

SERMON FOR JANUARY 1, 2023

TEXT: LUKE 2: 21

THEME: THE NAME

And when, after eight days, the time came for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name which the angel had given to him before his birth.

In the name of Jesus:

Happy New Year! Even though it is a time to celebrate the dawning of 2023, as Christians we gather to celebrate what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, namely, that God has given to all who believe in Jesus a NEW NAME.

Today we often underestimate the importance of names. Many of us have received our names from our parents, without any input from their children. We have been named because of grandparents, family history, even we have been named because our parents liked the way our first name sounded with the last name! No matter your name, your name is important. It identifies you, tells you and others who know you who you are and what you are about. Family names are sometimes derived from the job of a long forgotten ancestor. You can imagine what someone who had the name of Sawyer, Potter, Smith, or Coppersmith did a long time ago. Some names came from where people lived, such as Rivers, Burger, Hill, and so on.

But no matter your name, that name says something about you as a person. Your “good name” is your reputation, it is how you are known as a

person. If you have a bad name in business, you then have the unwanted designation that you can not be trusted or that you do shoddy work. Today, companies will invest millions of dollars in order to try to make their brand name appealing, or to overcome a bad name for their product. If you are old enough you may remember the Tylenol scare, where people were afraid to take Tylenol because some of the product was tainted. The makers of Tylenol spent millions of dollars trying to overcome the bad name that they acquired because of people tampering with their product. Seven people in the Chicago area died as a result of someone lacing Tylenol capsules with potassium cyanide. The makers of Tylenol were fortunate in that they were able to remarket Tylenol and make it a trusted brand name once again. But there are countless others who because of a bad product and bad name that went out of business. The Edsel was a car made by Ford that was supposed to be the automobile of the future. But because of its failures, the name Edsel became synonymous with failure. Names, good names, are important to people and companies in the business world.

Just as names are important to us today, so they were important in Biblical times as well. There are countless examples of references in the Bible that say: "they shall be called" or "he shall be called." Eve was given her name

because she is the mother of all the living human beings. Today, we celebrate the Name of Jesus because the name of Jesus means everything to us.

Jesus received His name from the angel. It was announced to Joseph that the Child born of Mary (Jesus) would be given the name Jesus because “He will save His people from their sins.” The name Jesus identifies this Child born of Mary as the Savior of the world. It was a name given to Him by His Heavenly Father. Jesus is the name that reveals that He is your Savior and that He will live His life as your Savior.

But how will Jesus save? By shedding His blood. This is why, eight days after His birth Jesus was brought to the Temple, to be circumcised, just like all good Jewish boys were. On the day of His circumcision, Jesus was given His name and in His circumcision Jesus shed His first drops of blood, as a sign of what He would do on Calvary’s cross, when He would pour out His life and blood for the sins of man.

That is why Jesus’ name is special, because this name reveals to sinners that Jesus is the Savior and that the name of Jesus actually saves all who believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. For the Bible says: “there is salvation in one else, there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12) and “**18** Whoever believes in him is not

condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” (John 3:18).

God has given to you this Name of Jesus in the waters of your Baptism. Baptism isn't just simple water but it is a life giving water, a water that gives faith in Jesus and gives you the name of Jesus. Through faith in Jesus you are a little Christ, a Christian, a follower of Jesus. You now bear the name of Jesus and it is because of Jesus that you have a special relationship with God.

But you know all too well that you haven't lived up to that name of Jesus in your life this past year. Jesus says that you must be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect. But in examining your life, you realize that you are far from perfect. Nobody is perfect, the saying goes, and how true that is! Your mixed up priorities show that you don't love God as you should. The curse words you utter under your breath reveal that you don't keep God's name holy as He expects. Your love for yourself supercedes your love for those around you. So many times you have been deemed unworthy of having the name of Jesus or even being called a Christian.

But God has saved you in Jesus. Just as a small child who, when in fear and danger will run to a parent crying out:” Mom, Dad,” so too you can call upon God and His name for His blessing and protection. The Bible reveals that the name of God actually gives the presence and power of God in all of its

fullness. That is why we keep God's name holy, that is why we treat God's name with great care and reverence, for God reveals Himself and comes to sinners by His name. Just look at Elijah, who called upon God's name to defeat the prophets of Baal, or David who called on God's name to slay Goliath. The lepers cried out to the Lord: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." And by calling on Jesus' name, they were healed.

These same blessings are given to you in His name. Whenever you confess your sins at the beginning of our worship service, the Pastor, as God's called and ordained servant forgives you all of your sins in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Just as Moses and Aaron of the Old Testament, the pastor speaks not of his own authority but as one who is authorized by Jesus to represent Jesus and to speak in His name. That is the pastor's job, to bring you the blessings of God by speaking forgiveness, life and peace in the name of Jesus.

So too God speaks His blessing upon you at the conclusion of the worship service. The benediction gives God's blessings to you to get you through another week. The Lord promises: "So shall they put my name on the people of Israel, and I will bless them." Did you catch that? God puts His name on His people to bless them! God puts His name on you to bless you!

And you are blessed! You have been blessed in this past year, and you will be blessed in the coming year! Why? Because of Jesus! Your Savior! This coming year of 2023 will certainly bring its share of surprises, its share of disappointments, trials and tribulations. Yes, you will have your share of trial and tribulation in the New year, but you can rejoice and be confident. Why? Because you have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

What is in a name? In our world, not a great deal. We don't value people's names and those names fail to tell us very much about a person today. But that Name, The Name of Jesus means everything! In His name you are forgiven. In His name you have His peace. In His name you are assured that He is with you always, no matter what happens in the coming year. So in this year 2023, call on His name, trust in His name, live in His name, and share with others the name of Jesus, for in Jesus there is forgiveness, joy, peace, and God's blessing!

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen

