

## The Name of Jesus

Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry  
King of Glory Lutheran  
January 1, 2022: Year A

Luke 2:15-21

<sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

<sup>21</sup>After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

*Beloved of God, grace and peace be with you this day and every day. Amen*

Any of you that have ever named a child, know what a process it is to arrive at a decision upon those particular letters that shall be known as your child’s name. I heard a story on the radio about one couple’s process. First baby, the wife got to choose. Next baby, husband’s turn and so on. In this case, the husband was having the worst time landing upon his choice. Mom started having contractions and it was time to go to the hospital, and his wife is almost yelling at him. “If this baby doesn’t have a name when she comes out, I’m going to hurt you!” Names are incredibly important.

The Son of God who came to earth, born to human parents also had a name. In the text today, we leave the glorious angels and visiting shepherds to return to the more earthly, mundane details of life. Mary and Joseph did what was required by the Old Testament Law and had their son circumcised on the eighth day. They named him “Jesus” as the angel Gabriel had told Mary (Luke 1:31) and as Joseph had been told in a dream (Matthew 1:21). ‘You shall name the child, Jesus.’

Jesus was a common Jewish name, perhaps like John is to us. It is the Greek form of the Hebrew name, Joshua. He might have been called Yeshua. (Spelled y-e-s-h-u-a), meaning “to deliver” or “to rescue.” Of course, as we heard on Christmas Eve, Jesus is also known as Immanuel (God with us). The name, “Christ” is the Greek form of the Hebrew “Messiah”, which both mean Anointed One.

Yet because our Lord is named a common, ordinary name, like Jesus, it gives us a certain accessibility to Him. We can be on a first name basis with God! As we are with the people closest to us, friends and family, we call God by God's ordinary name. Think of that, we are on a first name basis with God. Once again, this God comes close, not only in flesh, but also in name.

Names, you see, while ordinary, are also powerful. There is an Old Testament – a Hebrew Bible – story in Genesis chapter 32, about Jacob wrestling at the river Jabbok. He is wrestling with a being who is very strong, and this being doesn't prevail over Jacob. Instead, this being puts Jacob's hip out of joint. Jacob says, 'I won't let you go, unless you bless me.' The being says to him, "What is your name?" "Jacob." "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans and prevailed."

Jacob asks again, "Please tell me your name." No name is given, so Jacob names the place, 'Peniel', which means, the face of God.

Jacob wanted to know God's name, and God wouldn't tell him. But...we know Jesus' name! Not only do we know that name, we get to call God by that name. Knowing another's name, holds a certain influence, positive or negative. We could even call it power.

Let's make this real. Did your mother ever call you by your three names? My sister, once said to her young son, "Henry D. Kline, come down from there." To which he responded. "My name, isn't Henry D. Kline. It's Fred Joseph Kline." Without skipping a beat she said, "Get down here Fred Joseph Kline."

When we have a name, and someone calls us by that name, they know something about us. It's not negative power, but it is the ability to make another respond. Even if we have the same name as another, our particular personality traits convey which person it is who goes along with the identified name. Are we talking about Kathy Gustad or Kathy Cisar? When we call Jesus by name, we remember this one named Jesus, allowed the children to sit on his lap. He spoke to women, who weren't supposed to be spoken to by men. He healed the blind man. This is the one whom we call Jesus.

Furthermore, God who is all powerful, claims us by our name. We are known by God. God knows us through the person of Jesus. On this day we celebrate the fact that we are Christ's namesakes. For we have been Christ-ened, in our baptisms.

We've been Christ-ened. In Christ's death and resurrection, that powerful name in which we baptize, we are named "Child of God."

What a fabulous thing to remember on the first day of the new year. We – you and you and you and you and me – are named, Child of God. "Being blessed and claimed in the name of God *does* something to us. It empowers us in ways we do not deserve and did nothing to earn (Ps. 8, Num. 6:27)."

(<https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources?date=2023-1&eventDateId=0#resources>) This grace filled naming claims us no-matter-what we've done. No matter what we've not done. What amazing grace is this! That in God's name, we are named and claimed forever.

For it is only by God's choice always, and only by God's power alone, does God place this named blessing upon us. For as God told Moses, "So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them." Then Moses told Aaron, who told God's people, "The Lord bless you and keep you. The LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

This ordinary name of Jesus we are blessed by is one powerful name! I knew a Catholic man in a small town who had been very sick. I saw him weeks later, and he said to me, "I just kept praying the name of Jesus." "You did?" "Yes, I prayed, 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,' all day long, and He healed me. He healed me, He did."

I believe him. Jesus' name is not only powerful in itself, in scripture, it causes unclean spirits, the demons to tremble. In Mark 1, Jesus encounters a man with an unclean spirit. The spirits living inside of him, knew Jesus. They called out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God!" Jesus commands the spirit to come out.

This is why it says, in Phil. 2:10-1, "at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father". We give glory to God who is called Jesus.

On this New Year's Day, let us give thanks for God who is accessible in the ordinary name of Jesus, whose name is all powerful, and who also names us the Christ-ones, the beloved Children of God. Amen.