

Children's Message  
1.20.08  
2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Good morning.

Do you know my name? What is it? My first name is really Denise, but most people (except my mom) call me Dee. How about you? Who are you? And who are you? You? How do you know? Who gave you that name? hmmm- is your name important to you?

Do you think we need names? I wonder what it would be like if we didn't have names. Do you think we'd go around saying things like, "Hey you, you with the brown hair, you twirling the pencil, you with the big eyes, you who can't sit still, come sit down over here." I wonder if we'd get tired of saying things like that and shorten it to: Twirling Pencil and Can't Sit Down. All of a sudden- you'd have a name- for the rest of your life you'd be: Can't Sit Down. That's funny to think about. Maybe it's a good idea that we were given names- I'm afraid of what my name would have been!

In the end, though, names are pretty important- they identify us, help us to tell one person from another. We use names all the time: we say them, we call them, and we write them. Our name is probably our very first possession.

Do you think names are important to God? I'm pretty sure they are. In fact we can read in the book of Isaiah of a time about 600 years before Jesus was born when God's people had been taken away to live in a place called Babylon- far away from their homes. People were scared and worried. Many people wondered if God knew where they were, if God still cared for them, if God was strong enough to help them- when they were so far away. Would God simply forget about them?

God spoke to the people through Isaiah and God said, "I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands." We often interpret that verse by thinking of our names written on the palms of God's hands.

This might help you understand: you know how all of us, even though our mothers tell us not to, write on our palms? I know I do it when I absolutely, positively CAN NOT forget something and I want it right there where I'll see it every time I open up my hand. (*Have "Go to Church" written on my palm.*) So, when God inscribes us on the palm of God's hand, God is telling us- that there is no way, no circumstance that could ever arise, when God would forget us, forget our name.

And, thinking back to God's people who were far away in Babylon- sure enough- God led the people of Israel back to Jerusalem. God didn't forget- God remembered all of their names! I know, for me, it makes me feel strong and confident, knowing that my name: Denise, is inscribed on God's own palm. God knows my name. God knows your name- it's right there on God's palm. God knows that all of us belong to God. God won't ever forget us.

Reverend Wiley, will you please lead us in a prayer?