

WHAT'S IN A NAME!

The Circumcision and Name of Jesus Sunday

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Grace, peace and mercy from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

The sermon for today is *What's In A Name?* Please listen once again to the Gospel reading in light of the sermon theme. St Luke 2:21 ***“And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, He was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb”***. So far the text.

What's in a name? That's what we'll discover this morning. But I will answer part of it with a question. Which one of you would name a child or allow a grandchild to be named Bozo? That name just doesn't seem to instill much confidence. There's not a much expectation in that name, is there?

Imagine needing to see an accountant to clean up some tax issues. Someone asks, “Well who's your accountant?” And you respond, “Why Bozo the accountant”. The name just doesn't instill much confidence. Or imagine being on a hospital gurney heading into life saving surgery. The orderly turns to the nurse and says, “Who's doing the surgery”. She responds, “Dr. Bozo!” There isn't much comfort in that name. One final example ought to suffice. The United States has been in many battles over the years and great generals who have led soldiers into war. Men with great names like, Grant, Patton, Eisenhower, MacArthur and Schwarzkopf notable soldiers whose men would gladly follow them into harms way. Can you imagine a General Bozo? Who would follow him?

What's in a name, evidently a lot more than we can imagine. It was the custom of the Jews in Jesus day to name a male child when they were circumcised. Eight days after Jesus birth He would have been circumcised and named. That's why this Sunday is called The Circumcision and Name of Jesus Sunday. A child would become one of the children of God through the Old Testament Sacrament of Circumcision. They would receive their spiritual name at time as well.

That Old Testament practice was then carried forward into the New Testament church. A newborn child would be baptized and named. Listen to what Colossians 2:10-12 says: ***“And in Christ you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead”***. Notice how this circumcision took place, “through baptism”. During the process of becoming a child of God through baptism the infant would receive their name. This process is called Christening. Perhaps you've watched an old western and heard someone say, “What's your Christian name Tex?”

Our single verse for today tells us how Jesus got His name. He didn't get his name from Joseph, who would announce His name at the circumcision. Our Lord didn't get His name from the whims and fancies of His mother Mary. Certainly family members and friends would expect Him to be named Joseph. That the custom of the people to name the first born after the father. But St. Luke tells us that the angel had announced Jesus' name to Mary even before He was even conceived.

If we go back a chapter in St. Luke's Gospel we see this is exactly the case. The archangel Gabriel appears to Mary and says to her, ***“Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with***

God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus." Jesus' name is not a suggestion from a beloved family member. It is not the result of hours of debate and conversation between expectant parents. Jesus' name comes from His true father, God the Father Himself. As such, it is the name which the Son of God, born in the flesh, will bear for all of eternity.

To ensure that He is named properly, an angel, perhaps the same angel who came to Mary, reveals himself to Joseph in a dream. **"Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save his people from their sins."**

Once Jesus is born, we see that Joseph obediently does what the Lord commanded, and names the child Jesus. By giving Him that blessed and holy name, he was publicly doing what God the Father had already done in heaven. He was making known to all what the angels had made known to him and to the child's mother. There was no other name suitable for this child. He had to be named Jesus.

But why? Why not Bob, or Bill, or even Joseph as was the custom? After all Joseph was a highly revered name. None of these names would do because Jesus' name IS His identity. The name Jesus tells us exactly who Jesus is and exactly what he does. The angel told Joseph this when he came to him in that dream. Matthew 1:21 ... **"you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save his people from their sins."**

Because He is our Savior, Jesus gets a name that says exactly that. Jesus (Jeshua) means, "Yahweh saves." "The LORD saves." The heavenly gift of salvation from sin, death, and the devil is bound up in the holy name of Jesus. So this name is reserved for the Man who is God Himself, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the one who saves us from our sins. It's a special name, a holy and blessed name. It's the name of God.

In the Second Commandment we are commanded by God: **You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.** The Small Catechism says: What does this mean? *We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks.*

The more we hear about the precious name of Jesus, the clearer it becomes that we do sometimes misuse His holy name. In frustration we often hear someone blurt out the name of Jesus as a way to express frustration or anger. We take the name of Jesus on our lips for so many things other than calling upon God, or praying to Him; praising Him or giving Him thanks. Every time we do so, we sin. And this sin brings the wrath of God upon us. Exodus 20:7 **"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain".**

None of us here are free from the guilt of this sin. The Law of God reveals that by our sinful misuse of the name of Jesus, we are guilty in the sight of God himself. We are sinners. Sinners against the very name of God!

Because we are sinners, this is why God the Father sent his Son, Jesus, to do exactly what His name says. To save us from our sins. And we are in desperate need of saving. We are so

desperately lost that we are, in fact, dead. And the one named Jesus, God in the flesh, has come to revive us from the dead and save us from our sin.

St. Paul tell us in Colossians, chapter 2 verse 13 through 15: ***“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross”***.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has saved us by taking our sinful misuse of His name to the cross on Calvary. There He endured the punishment for our sin and made us alive again. By shedding His blood and offering up His own life, Jesus bore the verdict of our guilt against His very name. And there (†), on the cross, Jesus gave up His own life so that we would be freed from the damnation brought about by our breaking of God's Holy Law.

When the angel told Joseph that Jesus would save His people from their sins, that's what he meant. Jesus would die for our sins. (†) He would bear our guilt to save our lives. He would revive us and make us alive with Himself, alive to live forever with Him. All these promises are bound up in Jesus' name, the promise of forgiveness, the promise of life. The promise of salvation and life lived in Christ, rather than in this sinful world.

God himself has given the name of Jesus as a blessing to us, body and soul. He covers us with His name. Galatians 3:27 ***“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ”***. St. Peter says in 1 Peter 3:21: ***“Baptism does now save you”***. In baptism you may have received your Christian name, but even more you received the name of Christ. A name is that is above all other names. ***“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”*** (Philippians 2:10-11).

Jesus means Yahweh Saves! And Yahweh saves by connecting you to the name of His Son Jesus. Through His Word He utters faith into you. Through the waters of Baptism He drowns the Old Adam and resurrects a new man clothed in the righteousness of Christ. He places His name upon you and calls you His own. You are adopted into the family of God. You may stray, from time to time, but God is faithful and will never leave nor forsake you.

Perfect love cast out all fears. And God has that perfect love for you. He loved you enough to send His son to the cross. There Jesus paid the price in full for your sin. From the cross Jesus says in His dying words, ***“Father forgive them they know not what they do!”*** (Luke 23:34). The Father has honored Jesus request. So you can know beyond any doubt that all your sins are forgiven price paid in full by the blood of Jesus.

So what's in a name? A lot when the name is Jesus. For in Jesus Yahweh Saves and He has saved you, because in the name of Jesus all your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit, In Jesus name, AMEN and AMEN!

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
AMEN