

## 2025 Isaiah 62 New Name

I went to public school so rest assured I've been called a thing or two in my day. And, that didn't stop just after school, I assure you. I bet we all have been called a few things.

But we don't just get to play the victim here, however. I think if any of us are honest we apply some names, some labels, to others. How do we speak of others on the other side of the political aisle? To people we just don't like? To people we do like, and maybe like a little too much? And so we label and we have names for these folks: Hero, Villain, Savior(?), devil, nice, jerk, faithful, heathen. And the like.

And we know that many of these terms are not tossed around with perfect objectivity, and we certainly don't need to get into how many of the terms used are not charitable let alone appropriate. But, here's the thing, some of those names and labels are true, and accurate, and helpful in navigating this complex world we are in.

We are having Lutheran Schools week this week, so I usually have to answer the question: What is a Lutheran? And, since we are talking about names, how about a little rabbit hole? We are called Lutherans not because Luther is our Savior, not because the Church on earth was completely gone until he came, and we are not called Lutherans because *he* wanted that name—that's for sure. You Lutherans out there are called Lutherans because a bunch of people wanted to make fun of you. They were calling you a name! Making fun of you for being those crazy people who followed Luther's teachings in the Augsburg Confession – which taught how we stand on Scripture Alone, and who profess salvation by Christ alone through faith alone. Now, of course, a few other names and accusations went with it: heretics, despisers of good works, and so on, but

this word, Lutheran, came to mean: Someone who stands on Scripture Alone, and who professes salvation by Christ alone through faith alone.

It's not about worshipping Luther, nothing about how everything he ever wrote was perfect or even without sin. Nothing about how the Church was lost before him. Just: Someone who stands on Scripture Alone, and who professes salvation by Christ alone through faith alone.

And so the Lutherans, those folks, said, "You know what? Yeah, that's accurate."

And so the name, given the meaning attributed to it, stuck. And one can debate how useful this name is in our context, I suppose, but I suggest we proclaim and rejoice in being a people who stand on Scripture Alone, and who profess salvation by Christ alone through faith alone.

And, back to our sermon, May God give us discernment to use and employ names that are accurate, honest, and of course, appropriate.

God's Word does this! God's Word calls you a few things. We see it in our Old Testament reading today. Because of Israel's idolatry and corruption God's Law brings judgment upon them and they are conquered, laid low, and are called "Forsaken" because their God certainly didn't rescue them from Babylon. They are called "Desolate" because their men are killed, the brightest and best hauled off to be slaves, and their city burned.

When we look in the mirror of the Law of God, what do we see? What are we called? First commandment: have no other gods. Could we be called like Thomas, a "doubter"? Second commandment: his name. Are we a curse-er more often than a pray-er? Third: the sabbath day. Sure we are here today, but are we not at times "apathetic"? "Thankless"? Going through the motions? Fourth commandment: honoring parents and authorities. Are we "rebels," Idahoans? Fifth: murder. Are we angry? Do we hate our neighbor in our heart and therefore commit murder

as John says? 6<sup>th</sup> commandment: adultery. Read that sermon on the mount and ask if you are an “adulterer.” 7<sup>th</sup>: about stealing. No one could give us the name “greedy” ever could they? 8<sup>th</sup> commandment: false testimony. We wouldn’t be a “busy body” or a “gossiper,” or prejudiced in our speech, or have we been? 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>: are we “coveters”? “Surely not us - Who have more than most people in the history of the world!” Or do we still complain and are so unhappy and unthankful and discontent?

Do any of those labels stick? Are any of them accurate? The Law of God labels you. It’s why Paul can rattle off his lists of sins that condemn us and render us unfit for the kingdom of God. And if it was just up to us, if we were left alone, how would we be any different than ancient Israel, how would we not be “Forsaken and Desolate”? Without a future, without life.

There is Good News, however, literally – Gospel! Because the Gospel calls us things to. It has a few names for you too!

In our text today God promises to deliver his remnant, those who turn to him for mercy. He says I have a new name for you: “Married,” and “My delight is in her.” And we tough guys get a little uncomfortable, but this is a beautiful promise to God’s people, and his bride, the Church – all his people around the world with faith in him. That you will have someone to fight for you, to provide for you, to give you a future and a hope. This is what he promises his people in the midst of and after the exile, that he will not forsake or leave desolate any who trust in him and call on his holy name.

This is what the Gospel calls God’s people. Married, My Delight is in Her, and how about: forgiven, redeemed, holy! Yes, that’s what the Gospel calls you!

But on what basis? Who, being as holy as God, would covenant himself with people like us who are so many bad names. And then which word, which name sticks and gets the final say – the word of the law or the gospel? And if it is the names the Gospel gives (forgiven, redeemed, holy, beloved...) by what mechanism does that name supersede the names of the law that seem so accurate?

Well, the text and lectionary invites us to use marriage language. So perhaps we go there. In a marriage we see (1) a promise, a covenant – which is a promise fulfilled by death, is made. In addition, (2) usually a dowry, or a payment of some kind is given, and then (3) there is a legal name changing. And that new name is: THE name, right? Permissible in court, and an actual part of their identity. Unless that name is otherwise rejected or payment given to revert it.

And so, who would covenant himself with ugly sinners like us? Our God who delights in showing mercy and saving. Yes, in this illustration, we are the lost ones, whom the bridegroom, seeing nothing beautiful in us, he will love us anyway and will make us beautiful by his work and love. This is his great inexplicable love that loves “nevertheless.” We see beauty and we love it, he sees ugliness and he loves “nevertheless” and will make something beautiful. He is the friend of sinners, not to condone their sin, but to free them from it. He is the one who looks for the wandering. He is the physician who comes for the sick, not the “healthy” as if that was a name we could place on our sinful selves.

And so that’s who could love us who are so unlovable on our own. This is the one who gives us promises and a covenant. A covenant that he will pay the price for. He, because we are so poor, will pay this dowry, he will pay the legal fees as he seals that covenant in his blood, the abundant overflowing wine from his cross. And, you guessed it, He is the One who will change our name.

This great exchange happens as he hangs on a cross and becomes Forsaken for us. Eli Eli Lama Sabacthani. And he who knew no sin, the sinless one, becomes sin for us. That's his name, the sinbearer. He is the lamb who will take away the sin of the world. He is the sacrifice, he is the redeemer, He is Jesus. How's that for a name? Jesus, Yeshua. It means: Yahweh (the I AM) saves. That's his name.

Risen he is the bridegroom. The bridegroom who has paid all the fees, he's made the promise, and so yes, he bestows on us the names that the Gospel gives us. Beloved. Married. Clean and pure. Forgiven. Saint. The new name, the lasting one, the one that sticks.

This name is upon us in his promise, in baptism, in the body and blood. We belong to him.

And yes there is this sinful nature that brings us doubt and sin and fear, "will those names get the best of us? Will we be forsaken and desolate and damned because of them?" Well I ask, have you filled the paperwork, have you paid the fees, have you actively changed the name he has put upon you? Have you stood and publicly proclaimed that you reject the family name of Christian? Have you stated that Jesus is not yours, nor do you want him to be? "No one in the spirit says Jesus is accursed..." You said that? If not... well then perhaps rest a little in the name he has worked to place on you. It's his name, and it's yours. Rejoice in it, and join your family members as you stand and confess that name in the invocation and creed. "For no one does that apart from the Spirit..." Brothers and sisters, you are his.

The bridegroom became forsaken to save you from the names and accusations of the law. He is risen and at the right hand of God to give official notice, in the highest court, that you have his name upon you – and the names of the Gospel. Our response to this should be akin to a wedding

– rejoice! That’s certainly what we will be doing when the Bridegroom comes again, or brings us himself to his victory feast. God be praised.