

Name & Circumcision of our Lord      1/1/23  
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.

One of my favorite parts of the baptismal service, as you are probably aware of by now, is when the parents are asked, “How are you named?” Keeping in tradition, I generally have the mother give me the full name of the child.

Today, we celebrate the 8<sup>th</sup> day of our Lord Christ’s becoming flesh and dwelling among us. The day He was circumcised and named.

When it came to naming her son, Mary didn’t have to contemplate if he would be named after grandpa or dad, or given a quite traditional name, or a newer, more modern name. She didn’t have to consult Google to see what the most popular boy’s names in Judea were. You recall that when Joseph found out Mary was with child before they lived together as husband and wife, he “being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly”. But, the Evangelist Matthew tells us an angel appeared to him, saying,

“Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call His name **Jesus**, for He will save His people from their sins” (Mt 1:19-21).

Like our bulletin cover reminds us this morning. On our bulletin cover this morning, it looks like there is an “I”, and an “H”, and an “S”. You have probably seen this before, because it is a popular symbol of the Christian faith. Actually, these are the Greek letters iota, eta, and sigma, the first three letters of the Greek spelling of “Jesus”. The symbol on our bulletin is

the symbol for the name “Jesus”. And, “Jesus” means “the Lord saves,” or simply, “Savior”. And that is news of great joy for you and for me, My Friends in Christ, because we need a Savior.

In one of my favorite Christmas hymns, if not my favorite Christmas hymns, we sing,

“Lo, how a rose e’er blooming from tender stem hath sprung!  
It came, a flow’ret bright, **amid the cold of winter**” (LSB 359:1).

I don’t have to tell you North Dakotans we are in the cold of winter. In fact, “cold” isn’t even the word for it. What you should be considering is: What are you thinking living in North Dakota?

No, I’m not trying to play weatherman this morning. I am calling your attention to the cold, the dark, that remind us of the curse of sin; that curse that afflicts us every day. Illness and infirmity grasp our bodies. People, often people we love and care for every much, frustrate us, disappoint us, hurt us. You work hard to build your property, and someone comes along and vandalizes it, steals it. Wagging tongues destroy your name and reputation. And where do you go to get it back?

And you, you Dear Child of God, know the Commandments. You know you are to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. You are to love your neighbor as you love yourself. But you don’t. You trust in lady luck. You don’t call upon the Lord your God in the day of trouble. You believe the lies of Satan, rather than the promises of God in His Word. You don’t respect those God has placed in authority over you. You don’t forgive as God has forgiven you in Christ Jesus. You stay angry, really angry, and allow the sun to go down on your anger. You even wish harm and ruin upon your neighbor. You’ve lied; you’ve cheated. You were jealous of your neighbor when you saw what your neighbor had, and

wanted it for yourself.

You know what you do when you do those things? You make the Father's creation **cold**. You darken it with the hardness of your heart.

But, there is news of great joy for you. And it is this:

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.

For your sins, you deserve death and hell, but Jesus came to save you. At His circumcision, He placed Himself under God's Commandments, under the Law, for you. He did what you couldn't do for yourself – He completely and perfectly fulfilled the Law for you. He perfectly feared, loved, and trusted in God. He perfectly loved His neighbor. All this He did for you.

And, He did something else for you, as well. He shed His blood for you. "Under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins," the Bible says (He 9:22). So at His circumcision on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of His earthly life, Jesus shed His blood, so He could live up to His name and save you from your sins. His blood was also shed when He was flogged, crowned with the crown of thorns, and nailed to the cross of Calvary for you. Upon that cross, His blood was shed, for you, in your place. He lived up to His name perfectly. And because He lived up to His name, you are forgiven.

I said a moment ago that one of my favorite parts of the baptismal service is to ask that question, "How are you named?" The reason I love that question, and hearing your name, is because that means all of Jesus' circumcision and all His blood is shed not just for the world ... but for you, **by name**.

St. Paul says it this way, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on -- literally, ‘clothed yourself with’ – Christ” (Ga 3:27). In these cold North Dakota winters, you put on your coat, you clothe yourself with your parka, to protect you from the cold, to keep you warm. So it is for us in our baptism. In that blessed washing of regeneration, you put on Christ just as you do your winter coat. You wear the righteousness of Christ. God looks at you and does not see the uncleanness and filth of your sin, but the righteousness and purity of Jesus Christ. When God looks at you, He does not see any sin, because all of your sin is gone in Christ. And with that He is well pleased.

I remind you of that – and you need to remind yourself of that every day. Which is why your baptismal certificate is hanging on your bedroom wall – because this world is all its perversity, darkness, coldness, tries to squeeze you into its mold. And you’re only popular; you’re only liked; you’re only welcome; if you do things according to the ways and whims of this cold world. The GOOD NEWS is God doesn’t see you like that at all. The world may not think you wise, or smart; they may not like you at all. OK, so be it. Remember, Dear Child of God, your Father in heaven is well-pleased with you. So, you can be well-pleased with yourself.

And, there is one other thing we have to note this morning, for your faith and life, Dear Child of God. “At the end of eight days...” We cannot overlook the fact that Jesus was circumcised and named on the 8<sup>th</sup> day. That is much too important to overlook. For this reason: Here’s a trivia question for you – How many days are in a week? Seven, right? Here was have the 8<sup>th</sup> day!

The 8<sup>th</sup> day of life was the beginning of a new week. So, the beginning of a new week – the 8<sup>th</sup> day -- was a sign that they were new in

Christ. So it is of us. Living in Christ, the old is gone, and we become new in Christ and that means we don't live in sin anymore. We don't darken creation by our deeds of darkness. We trust in God, even when our reason can make no sense as to why He is working the way He is. You forgive as God has forgiven you. You are kind; patient; content. Ye live as the little-Christ you are, shining the light of Christ to warm and enlighten this present day.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.