

A NAME FOR EVERY NEED: EL SHADDAI

Sermon written by Martha-Jean Fitch

October 29, 2023

TEXT: Genesis 17:1-8, Psalm 91

One day, a woman who was pregnant with twins got into a car accident and fell into a deep coma for 6 months. When she awoke from the coma and realized that she was no longer pregnant, she frantically asked the doctor about her babies.

The doctor replied, “Ma’am your twins are fine, you have a boy and a girl. Since you were unconscious, your brother ended up naming the children for you.”

“Oh no!” the woman thought to herself, “My brother is so irresponsible and unpredictable!”

The woman asked the doctor, “So, what did he name my daughter?” The doctor answered, “Denise.”

The woman said, “He did okay, I like the name Denise. What did he name my son?” The doctor answered, “De-nephew.”

Names are important. It is a really big deal when we choose names for our children – and when companies choose names for their businesses. Names represent people and companies – they carry with them their character and reputation. Some we like and have confidence in and others not so much.

Think about the names when it comes to cars. Some only want a car or a truck with the name “Ford” on it...they are “Built to Last”. While others might trust only Chevrolets or Buicks – or say Toyota or Honda is the name to look for.

When it comes to computers, some have more confidence in the ones named Apple, while others prefer Toshiba or HP. I guess the same thing goes for our cell phones. Years ago, Nokia was the name to look for in a phone, famous for its strength. And now it is an I-phone or an Android.

And then there are all sorts of companies that have changed their names. I know that is really true for companies here in Galesburg. First Magic Chef was the name to look for in appliances - then Admiral and then Maytag.

Today in our Scripture reading – we are going to hear about some names being changed – and we’ll be introduced to yet another name for God – a name that is changeless and full of power and promise for you and for me! For - God has a name for every need!

You might remember a few weeks ago, we heard how Abram and Sarai got impatient waiting on God. So, they took matters into their own hands and came up with their own plan to have a son through Sarah’s servant Hagar – because God’s plan seemed too slow. When Hagar got pregnant, Sarai was not happy and she made life unbearable for Hagar. Finally, Hagar ran away – but God notices her, and calls her by name. And Hagar proclaims, “You are El Roi, because you have seen me and heard my cries.”

At the end of Genesis 16, we hear that Hagar’s son is born – and they named him Ishmael. And Abram was 86 years old!!

When chapter 17 begins, we discover that 13 years has gone by and Sarai has still not given birth to a child. And it appears that there have been no visions or messages from God those 13 years. It had been unusually silent for Abram, who had heard from God several times in

the past, promising him land as far as he could see and descendants, numbering like the stars in the sky! I imagine Abram was wondering when he'd ever hear from God again. So, **in Genesis 17**, we finally hear God speak. Follow along with me as I read Genesis 17:1-8 and watch for the names that change and what promises are made.

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am El-Shaddai— ‘God Almighty.’ Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. ²I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.”

³At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, ⁴“This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! ⁵What’s more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. ⁶I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!

⁷“I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God.”

Skip down to verse 15, and hear about Sarai:

¹⁵Then God said to Abraham, “Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly,

and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants.”

¹⁷ Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. “How could I become a father at the age of 100?” he thought. “And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?” ¹⁸ So Abraham said to God, “May Ishmael live under your special blessing!”

¹⁹ But God replied, “No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant. ²⁰ As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. ²¹ But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year.”

Lots of names are mentioned here. First, God changes Abram’s name to Abraham. What’s the significance of this? Abram means “exalted father” but Abraham means “father of nations”, which confirms the promise God gives him about his descendants. And then Sarai’s name is changed to Sarah. Sarai means “princess” but Sarah means “mother of nations.” God confirms that Sarah will give birth and she will be the mother of many generations.

But notice how Abraham responds to this news from God. He falls on his knees laughing! How can an old man who has been unable to

have children with his wife – who is also old – become the father and mother of many nations? It was just too ridiculous – laughable! So, he asks God, “Couldn’t Ishmael live under this blessing?” God answers that He hasn’t forgotten Ishmael – and He will make him a great nation. But His covenant would be with the son Sarah will bear. And what did God say his name would be? Isaac – which means “he who laughs”! Do you think God chose that name because of Abraham’s laughter – or maybe because this child would bring much laughter and joy?

Names chosen – names changed – all pointing to the promises of God.

But look specifically at how God introduces Himself – using this name for the very first time in Scripture. **He says in** verse 1, “I am El Shaddai – God Almighty.” You notice the first part of His name is “El” – short for Elohim ... the Creator of all things. And then the word **Shaddai** – which in Hebrew means the all-powerful, all sufficient One. El Shaddai is a name you can trust – and have confidence in. He can make life out of nothing and multiply it – and is faithful to keep His

promises and is sufficient for all our needs. This is the name God gives to Abraham – El Shaddai – the name he could trust.

And El Shaddai fulfilled His promise to Abraham in abundance – with the birth of Isaac and all the future generations that came from Abraham. This is just the beginning of the many places we see the name of El Shaddai showing up in Scripture. To Isaac and Jacob –El Shaddai is mentioned again to assure them of the promise of the covenant that God would surely fulfill. And then in Exodus, God appears to Moses to assure Him that God Almighty would help him as he went before Pharaoh to ask him to let the people go. When the Israelites are freed and stand on the shore of the Red Sea with no way forward, an army advancing from behind to take them back to captivity, El Shaddai parts the sea so they may walk across. He overcomes what seems like impossible odds and makes a way.

And Psalm 91 gives us the great assurance of El Shaddai, the Almighty God. Verses 1 & 2 declare:

*Those who live in the shelter of the Most High,
will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. ² This I declare about
the LORD: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety;
He is my God, and I trust Him.*

*And then verse 4: He will cover you with His feathers. He will shelter
you with His wings. His faithful promises are your armor and
protection.*

El Shaddai – God Almighty, is our protector and promise-keeper –
and our refuge and safety. His name El Shaddai is truly a name you can
trust.

I love how Charles Spurgeon interprets Psalm 91:1. He says:
*“Under the shadow of the Almighty is expression which implies great
nearness. We must walk very close to a companion, if we would have his
shadow fall on us. Can we imagine any expression more perfect in
describing the constant presence of God with His chosen ones, than this
-- they shall "abide under His shadow"? " For when we remember the*

blessing is a promised blessing -- we are led to feel it is a gift -- a thing therefore to be prayed for in faith, as well as sought for by God's appointed means. Ah, the hopes that this awakens! It is not we who cling to Him. It is He Who keeps near to us."

What kind of comfort and strength and safety does the name of El Shaddai - the Lord God Almighty – bring you this morning?

I think there is comfort in knowing that El Shaddai is a name we **can put our** confidence in. As Pastor David Owens share, “While God might not always take us out of the difficult situation we are in, or give us everything we ask for when we want it, we can trust in the name of the Lord and know that we are in the good and loving hands of our Father, God Almighty. There is only one name we can trust above all others – and that is in the name of Almighty God.

El Shaddai **is all powerful** – and we can know that He is able to do what He says He will do. He can work in our impossible situations – and can give us strength and power. He is able – more than able! That is why Paul was able to tell us, “God is able to do exceedingly

abundantly above all that we ask or think.” We can trust Him with whatever concerns this day.

El Shaddai is our Promise Keeper. Just as He fulfilled the covenant promise with Abraham and Sarah – He can keep the promises He has made throughout Scripture for you and for me. He is faithful and will never leave us or forsake us. He is all sufficient – and in Him we have everything we need.

El Shaddai is our **Refuge and Place** of Safety. We can trust in His protection and care, especially when we are feeling uncertain and are weighed down by the struggles of life. We must remember that God’s presence is a refuge and shelter that you can rely on, no matter what.

I don’t know where you are right now – what difficulties you might be facing, what fears may be attacking you – what doubts or questions fill your heart or what burdens you are carrying; but I do believe God is calling out to you today saying, “Let Me be your El Shaddai - for I am your Almighty God, I am your All Sufficient God, and I am your God of More Than Enough.” He has more than enough

grace that is all sufficient in our weaknesses – and can deliver us and make us more than conquerors through Christ our Lord.

You know the name “El Shaddai” became more well known back in 1983 when Michael Card wrote a song called “El Shaddai”. Amy Grant made the song popular – and it will actually be sung by our own Steve Jackson today in worship. It is an unusual song for contemporary music in that it has a lot of Hebrew words in it. I want to share those words with you now and translate them so that you can understand them better as you hear it being sung.

It begins with 3 names right off the bat for God: El Shaddai – which we know as God Almighty. Then with El Elyon – which is meaning God Most High. And then the name Adonai – which means Lord. Age to age, the song goes, You’re still the same by the power of Your name. Then there is a longer phrase in Hebrew that I have always wondered what it means. The words are: “Erkamka na Adonai.” These words are a direct quote from Psalm 18:1 which mean “I love you Lord”! And then the song ends with “I will praise you ‘til I die, El Shaddai!”

INVITATION

And so, as we conclude – the question remains – is that your response to El Shaddai? Is He Your Lord and Savior? Do you love Him with all your heart and will you praise Him until the day you die? He is reaching out to you right now with His love – and waiting for Your response. Can you make a decision today for Him? You are invited to come forward at this time to confess your faith – to become a part of this congregation – or to rededicate yourself to living for God Almighty.

Won't you come now and we will celebrate this most important decision you make for God.

BENEDICTION

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

RESOURCES

Sim Kay Tee, “El Shaddai”,

<https://ourdailyjourney.beta.ourdailybread.org/2013/02/03/el-shaddai/>

- [David Owen, “A Name You can Trust”](#). Jul 17, 2017

<https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/a-name-you-can-trust-david-owens-sermon-on-names-of-god-210331?page=6&wc=800>

Precept Austin, “El Shaddai” – quote from Charles Spurgeon.

https://www.preceptaustin.org/el_shaddai#naomi