What’s In A Name?
Acts 11:26b

_The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch._
-Acts 11:26b

Let us pray…………..

**I N T R O D U C T I O N**

What’s in a name?

On the day you were born, your parents gave you a name, a name you will carry with you all through life.

Your name is important! Your name is how you INTRODUCE yourself to others and how others identify you.

It has been said, “There is no sweeter music to one’s ears than the sound of his own name.”

Some people have rather unusual names: Have you ever met a man named Wadsworth or Bismark or Basil? And remember Johnny Cash’s hit song about “A Boy Named Sue?”

Have you ever met a woman named Berneatha or Lubertha or Latrine?
All through my grade school years there was a girl in my class named, **SUETTA SPEARS**.

Can you imagine going to a dentist named: **Dr. Yankum** ...... or ...... **Dr. Philip Fang** ........... or **Dr. Darrell Payne**?

How many of you would go to an **allergist** named **Dr. Aikenhead**. Or go see a **chiropractor** named **Dr. Bill Bonebreak**? How about a **psychiatrist** named **Dr. Nutt**?

How many of you would go to the **LAW FIRM of Dewey, Cheatham and Howe**?

By the way, these are all REAL NAMES!

***********************

And then there’s YOUR NAME! More than just a name, your name has special meaning.

**EMMA** means “whole” or “universal.”

**MONA** comes from the Greek word “monos” which means, “one” or “adviser.”

**GARY** is of German origin. It means to “gar” or “spear.”

**MERVIN** means “friend of the sea.”

**MARIE** means “star of the sea.”

**ERIC** means “ever the ruler” or “peaceful ruler.”

**RAYMOND** and **RAMONA** both your names mean “a wise protector.”

**DOUG** means “dark river.” **SHIRLEY** means “bright clearing.”
KAYLA, CAITLYN, AND CATHY all your names are derivatives of the name KATHERINE which means “one who is pure.”

ARCHIE means “bold” or “brave”……………while HELEN means “light.” By the way CINDY your name also means “light.”

LINDA is Spanish for “pretty.”
REGGIE means “royal” or “regal” and don’t you forget it!

**************

Our main purpose in this message is not to focus on the name given to you by your parents when you were born, but rather to focus on that special name you received when you were BORN AGAIN……………..the name C-H-R-I-S-T-I-A-N!!!

You may or may not know this, but there was a time when followers of Christ were known as something other than CHRISTIANS.

Turn back just a few pages in your Bibles to

ACTS 9:1,2

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the WAY, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

The first followers of Christ were simply known as the people of “The Way.” No doubt this was in reference to what Jesus said about Himself in John 14:6 “I am the WAY, and the TRUTH and the LIFE.”

So from the beginning of the Church on the Day of Pentecost in ACTS chapter 2 through Acts chapter 11 followers of Jesus were known as “disciples” or “people of THE WAY.”
But in today's scripture text we read about a new name given to the followers of Christ.

verse 26b  The disciples were called CHRISTIANS first at Antioch.

Now where did they get this new name? Did the Church at Antioch have a special congregational meeting after Church one Sunday and decide to start calling themselves “Christians?” NO!

Most commentators agree that the name “Christian” was not a name the followers of Christ gave themselves, but rather it was a derogatory name that was tagged on the followers of Christ by non-believers. Originally it was a name of ridicule and mockery. And the disciples at Antioch were the first to be dubbed “Christians.”

When you break the word Christian down into its two components.......CHRIST .....IAN you can better understand its meaning.

Of course we know CHRIST refers to JESUS CHRIST, the only begotten Son of God.

The suffix “IAN” means: “belong to” or “coming from” or “to be like”

So the NAME Christian means “belonging to CHRIST.” or……”coming from CHRIST” .......or “to be like CHRIST.”
When unbelievers first called the followers of CHRIST .....”CHRISTIANS” they were mockingly saying, “You people are trying to be like a bunch of ‘little Christs.” You THINK like CHRIST. You TALK like CHRIST. You ACT like CHRIST. You LIVE like CHRIST. Why you are nothing but a bunch of “CHRIST-IANS.”

As this NEW NAME caught on and was adopted by the followers of CHRIST, the name “Christian” took on a whole NEW meaning.

**********************

First.........

I. The Name Christian Is An Honorable Name

1. Though the name “Christian” was originally intended to be a name of ridicule and mockery in time it became a very honorable name.

2. I am honored to wear my family name BRAZIEL. And I am honored to wear the name of my state, NORTH CAROLINIAN. And I am honored to wear the name of my country, AMERICAN.

But the most honorable name I wear is the precious name that identifies me with Jesus Christ........the name CHRISTIAN

3. Just how special is this name? The Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 2:9-11........

“Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the NAME that is above every name, that at the NAME of JESUS every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11)
4. Oh brothers and sisters, you and I wear the NAME that is above ALL names!

One day EVERY KNEE will bow before the one whose name we wear!

One day the TONGUE of every atheist, every agnostic, every Muslim, every Hollywood actor and actress who now mock JESUS and ridicule JESUS and curse the name of JESUS will humbly confess that He is the King of all kings and Lord of all Lords to the glory of God the Father.

5. You and I should never be embarrassed or ashamed of this precious name you and I wear. It is the name that one day will be honored throughout the Universe.

6. What are some ways you and I can uphold the HONOR of the CHRISTIAN name?

(A) We can uphold the HONOR of the Christian NAME by CONFESSING the name of CHRIST before men.

MATTHEW 10:32 “Whoever acknowledges Me before men, I will also acknowledge Him before My Father in heaven. But whoever disowns Me before men, I will disown Him before My Father in heaven.”

I heard Dr. David Jeremiah say one time, “Don’t ever pass up an opportunity to put in a good word for Jesus!”

May we never be ashamed or embarrassed or hesitant to mention the precious NAME of CHRIST in the presence of our non-Christian loved ones and friends………and the people we work around….and even total strangers!
(B) We can also uphold the HONOR of the CHRISTIAN name by CAREFULLY GUARDING our Christian witness.

Colossians 4:5, 6 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders (meaning those who are “outside” the kingdom of God.) ......make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

I Thessalonians 4:11,12 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your own hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders (there it is again) and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

How you and I live our lives when we are outside the four walls of the Church building speaks volumes to those who are outside of Christ.

You and I must understand that this name CHRISTIAN we wear is held to a higher standard of scrutiny than any other name.

If people know you are a Christian they are watching you very closely. They are watching your lifestyle......they are watching your habits ......they are watching your work ethic......... .....they are listening to the words that come out of your mouth......they are observing your attitude. They are watching how you treat people.......and how you respond to adversity.

And in all those areas of your life you either UPHOLD THE HONOR OF THE CHRISTIAN NAME or you bring DISHONOR to the Christian name.
May all of us seek to UPHOLD THE HONOR of the precious Name we wear by CONFESSING THE NAME OF CHRIST before men........and by CAREFULLY GUARDING OUR WITNESS before those who are outside of Christ.

But the name Christian is not only an HONORABLE NAME......

II. The Name Christian is A HATED Name

1. Hardly a week goes by now but what we don’t hear about strong anti-Christian sentiment in this country.

* In MADISON, WISCONSIN the Freedom From Religion Foundation has been allowed to distribute pamphlets in all the public schools entitled: We Can Be Good Without God.”

*Those in the entertainment industry have vilified Christians as “sewer rats”........”vultures”......and.....”simple-minded social ingrates.”

*In recent months some of our nations leaders have labeled Christians as “hate mongers” and even accused Christians of being “potential terrorists.”

*Recently an employee of Hewlett-Packard was fired for posting Bible verses condemning homosexuality as immoral on his desk in response to posters the company had displayed endorsing homosexuality as an acceptable alternative lifestyle.

*Several weeks ago we heard about the Cheerleaders in a Georgia High School who were banned from displaying banners with Bible verses at the start of every ball game because one person complained he found the scripture banners offensive.
2. When we think of persecution we tend to focus our attention on the early Christians we read about in the New Testament. And indeed they were a hated, persecuted people.

But according to a Christian group based out of Oklahoma called “Voice of the Martyrs” more Christians died for their faith in the 20th century than at any other time in history.

Worldwide, an average of 150,000 to 200,000 people are executed each year because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

3. This begs the question, “WHY?” Why do so many people HATE the name CHRISTIAN?

I believe Jesus answers that question for us in JOHN 15:18-25.

Read: John 15:18-25

4. You know earlier I told you the name CHRISTIAN is an HONORABLE NAME. In light of what Jesus tells us here in JOHN 15, perhaps the greatest HONOR that can be bestowed upon as CHRISTIANS is to live a life that so HONORS CHRIST that it causes the world to HATE us!!!

I think Peter says it best in I Peter 4:16......

However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise GOD that you bear the NAME.
I know I have shared this poem with you before, so I hope you won’t mind me using it again because it really speaks to heart of this matter of wearing the name of Jesus.

WHEN I SAY THAT I’M A CHRISTIAN

When I say that I’m a Christian
I’m not shouting “I am saved.”
I’m whispering, “I get lost!”
That’s why I chose His way.

When I say that “I’m a Christian
I don’t speak of this with pride.
I’m confessing that I stumble
And I need Jesus to be my guide.

When I say that “I’m a Christian”
I’m not trying to appear strong.
I’m professing that I am weak
And pray for strength to carry on.

When I say “I’m a Christian”
I’m not bragging that I’m a success.
I’m admitting that I have failed
And can never repay my debt.

When I say “I’m a Christian”
I don’t live a life free of pain.
I still have my share of heartaches
That’s why I trust in Jesus’ Name!

---edited version of this poem