



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church
www.mzluth.org

December 24, 2009
Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship
Luke 2:8
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Micah 5:2-5a
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 96
Second Lesson: 1 John 1:1-9
Gospel: Luke 2:1-20

What's In a Name?

A fulfilled promise

An amazing truth

As we've been preparing to celebrate the birth of our Savior throughout the Advent season, we, in our special services, have looked at some of the names of our Savior. In the Midweek services, we looked at an offshoot of the ancient O Antiphons. We considered the hymn, "My Soul in Stillness Waits," and looked at the titles of the Messiah that were mentioned in those hymn verses. In the Choir and Band concert this past weekend, the theme of the service also dealt with the names and titles given to the Messiah again based on the O Antiphons, titles that were given to the Messiah in the Old Testament.

Think about all the names that were used for the Messiah ahead of time. A lot of them taught us a lot of different things about him. We see Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor, the Lord our Righteousness, and many other things. When he was born that day in Bethlehem and then that night the angels told the shepherds that he had been born that day. They tell us something about who that baby is in the name that they used for him. They said, "Today in the Town of David a Savior is born to you. He is Christ the Lord." As you consider Christ the Lord this evening, you see that this name really tells us that an ancient promise has been fulfilled. It tells us an amazing truth that is beyond understanding, and it's something that is absolutely essential to us.

The Promise is fulfilled really takes off on the name "Christ." Christ is a Greek word. It also comes from the same meaning of a Hebrew word, "Messiah," but neither one of them means "I'm really frustrated and angry right now." This might be how you and I use it, but that's not what it means. It means "Anointed One." The Messiah was the Anointed One. The Christ was the Anointed One. The "Anointed One" in Greek is "Christos," and "Messiah" is the Hebrew for "Anointed One."

What in the dickens would that mean? For you and I, that probably doesn't mean a whole lot, but to those shepherds, I get the feeling they understood it. In the Old Testament they would anoint people into various offices. You might remember the story of how Samuel went to anoint the new king when God took the throne from Saul and was going to give it to David from Jesse's house. Samuel went there and anointed him with oil into his office as king. Priests would be anointed into their office. Prophets would be anointed into their office. But really only one guy was anointed into the office

of prophet, priest and king. That was Jesus. He was the Anointed One that would be the fulfillment of all those prophecies of the Messiah. He wasn't just some other great teacher. He wasn't just some great ruler. He wasn't just someone who would offer sacrifices for himself and for the people. He was something completely different. He was "The" Christ. He was the one that they had all looked forward to. The promises that they had heard growing up in their temple worship, the synagogue worship, the promises of the One who would be their righteousness, the One who would be that Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. When the angels say that "the Christ has been born to you," this is what they are talking about. The Messiah has come. All the promises that God had ever made throughout the entirety of the Old Testament period that pointed people ahead to the One who would be their salvation was now fulfilled.

It's kind of amazing that God brings that message to some shepherds that are out in a dark field. The night sky is lit up and in the middle of that darkness comes this message that everything that everyone has longed for is now here.

I wonder if the shepherds digested that right away or if this is something that they had to chew on a little bit and talk about with each other as they walked into town. I get the feeling they understood this part of it right away because they leave the sheep, something shepherds wouldn't do, and they go to town because the Anointed One has come. The Savior of the world is there; the One that they looked forward to, the One that all the sacrifices pointed to. Here comes one that rules, an everlasting king. Here comes one that is not only going to be a prophet that speaks God's Word, but he is going to be the message himself. Here comes one that is going to offer the sacrifice that pays for all sins of all time. His perfect life and then his death in our place with our sins put upon him. All of that is really conveyed in that title "Christ." As you and I look back with a vantage point that we have of seeing completed history, we get to see a much fuller picture. But they had enough to understand that God was telling them through these angels, "The promise has been kept. The Savior is here. Go take a look and you'll find him wrapped up in some cloths in a manger." I don't think they had to wonder, "Gee, is this the right manger?" I don't think there was probably another kid in a manger in Bethlehem that night.

God kept his promise. But how he kept his promise is an amazing truth that I wonder if they had to chew on a little bit more. When he says, "Christ the Lord," think about what that means, the "Lord." Christ is his office. The office they described as Savior. Here is the fulfillment. The "Lord" would be a name that they would associate with that Hebrew word "Yahweh," which was the God of the covenant, the Savior God, the God that keeps his promises, the God of full and faithful grace. When Moses said, "Show me your glory," God put Moses in the cleft of the rock, covered him up and then had his glory pass by him. But when he passed by him he said, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in love." The sermon he preached on the meaning of the name of the Lord; this was a name that was used only for God. Although it is recorded for us here in the Greek, this word in the Greek would have brought to their minds that same connotation that it had in Hebrew, the

compassionate and gracious God. The word “Lord” here for them would have been saying “He is Christ, true God,” the God who has made his promises and the God who keeps his promises; the God who is full of grace and compassion. That I think they probably had to chew on a little bit longer. But I think they would have come to that understanding because when they heard the word “Lord,” that’s where their minds were trained to go.

Whatever you read in the Psalms or you read in the Old Testament, you see LORD in all capital letters, this is what they would have been thinking of; this is the God of full and faithful grace.

So here is the amazing truth, this baby they are going to go see in a manger that looks like any other baby is the Lord. He is true God from all eternity. That’s a truth that we wouldn’t have expected. That God leaves heaven, takes on human flesh and becomes one of us, for no other reason except that he wants to redeem us, take away our sins; this is not something you and I would have dreamt of as the way that our sins would have been taken away. We would have come up with something that would have involved you and I doing something hard, really sacrificing, or doing something that we could point to and say, “Look at what I’ve done.” That’s not God’s way. God’s way is he says, “I’m going to come and do it all. I’m going to keep my promise. I, myself, will come and take the punishment your sins deserve. I will become one of you and live under the Law in your place.” That’s an amazing truth.

I absolutely believe that when we understand the depth of that truth, that God loved us so much he became one of us, that’s going to help us chase away all those times that Satan brings those doubts into our minds that God doesn’t know what’s going on in our hearts and in our lives, or he doesn’t care even if he does know, or he isn’t going to be there to help us. The God that loved us enough to become one of us is not ever going to turn his back on us.

So in these familiar words, Savior, Christ, the Lord, these are glorious truths that give us confidence as we live each and every day of our lives. They are words to cling to. So when it comes down to it, there’s an awful lot in those names.