

## ***“In My Name”***

“Whatever you ask of the Father in my name, He will give it to you.” Like a child whose grandparents have told them to ask for “whatever” and promises to give it – we hear these words of our Lord and our imagination runs wild!

Really? Whatever! What should I ask for? Riches (toys, pick-ups, boats, phones, clothes) – for beauty, physical strength, great intelligence – for escape from something very specific that’s causing me pain (or from all suffering) – for revenge, for shame and the denigration of my adversary?

Is that what Jesus really means? Is the Father ready to give you anything and everything? Listen again to what Jesus says. “Truly, truly I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father **IN MY NAME**, He will give to you.”

Key to understanding what Jesus is saying – and what the Father desires to hear – is asking, “in my name.” And Jesus gives some insight when He goes on to say – “Until now you have asked nothing **IN MY NAME**. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” “Until now,” He says, as if something is changing.

So what does Jesus mean when He says that “until now” His disciples have not asked in this way?

Contrary to the way you hear it used many times – “in my name” is not a mantra – a magical incantation – so that if you say these three words, whatever you ask for – the Father will do.

No, “in my name” means to “stand in the place of someone” – to “act with the authority of another.” It is a very baptismal phrase – for you who are baptized into Christ – are baptized “in the name” of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

What does this mean? The Scriptures teach us that it means that you are united to Christ – and there is no other Christ than the One who suffered, was crucified, died and was buried – for you. There is no other Christ than the One who was raised to life on the third day, who ascended into heaven – and even now, “lives and reigns” to all eternity.

Baptized into Christ – united to His death and resurrection – you now stand, with Jesus, before the Father – and with Christ, the Father promises to give “whatever” you ask in His name. Baptized into Christ, He now dwells with you – and prays with you – “in my name.”

“Until now you have asked nothing in my name,” Jesus says. “Until now,” these disciples believed and confessed that Jesus is “from God” – but they do not yet know Him as their Savior who is crucified and raised to life again – for them.

They think they understand what is going on – but they don’t. Yes, Jesus came “from God” – and very soon, He said, He will leave the world and go to the Father – but first, there is a crucifixion, death and resurrection.

And it is in connection with this that Jesus says something that would dramatically affect the disciples’ prayers. “Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone.”

When the persecution heats up – when Judas betrays Jesus and they arrest Him – all the disciples run away. When the tribulation arises, they scatter. They leave Jesus all alone. With that in mind, listen to Jesus again.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, He will give it to you.” You abandon the Son and now you have the gall to ask the Father for anything? You don’t have a leg to stand on. No “boldness and confidence” before the Father.

“Yet I am not alone,” Jesus says, “for the Father is with me.” Indeed, YOU are not alone either – for Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father – who was crucified and raised to life again – is with you. When He says that “whatever you ask of the Father IN MY NAME” – He means that He is there with you. To pray in Jesus’ name is to stand before the Father with Jesus, who was crucified and raised to life for you.

Now you have “boldness and confidence.” Now you have a leg to stand on as you stand before the Father. When you ask the Father for “whatever” – you ask that He would do so, “for Jesus’ sake.” Father, hear this prayer – not because of me – but because of Jesus.

To ask the Father in Jesus' name is to pray the things that Jesus Himself would pray. After all, can you imagine standing with Jesus before the Father and asking the Father to hurt or harm your neighbor? Can you imagine asking the Father to give what you sinfully desire?

So what should we ask of the Father? Well, to start with, pray for those things that Jesus Himself has taught you to ask for in the Lord's Prayer. Pray to you Father in heaven that His Word would be taught, and lived, in truth and purity – in your life.

Ask Him to send the Holy Spirit so that He may rule and reign over your life – so that you may hear and believe His Word, and lead a holy life according to it. Pray that He would break and hinder your sinful desires so that you are not lead astray by the temptations of the evil one.

Petition Him to enable you to see all the gifts He gives for the support of your body and life – and lead you to use them in thankfulness. Pray that He would deliver you from the tribulations of your sin – and from all evil, in this life, and for eternity.

I know, it's a bold promise – to give you “whatever you ask ... in my name.” But it is the promise of Jesus Christ who died for you, and was raised to life so that you might live eternally. It is in the peace of His forgiveness – the certainty that He does not abandon you, but lives and dwells with you – and that He stands by you, praying to your Father in heaven – that you are bold to pray for “whatever.”

This very day, He sets you free from the bondage of your sins. He covers you with His blood. He reconciles you to the Father. And now, He assures you that your Father in heaven loves you – wants to hears your petitions – and promises to answer them. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.