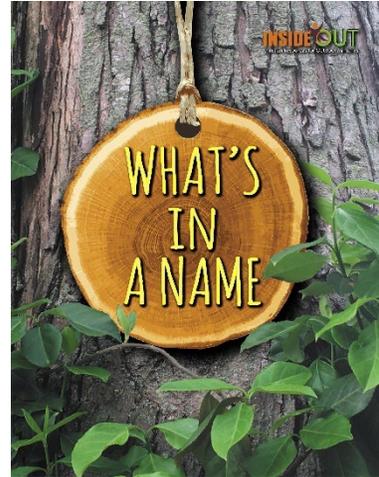


Worship Resources for Camp Sunday

2023 What's in a Name

By Rev. Paul Lint

This year, the camp curriculum focuses on names and identities and God who is bigger than all our words. Each camp day focuses on a different Old Testament or New Testament story of person who encounters God and has their life, identity, or name changed. All page number references are from the curriculum packet for “What’s in a Name.” For this year’s worship, we have drawn heavily from Day 5, “Name Tag”.



Story: Jacob Becomes Israel

Theological Summary: Jacob has already had an eventful life. When we reach this passage of Genesis, Jacob has been deceived and is in the process of reconciling with Esau. Things have changed in him, and things will keep changing, including his name. Campers may not ever change their name, but like Jacob, they can keep wrestling with God until they themselves have changed and can see the new things God has for them.

Scripture (NRSV): Genesis 32:22-31 **Jacob Wrestles at Peniel**

²² The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³ He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. ²⁴ Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. ²⁵ When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob’s hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶ Then he said, ‘Let me go, for the day is breaking.’ But Jacob said, ‘I will not let you go, unless you bless me.’ ²⁷ So he said to him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Jacob.’ ²⁸ Then the man^[a] said, ‘You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel,^[b] for you have striven with God and with humans,^[c] and have prevailed.’ ²⁹ Then Jacob asked him, ‘Please tell me your name.’ But he said, ‘Why is it that you ask my name?’ And there he blessed him. ³⁰ So Jacob called the place Peniel,^[d] saying, ‘For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.’ ³¹ The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.

Possible Supplemental Texts:

- Romans 8:(15-16)17-18(19-26)
- Psalm 77:1-14

Call to Worship

Option 1: Use UMH 798 (all or part of it)

Option 2: Call and Response

Leader: Come together, Children of God!

People: We come to celebrate and stand in awe of God.

Leader: You have been called by name to be a part of God's great work.

People: May we rejoice in hearing our names and having them blessed.

Leader: Sing and shout in Jesus' name, for that is where our hope comes from.

People: We will raise our voices that all may hear and know that God is faithful to save.

Option 3/Opening Song Suggestions

- Come, Now Is the Time to Worship
- This Is the Day
- Today Is the Day (Lincoln Brewster)
- I Choose to Worship (Rend Collective)
- Come As You Are (Crowder)

Opening Prayer

God of Strength and Mercy, you have brought us together again and blessed us with your presence. Fill us with joy as we worship you today. We gather partially because we are comfortable here and have felt you with us here. Yet, we also come to be challenged, to grow and move with you, and to see the ways we still have work to do, and for that we look to you, the one we trust to be with us. Strengthen and heal us, all while you wrestle with us toward a better future. Fill this place with the mercy and grace that empower us to try and fail. Fill this place with the hope and joy that we see so abundantly at our camps. Extend our worship and ministry today from this community out into your work in the world. Amen.

Alternate Opening Prayer/Prayer for the camps

God who creates and inspires all that is good in the world, as we celebrate your gift to us that is Camping and Retreat Ministries, we lift to you those who will attend camps this year. Watch over them as they venture out and open them to new and enriched relationships with you and with others who seek to know you and love you. We also ask you to wrap your arms around the staff people who will serve in ministries of all kinds at our United Methodist campsites. Bless them with spiritual gifts to provide the greatest hospitality and safety for all who come to their sites. Inspire them to preach the gospel with words, actions, and all that is needed to share your love. Finally, we ask for a blessing by name just as you blessed him who wrestled with you. We lift up Storm Mountain Center as an offering to you and as a gift to our world. We lift up Lake Poinsett Camp and Living Waters Retreat Center that you again might use it to provide so many with the life-giving waters that are a relationship with Jesus Christ. We lift Wesley Acres Camp and Retreat Center to be a place where you again bridge the gaps that we experience or imagine between each other and with you. May your love that flows through us be felt in all that they do. Amen.

Children's Time

Supplies: Loose change of various coins

Invite children to name the different coins they know the names of. Discuss coin how much each is worth and what could be purchased with each (coins changed into items of value) or how many coins it would take to make the same value of different coins. For example, it takes five pennies to make one nickel and it takes five nickels to make one quarter. Remind children that all coins have value, no matter what they are called.

Summarize Genesis 32:22–31 together. Point out that Jacob is making a momentous change. He is changing not just his name, but how he connects to God and to others. He is valued for who he is in God's family; he is loved and accepted just as he is. Each child is loved and accepted just as they are in our church and in God's family. When we encounter God, we are changed and should live differently so that others can see that we are different, like Jacob walking differently after wrestling with God. Ask children how they can act/live differently so that others will know about God's love.

Prayer: *Dear God, Thank you for the story of Jacob. Thank you for loving us and accepting us. Help us to live so that others will know they are loved too. We love you God! Amen.*

Consider using this as a stewardship conversation or as invitation to offering, reminding children and the congregation that when we give an offering, we are hoping God will help us change the world for the better. The change we donate can support the changes we want to make.

Everywhere, Wonder, by Matthew Swanson (New York: Macmillan, 2017)

Jacob had to be open to God in order to change and to see what God wanted to give him. This book helps children to remember to look around and see the amazing gifts of God in this world.

Prayer Time: A confessional

A confessional is when we share with God the ways we have messed up and the areas in our lives we want to improve so we can be more loving people. I will pause a lot during our prayer so we can have time to silently offer our own thoughts to God. Pause between each line. Pray:

God,
Sometimes we mess up.
We lie.
We judge.
We bully.
We exclude.
We name call.
We are mean to others.
We are mean to ourselves.
We are mean to your creation.

We don't stick up for ourselves or others.

God, let us wrestle with our choices. Let us wrestle to receive your blessing.

Gracious God, thank you for being present with us in big, important moments. We are grateful for the times you invite us to wrestle and get to know you more. We lift to you now the celebrations and struggles of our lives (*Time for silent prayers or pastoral lifting of corporate prayer*)

Thank you for the ways you bless us and show us you are here. Thank you for the blessing of your son our savior, Jesus, who taught us to pray, saying

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Song Suggestion for Before/After Sermon

My Light House (Rend Collective) Begins with the Lyric, "In my wrestling and in my doubts, in my failures you won't walk out ..."

Sermon Notes

Tell a story of people wrestling with hard thoughts or feelings at camp, it is best if it comes from you or your community, but you can also use one of these:

1. There was a young man around the age of 15 that was at one of our camps for the third year in a row. He was well-liked by the other campers and was comfortable in the role of making other campers feel welcome and appreciated. On the 2nd full day of camp, they broke up into small groups to dig into the Bible Study for the day led by college-aged counselors. One of the questions that was asked led to discussing some of the struggles of our lives and the campers were allowed space to share any of those if they would like. The dean and a couple other adult leaders each came to sit in on the small groups as they had prepared these questions and wanted to be available if needed. When our young man began to share his whole body changed to become quieter and "protected." His story of parents separating and on a certain path toward divorce was raw and powerful as he had only been told the day before camp began and he would be returning to a single parent household from camp. Neither the counselor nor the dean made any effort to shut down that sharing. Each of them and several campers encouraged him to share his feelings from anger to sadness to confusion and his thoughts that were all over the place. It was so clear that God's love was at work and available to that young man and to all who were blessed to be a part of the struggle. Who knows if they covered the official Bible study materials, but the Gospel was made real in that sacred time, all we changed by the experience.
2. At one of our Senior High Camps several years ago, the campers were asked to work together in groups of about 12 to write a Creed, a statement of what they believe about God. Some groups started writing right away and there was much laughter and boisterous additions. Other groups were more thoughtful but were clearly working toward a "strong statement." There was one

group, however, that seemed from the outside to be either stuck or fighting. From within, however, this group was doing the hard work. You see, one member of the group started by saying, "Well this is easy, we will just write the Nicene Creed because that is what all Christians must believe." The counselor knew that one of the young men in the group was very much struggling with the simple-answer faith that she had just blurted out, so he invited some further discussion about what was in the Nicene Creed and if everyone understood it and believed each of those statements. After most of the time allotted had passed the Bible study leader came to check progress and reminded the counselor that they had to have something to share with the group that evening. The conversation that began between the questioner and the one who was so certain became an opportunity for all to wrestle with their understanding of God and in the end they wrote something that contained the ideas of the Nicene Creed and each camper was invited to sign where they were in that faith statement. It was a powerful visual to see all those names on the same paper but allowed to be at different points in their faith journeys.

Then transition to the Scripture passage (Genesis 32:22-31) and invite the congregation into the journey that Jacob was on. Jacob was on his way to reunite with his brother, whom he hadn't seen for 20 years. In the last interaction with his family, Jacob manipulated their father and stole a blessing meant for his brother Esau. Jacob had been through a great deal in those 20 years apart. He had a huge family and great wealth in the form of livestock, yet his anxiety was off the charts as he prepared to face the one he had hurt. Jacob did everything he could to protect his family from the coming wrath of his brother's armies but moved toward it anyway. That is the situation in which Jacob met and wrestled with the Divine.

Now invite the congregation to think of their own lives:

Jacob protected others and prepared for the wrath of his brother and that fight, but instead God engaged with him. We too have many battles, struggles and unresolved conflict in our lives. Are your family relations like Jacob and Esau? Are yours laced with your own feelings of guilt, like Jacob's? Are yours filled with more questions than answers? In these heavy and anxious times, God is there.

Relate Jacob's story and our stories back to camp:

Our camps and retreats can be places where God engages us away from our biggest struggles and fears. God is big enough to handle our wrestling and our doubts. The theme of camp this summer (2023) is, "What's in a Name?" and each camper, guest, volunteer, and staff member will be invited to engage with the questions of who they are and what it means to be claimed by name by a God who loves them.

Jacob was blessed and given a new name signifying that he is one who had striven with God and humans. Our identity becomes clearer and even changes when we engage with God. The camp leaders are excited to be a part of these journeys of engaging with God, and we rejoice that each one of us will have opportunities to be changed and challenged by a loving God.

Here at Home:

As we strive to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World, we here at *Your Church's Name* United Methodist Church know the value of places where it is safe to ask hard questions,

share deep fears, and grow in our understanding of who God has created us to be as well as how God is calling us to grow.

We long for situations in our small groups, community worship, Sunday School Classrooms, Bible School Groups or whatever else we are doing as a congregation for people to wrestle and engage a loving God.

We also know that just as Jacob had to send away those he cared about and all that he had, we too may have to get away in order to better hear and see God face to face.

The Dakotas-Minnesota Area Camp and Retreat Ministries all our sites are ready for a new season of providing space, both literally and figuratively, for any and all of us to engage with God in Christ.

Restate the "Problem"

We all have created moments of anxiety and fear of what might be next. Jacob KNEW his brother hated him and wanted to harm him for what he had done. He KNEW the armies of Esau were bent on destroying him and all that was his. Yet, when Israel (Jacob after striving with God and humans) limped away from his encounter with God, he then met a brother that was overjoyed to see him again. Esau was not filled with hate, nor were those with him there to harm anyone.

May our encounters with God open possibilities for healing that we never saw. May our wrestling with God prepare us to love and embrace those we thought enemies.

What is the Good News and the Celebration:

The Good News is that God is that God really is always with us, even when we are wrestling with big decisions and hard questions. When we wrestle, when we face storms, God will be our Peace. In our wrestling and in our doubts, in our failures God will not leave us to our fear-filled battles.

Invitation to Offering-

One of the many ways in which we support our conference camping program is through our apportionment giving through the local church. There are also opportunities for direct gifts to ministries or programs. These things all start with having a healthy local church. We invite you to give generously in that way. We also invite you to give to local camp scholarship funds and support individuals in your congregation to attend camps. Finally, each of your conference campsites will gladly receive and faithfully use any gifts that you would like to give in support of this vital ministry.

Offertory Prayer

Good and gracious God, all that we have comes from you. Today we return a portion of all that you have blessed us with back into your service. Accept this act of worship as we give not only our financial gifts, but our gifts of time, talent, and prayers. Bless our camps, camp leaders, and campers so that they may encounter you through these gifts. Multiply these gifts to reach farther and do more than we can dream or imagine. Amen.

Invitation to Communion

Jacob, the trickster, wasn't a perfect person. He lied to his father, bullied his brother, and committed a lot of other wrongdoings. Still, God blessed him. The same God continues to forgive us and bless us. When we come to the table, we are forgiven and blessed. Think of a time when someone was kind to you when you thought you didn't deserve it. Why did you think you didn't deserve it? What did it feel like to receive unexpected kindness? How did you respond? Even when we think we don't deserve it, God invites us to the table to share a meal together. You are blessed and beloved. Come celebrate.

Continue with communion liturgy as preferred.

Benediction

The hand of the Lord touched Jacob.

Jacob said he saw the face of God.

Jacob left as a blessed man.

The hand of the Lord touches us.

We, too, see the face of God around us.

We leave here as blessed people.

Amen.