

Luke 2:21

**“He Was Called Jesus”**

**Circumcision and Name of Jesus**

January 1, 2024

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.

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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Happy Eighth Day of Christmas! On the Eighth Day of Christmas, my true love gave to me: Eight maids a-milking. These eight maids a-milking represent the eight beatitudes that Christ spoke as part of His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5.

Now, tucked between the “Gloria in Excelsis” of Christmas Day and the “Nunc Dimittis” spoken by Simeon 40 days after Christ’s birth, we have a single verse. It looks insignificant, but that single verse is extremely significant for Jesus, and for us and our salvation.

***“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”*** (Luke 2:21).

Nine months earlier, the angel Gabriel came to the virgin Mary and said, ***“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end”*** (Luke 1:30-33).

By God’s ceremonial Law command, every male child was to be circumcised on the eighth day. And by circumcision, the child was incorporated into God’s covenant with Israel, dating back to Abraham. The circumcision and naming of a child on the eighth day would be equivalent to a Christian Baptism today. However, as important as Baptism’s are for Christians, the circumcision wasn’t a temple event. The circumcision was done locally, wherever the family lived and without any fanfare. It was like when a nurse comes to a mother’s hospital room and asks her to verify the information about her child to go on the birth certificate. The baby is being held by his mother as the father smiles joyfully, but there is little to any fanfare.

On the eighth day, following the birth of their firstborn, Joseph and Mary did precisely what the angel Gabriel commanded. As faithful Jews, they did as the Lord had commanded them. So, on the eighth day of Jesus' earthly life, they incorporated their Son into the Abrahamic covenant, which also included the official ceremony of the Child being given His name: ***“He was called Jesus”*** (Luke 2:21).

There are some names we like and some names that you and me may call “iffy.” Typically, children are named after a favorite uncle or aunt, grandfather, or grandmother. Children are typically named in honor of a special relationship we have or had with a person. In other words, the significance of a name can change depending on our experiences with a person or persons who bear that name.

Only God's Name never changes its meaning. And God's Name is Jesus. Literally, “Yahweh Saves.” Jesus is Lord of lords. Jesus is King of kings. Jesus is ***“Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”*** (Isaiah 9:6).

As the angel Gabriel said to Joseph, ***“Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for 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”*** (Matthew 1:20-21).

The Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, is He who alone paid the redeeming price of His life for the sins of the world. Jesus, ***“though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”*** (Philippians 2:6-8).

Because of what Christ alone has done for us and for our salvation, through inspiration, St. Paul tells us, ***“Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the Name that is above every name, so that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”*** (Philippians 2:9-11).

And oddly enough, although Joseph and Mary named their Child Jesus, it wasn't them who named their Son. It was God Himself, through the angel Gabriel. Jesus, who is fully God from eternity, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, He named Himself, since He came as the Savior from the powers of sin, eternal death, and Satan's tyranny.

The Second Commandment teaches us: *“You shall not misuse the Name of the Lord your God.”* And we begin the Lord’s Prayer with: *“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name.”* So, we ought to not misuse God’s Name, but hold His Name sacred. We ought to call upon God’s Name in times of trouble, whether it is doubt, despair, or sickness. When we call upon His name, He promises to deliver you.

We also ought to call upon God’s Name in praise and thanksgiving. This is what we do at each Divine Service. Here, we praise God’s Name when we say the Gloria Patri: *“Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.”*

Indeed, the Prophet Isaiah also gives God other names: ***“Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”*** (Isaiah 9:6). Isaiah also gives God another name: “Immanuel.” ***“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His Name Immanuel”*** (Isaiah 7:14), which means God with us.

But the Name above all Names is Jesus. For in the Name Jesus, we are told of His purpose: Yahweh Saves. He will save His people from their sins.

We, too, have been given a name. We are called Christians, meaning followers of Christ. St. Paul writes, ***“For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise”*** (Galatians 3:26-29).

So, through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, we have been given Christ’s Name. And we have become heirs according to the promise. We have been re-created as children of God. Our sins are forgiven through Jesus Christ alone. And so, we live in repentance and faith in Him, for He is our Savior. Our Savior, who is called Jesus. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

**+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +**