's writing to Christians. "You are God's special possession that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

Exact same thing he said to the people of Israel, right? Chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. But there's one difference. Exodus 19 had a condition. "If you obey me fully, then you will be these things to me." Do you see any conditions in what Peter says? He just says, you are. You are these things. Because by faith in Jesus, what happens is -- one of the most important doctrines ever is union with Christ. That you, by faith, are joined with Jesus. And Jesus has already accomplished the "if." And he hands it to you as a gift of grace. What faith does is says that anything that is true of Jesus is now true of you. Jesus has done all the requirements to be made right with God. That's why on the cross, what does he call out at the end? It is finished. It's not mostly done. There's a difference between mostly done and all done. Sorry, that's my Princess Bride reference for the morning. He says it's done. You are these

things. You are, you do belong. You bear, by faith in Jesus, you bear the name of God. He's put his name on you. You belong to him. And if him putting his name on you is not a result of your actions, then your actions can't undo him putting his name on you. You fully belong to him. Period. When God writes his name on his people, he doesn't have an eraser. In fact, he goes one further and he gives every believer in Jesus Christ his Spirit. He puts himself in. And what is the Spirit? It's a down payment guaranteeing that he will finish what he's completed in you.

So what does this mean for us? Friends, it means that even in your moments of greatest doubt, it means that even in the moments where you are afraid, when you feel faithless, when you have no idea whether God even sees you, in the moments when the world is falling apart around you, you bear the name of God. Which means that you belong to him, which means that you are not invisible to him, which means that your sufferings and the things that you're walking through in life right now do not have final word in your life. You are not alone for a single moment of them. And sometimes we need to be reminded of that in the same way that Buzz and Woody did. Except here's the challenge, you and I don't have it written on our boots. We have something more sure. In the moments where you and I question whether or not we actually belong to God, we don't look at the bottom of our shoes, we look to an empty tomb and an empty cross that is the guarantee that what God has begun in you, he will complete. That even in moments where we are faithless, he remains faithful for what? He cannot deny himself. You have an anchor, not only that you hold on to, but that is holding on to you. Why? Because an act of grace, God has put his name on you.

It also means that as a result of being those who bear his name, you are called to represent him well. You will represent him, period. The question is, will you bear his name in vain or will you represent him well to the world around you? And so while bearing the name of the Lord on you ought to bring great encouragement and rest to your soul, that I belong to him, not because I'm so great and special. If it was up to my specialness to have God put his name on it, nobody's got anything written on the bottom of their boot in this room. But it's a gift of grace. And if that's the case, how then ought we to live? What does it look like to represent him well? How do the words of your mouth or the words of your thumbs represent the fact that you bear the name of God? How does your search browser history represent? How does your playing, your sports, your doing your homework with integrity? How does every facet of life become transformed because you bear the name of God? There's not just one little application lane for this. This is a worldview shift that says, I am not my own, I've been bought with a price. I don't belong to me, I belong to someone else. Father, by the grace that you alone can give, by the power of your Spirit, would I better reflect you and represent your heart to the world?

I don't know about you, but as I say that, immediately I feel this twinge of conviction. Sometimes it's not a twinge, sometimes it's a sucker punch to your gut. Because you go, wait, I've been bearing the name of God and I've actually been doing what Exodus 20 verse 7 says not to do. What happens when I carry the name of God in my life poorly? What happens when I actually treat the name of God as if it was a removable sticker? Where in this situation, sure, yeah, praise Jesus, he's awesome. And then over here I'm just pulling that sticker right off, because I

don't want anything associated with him. What do we do when we misrepresent him through our selfish actions, our greed, our sexual sin, fill in the blank? Does he have an eraser?

Listen to the good news from Isaiah 49:16, because not only does God write his name on you, but he says "I've engraved your names on the palms of my hands." This is where God does not leave his promise of the things he will do in your life up to you. He commits himself to making that true. And that he who began a good work in you will see it through to completion on the day of Jesus Christ. That's his promise. And he has put his name on you. And he has put your name on him. That's how sure you can be. As sure as God is God, you can be confident. Because as I said before, even in the moments when we are faithless, he remains faithful, because he cannot deny or disown himself.

But you and I live in a world where this is so hard. I actually get really frustrated when I talk about how great faith is. I think faith is unbelievably challenging. I think faith is one of the hardest things in the entire world. It is literally believing something I cannot see. Do we have blind faith? No. God gives us great confidence and assurance, but it's still faith. Do you know that faith is temporary? That one day, faith will become sight? You will not walk by faith forever. On this earth, until you see Jesus face to face, you will walk by faith. But one day, your faith will be made sight.

And Jesus knows how hard it is for us to believe that we actually belong to him. Because you know you and I know me. And I know -- let's go to my friend who has employees -- If my friend's employees represented him in the way that I've often represented God, give me the uniform back, give me the keys, go find another job. We are prone to doubt, we are prone to forget. But listen to the words of Revelation 22:3-4. This is the Apostle John, speaking of the day when Jesus returns, and the new heavens and new earth are instituted, and all is made right. Listen to what he says: "No longer will there be any curse, the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him." And look at this, "They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads."

It means one day, what you walk in faith in right now will be so plain it will be written on your forehead. The places where you doubt will be gone. The places where you misrepresent and miscarry the name of the Lord your God will be gone. For there is no longer any curse. Friends, that's your future. Your future is one where what God says of you is fully true in every possible way, and he has committed himself to making that true. And the challenge for us right now is that we would walk by faith, believing that what God says is more true than, oftentimes, what I feel. And humbly asking, "Lord, help my unbelief in that area and may I walk in such a way that bears your name beautifully, so that the world around me might know what it's like to live in submission to the holy God of the universe." Let's pray together.



Father, what incredible love you have lavished on us, as 1 John says, that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are. Father, we rest fully in the work of Jesus. We come to you with empty hands of faith. We don't have anything to bring that is worth giving to you. Anything we bring is something you've given us to start with. And Father, thank you that your Word is stronger than anything else. That nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord. So that even when our own hearts condemn us, there is one that is greater than our hearts. What you say about us matters more than anyone else. Lord, help us believe that. And as those who bear your name, would you help us? Because we know we can't do that on our own, but I'm so thankful that you have not called us to represent you on our own, but you have given us your Spirit, who empowers us, who has given us a new heart that is eager, longing, willing, and now actually able to represent you well. So, Father, would you search us and know us? Would you test us, test our thoughts? And Lord, wherever there is a grievous way in us, lead us in the way everlasting. We pray these things in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, life everlasting, amen.

Thank you, friends.