

Luke 2: 21 (Name of Jesus; Trinity Minocqua, January 3, 2021)

***“On the eighth day when it was time to circumcise him, he was given the name Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.”***

### **“Jesus Means Salvation”**

Tears of joy mixed with the sweat of pain on mom’s flushed cheeks. A proud dad holds the little tike for the first time as the hospital staff asks *“What are you going to name him?”* The new parents had poured over baby name books, searched into family history, and avoided negative connotations. The new parents are certain of the answer to the question in the hospital. They blurted it out together. Mary and Joseph needed no such searching. And there was no OB staff and fancy equipment. Grandpa and Grandma were not on their way. The new parents were hunkered down in a barn - alone. *“Ishua!”* is perhaps even spoken through their exhaustion. They both recalled respective visits from an angel: ***“You will give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”*** [Matthew 1: 21; Luke 1:31]

***“On the eighth day when it was time to circumcise him ...”*** From Bethlehem it would have been another 30 mile walk. But they must go. **He** must go. Israel had many requirements, but they all had one purpose: point people to their fulfillment in Jesus! Circumcision on the eighth day was no exception. From the day the Lord established circumcision for Abraham’s children it remained a physical reminder for God’s people. They were set apart for a special plan until a special child would be born and brought to that very Temple. The fulfillment of that plan completes every expectation to the fullest. Upon his own Baptism Jesus reminded John ***that it was necessary to fulfill ALL righteousness*** [Matthew 3:15]).

Jesus’ name means salvation. ***He will save his people from their sins.*** Thousands upon thousands of baby boys were circumcised from the time of Abraham to the time of Jesus. Only a few are mentioned to us and none of them have the significance of the Boy in the Temple with Mary and Joseph that day. Generations of sinners had been brought to the temple, were given a name, and sent on their way with one less piece of flesh. But they all returned just as sinful as the day they were born. Not one of those circumcisions earned a place in heaven or purchased any of God’s forgiveness.

His name means *our* salvation. Generations of children continue to be born. Together with them, we are born nameless, guilty recipients of Adam’s disobedience. We are born into this world with a deep-seated need: rescue from sin; rescue from death; rescue from hell’s fierce powers! We know those enemies well. We battle their lingering attacks every moment of each day. Guilt before God flavors our sense of namelessness. Like helpless babies we fall into our habitual sins everyday. Like overwhelmed parents of a newborn we sense that cloud of fear. Satan loves to place us into pits of despair believing we are too sinful to have value before a righteous God. We certainly do not deserve his name. He has the right to label us citizens of hell.

Today we remember the meaning of Christmas Day. This baby is the Word of God who took a body. He was ***given the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.*** That small phrase speaks volumes! It was not Joseph’s right to name the Boy. God the Father named his earthen Son before he arrived in the Temple. **This is Immanuel: God-With-Us. Of the Father’s love begotten! E’er the world began to be! Alpha & Omega born to sinners; “born under law to redeem those under law [Galatians 4:4].** He was born with a human body to be given as the atoning sacrifice for sin. Eight days after his birth, the Son of God, the last Jewish boy who needed to do this, gives his first drop of blood! Jesus’ name means salvation!

***“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called the sons of God, and that is what we are! [1 John 3:1]”*** God has placed **his** Name upon us ... as certain as he had Aaron place the blessing of his Name on his people Israel [Numbers 6: 22-27 is the Old Testament lesson for today and reminds us of that special blessing we receive to this day!]. Many of us were brought to the house of God for our new name: recall your Baptism when God placed his Spirit into your hearts to call him **Abba** Father. Far more significant

than our own names is the label God gave us at the Font: ***You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus [Galatians 3:26].***

Paul reminded the Philippians of the importance of Christ's humble entrance to earth in order to receive that Name, Jesus: ***"being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross [Philippians 2: 8]"*** It is that act of selfless love for us which moves Paul to conclude ***"Therefore God ... gave him the name that is above every name ... that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow! [Philippians 2:9-10]"*** The Son of God whose flesh was broken on his eighth day, was willing to have it completely broken for you on Calvary. And then, in a promise made the night before his death, he gives you his broken body in The Supper where his Name means everything to us!

As new parents welcome a new child, they wonder what this life will bring. They wonder what will become of their child. Mary and Joseph had plenty of instruction on the distinct purpose of their Son. That very day the Lord provided Simeon and Anna as voice pieces, not only to Mary and Joseph, but to the rest of the world. Simeon rejoiced to know that this was the glory of God to his people Israel and is the Light of Salvation to all nations of people. At age 12 he will teach scholars in the Temple. He will become a man who loves the nameless, helpless, hopeless dregs of society. He will preach to thousands in Galilee and yet reserve time for one grieving widow in Nain. He would eat breakfast with friends and supper with his enemies. He would rebuke church leaders and forgive a prostitute in the same breath. Mary would see her boy do great things until a ***"sword that would pierce her soul"*** [Luke 2:35] referring to the cruel death she would see him suffer. Three days later, in the vicinity of his eighth day naming, he crushed death and left his grave alive!

Even there in glory he lives and loves to plead for you. He knows your name. He knows your needs. He hears your prayers. The one whose **name is above every name** is not above loving only you and giving his name to all! His name is Jesus for he saved his people from their sins. That means that your life matters to Jesus. The things you do from sunup to sunset is the way the Christ-child uses your hands and hearts to serve others. Your labors of love to home and family, your duties in the workplace, your service to community and neighbors, all of it bears the name of Jesus as the Spirit lives to others through your life. These are the songs of praise you sing long after the carols of Christmas fade! This is why we pause to see one verse from Luke's beautiful telling of how he came to the world: ***"he was given the name Jesus!"***

***How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear***

***It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds, and drives away all fear.***

***Dear name! The Rock on which I build, My shield and hiding place,***

***My never-failing treasury filled, With boundless stores of grace!***

***I praise in weakness from afar - How cold my warmest thought!***

***But when I see you as you are I'll praise you as I ought!*** (CW 358: 1, 3, 6) Amen.

Pastor Michael Helwig