



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

January 1, 2012

New Year's Day Worship

Sermon Text: [Luke 2:21](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Numbers 6:22-27](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 8](#)

Second Lesson: [Philippians 2:9-13](#)

The Name of Jesus

The verse I just read to you could be called the forgotten verse of Luke 2. The Gospel for Christmas Eve was [Luke 2:1-20](#). Here the kids recite it every year. It's always read every year at our Candlelight Service. Those are the well known verses about shepherds and angels and the manger and all this stuff. *Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told* ([Luke 2:19-20](#)). Did you know that this was the next verse? *On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived* ([Luke 2:21](#)).

For God, because I think maybe in a certain way we are kind of uncomfortable with it, Baby Jesus in the manger had to cry on the eighth day. We don't want to think about that, do we? His blood was shed. At his circumcision it was the first time he shed his blood for us, right? It doesn't fit. There's no peace you go buy for your Creche, right? The circumcision of Jesus is just not a part of what we think about when we think about Luke 2 and the Christmas story. Yet God, in telling his story in Scripture, thought this was pretty important and the next thing we needed to know.

As we gather together today and we consider the name of Jesus, we see what this name means because part of it is we see how he already passively begins to do for us what we could not do, which is keep the Law perfectly. This name tells us who he is and what he does. This name is the name above all names, like we've heard and we sing, *How Wondrous Is Your Name in all the Earth*. We've seen how God has said this about his name over and over and it certainly is something that we can say about Jesus.

On the eighth day they went to circumcise him because that's what the covenant demanded. This covenant goes back to Abraham. God had promised Abraham that all nations on earth would be blessed through him, through his offspring that he didn't have yet. We are told that Abraham believed God, and God credited it to him as righteousness. Then after Abraham was declared righteous through faith, God gave this covenant, this circumcision as a sign of the covenant between Abraham and himself, and he said "all your offspring and descendants are to do it as a reminder of this covenant." It was really a unilateral covenant. "I'm going to bless all nations through the Savior that is going to come from your line. Your part is receiving the blessings."

So circumcision as a requirement of the Law was simply there to remind people that God does everything. Of course human beings, as warped as we are at times, like to give ourselves more credit than we deserve, so it had come to be viewed by the Jews as a meritorious work that separated them from the Goyim, the nations, and showed how special they were compared to everyone else. They turned a sign about how God does everything for your salvation and how God does everything to bless you into how it's all about us and we're better than the rest of you. That's just how we are. As sinners we turn everything upside down and we mess things up. That's why we needed a Savior.

The Savior came, and it's interesting to think that the One who gave this covenant, the Lord, now has the sign of the covenant done to him as this right. That's kind of mind boggling when you think about it. The Lord himself comes to earth as an infant and is marked with the sign of the Lord's faithfulness, the Lord's mercy and the Lord's love. Then he's given the name that tells us this is the Lord. Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Yehoshua* (Joshua). It's the name that means literally "the Lord saves." This child is the Lord, the One who gave the covenant. God has become flesh.

That sounds right because God had revealed the name of the Lord already through Moses in Exodus. *The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love, showing mercy to thousands, to them that love him and keep his commands.* (See [Exodus 34:6-7](#).) Talk about his mercy and his grace. Then through Isaiah he said, *I am the LORD, there is no other, there is no Savior apart from me* (See [Isaiah 45](#)). So the idea that the name "the Lord saves," although it was a common name, in this case it was the chosen name because this is exactly who this child would be. The Lord who had given the covenant of circumcision comes to fulfill the covenant that circumcision was a sign of. The Lord would be the One who would bring the blessing. The Lord himself would come and live among his people, take on human flesh. God becomes flesh so he can be the Lord, our righteousness, as he had promised through Jeremiah.

Over and over the name "the Lord" is associated with God's grace, God's love, God's mercy, and God's plan to act to save his lost people. That's what we see happening on the eighth day. He is circumcised. He is given the name Jesus, which tells us this child is the Lord. But it also tells us this child saves. He saves by putting himself under the Law because you and I can't keep the Law. It's just who and what we are. Because we are sinners, this is what we do.

In your life, have you ever seen the sign "Wet Paint" and had to touch it just to make sure it was really wet paint? It's the same way when God says "don't do this, don't covet." Paul says, "That instills in my heart the desire to covet." When God says, "Love your neighbor. Don't hate your enemy," the sinful nature in us says "No way. I'm going to hate my enemy."

When God lays the Law in front of us, part of its purpose is to show us just how corrupt and absolutely wicked we are to our core. We might think we are wonderfully nice

people, but when it comes right down to it, we are sinners who see what God says and say “No, I’m going the exact opposite direction.” That’s what we are by our nature. That’s why God has to keep the Law for us. That’s why God places himself, even as an eight-day old infant, under the mosaic law, the law of circumcision, all this so that everything is fulfilled, so that he can fulfill all righteousness because you and I can’t. Here is his passive obedience allowing this to be done to him so that in his active obedience he can keep all the laws that you and I don’t keep. His blood is shed. It’s the first time it’s shed, but like the other times that it was shed, it’s shed as a part of paying for our sins and saving us from our sins.

So this name “Jesus” that sometimes you and I use to express frustration, express the fact that we are upset when things aren’t going right, this is the name that means God loves you so much that he became flesh and he lived and died in your place to save you. That’s why it’s the name that is above all names. That’s why it’s the name of wondrous love. That’s why it’s a clear indication of what sinners we are when we warp it into something else and use it just to express “Oh no! Someone cut in front of me in the grocery store line so I have to mutter his name under my breath because I’m upset!” That’s how warped we are. That’s how gracious and loving God is...he still lived and died for us and forgave all of our sins.

He gives to us the privilege now, we who know what this name means, we who know what this name has done for us, we who know the joy of our forgiveness, he gives us the privilege to tell other people what the name of Jesus means. That’s our privilege. That’s our joy. And that’s our purpose.