

Christmas Eve/December 24, 2018
Isaiah 9:2-7/The Name of Salvation
Holy Spirit Lutheran Church
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“...and his name shall be called...”

What’s in a name? Shakespeare asked once. In Scripture most of the time names were given to say something, to express a hope or confess something. This is true particularly in the names of God or of His Messiah. Whenever God gives a name, it is intended to communicate some aspect of the truth about the one named. Think of “Adam”; it means “man” and “dirt”, from which he was formed. Or Israel; he who wrestles with God. Abraham, the Father of a Multitude. Or Peter, the rock. That is why the names God gave to His Son are so important, because they tell us about Him. Our text is a list of names which form one name for the One who was coming. In these names are the entire narrative of the gospel. Our Theme is, The Name of Salvation.

We know the details of the Christmas narrative as we’ve heard them time and time again over the years. We don’t need to repeat them in detail this evening. Our focus is to celebrate one of the most sublime mysteries of our faith, that God became one of us. The Creator and Ruler of everything, was born a helpless infant in Bethlehem, so long ago. He endured it all for our salvation. As the angels said to the shepherds, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

There are a number of ways to tell the narrative of our salvation. One of the ways He used are the names He said His Messiah would be called, as He spoke through His Prophets of old. The names of Our Lord tell us about the gift of God and about our salvation. Even the name Jesus means “Savior” or, literally “Yahweh Saves”, for He

shall save His people from their sins. The word “Christ”, really a title and not a proper name, means “the Anointed One.” The title means this one was chosen to be the One, the King, selected for the special mission, the Messiah of the Old Testament prophecies who would come to rescue and save.

But these ancient names of Jesus, announced here by the prophet Isaiah, tell us what Jesus would be all about. They speak of His nature, His will and His work. For example, His name will be called Wonderful Counselor. The Old Testament office of Counselor was the office of a wise and insightful man. It wasn't his job to listen and allow you to work through your problems on your own, as so many non-directive counselors do today. He was to direct and give guidance with great wisdom. He might have special gifts of knowledge, but He was always able to give wise and Godly advice. He always knew what we should do.

Jesus is our Counselor. He shows us the way to go and leads us in that everlasting way. Everything He did, and all He commanded is both good and godly, and it works to accomplish our salvation. Who would have ever conceived God becoming one of us to purchase us back from our own sin, and to pay for us the penalty of our own evil? Many people declared what God did impossible, but there it was, in a manger, in Bethlehem long ago. What sublime wisdom.

His name shall be called Mighty God. The baby in the manger is no average child. He is the God of all creation, who rules the world and all it contains by His almighty power. What a marvelous thought! The One who caused the tremendous reactions in the stars, causing them to shine so brightly is the One whose birth as a helpless infant we celebrate tonight. He who makes the chemical reactions happen which give life and health to your bodies every moment was Himself helpless, and needed to be fed and changed and loved, just as each of

us needed when we were babies. “And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High.”

His name shall be called Everlasting Father. God added this name to the list to keep anyone from being confused. The God which the Old Testament peoples knew as God, Jehovah, Yahweh Sabbaoth, that is, the Lord of Mighty Armies, is the God who has become flesh among us. It was that specific assertion which got Jesus into so much trouble in His ministry. He used the divine name, “I Am,” and the people would come unhinged. Jesus would say, “Before Abraham was, I Am,” and the crowd would cry “Blasphemy!” and tried to stone Him. He would call Himself the Son of God or the promised One and they would rush at Him to push Him off a cliff.

They should have known. This prophecy told them that when the Messiah came, He would be very God of very God. The prophecy told them when their Savior came, He would be the One whom they had known as the Lord throughout their history. But they did not remember, they did not pay attention, and they did not believe.

The Apostle Paul did. He reminds us in [1 Cor 10:2-4] “and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them and the Rock was Christ.” The God who followed them and led them through the Exodus was the One found in the manger that night, because there was no room in the inn.

His name shall be called the Prince of Peace. Scripture also says that He is our peace. He established peace with God by answering for the guilt of our sins. He answered our guilt on the cross. That tortured death is what we deserve for our sin. He bore the wrath of

God in our place because we could not and live, and because of His great love for us. We can never approach the manger of Bethlehem without remembering it was but a step on the road to the cross on Golgotha.

Jesus Christ placed Himself in our harm's way so He could rescue us from all our sins. Because of Him the will of God toward us is a blessing and salvation. Through His work we have peace with God instead of anger, terror and judgment. Now we can call on God and He hears us. Now we can contemplate our God with joy, contentment and peace, and all because of the One who was worshiped by shepherds and serenaded by angels.

We have peace with God, and with one another. What can we do but forgive one another, now that so great a debt of sin has been forgiven us? Of course, some choose another path, but by doing so, they choose to turn their back on the Prince of Peace. Jesus erased the distinction between Jews and Gentiles, between one race and another. He died for all. All are welcome to His Father. He intercedes for all. God is no respecter of persons; no partiality with God. If we are His children, we cannot afford to permit ourselves to cling to partiality which God Himself does not.

Whatever the name we may use to speak of Jesus, it is the name of salvation. "Jesus" speaks of salvation. The wonders we sing about this evening are but the beginning of the miracles and wonders which God worked for us and for our salvation.

We can also sing of the precious gift of the Sacrament. What a blessed gift! It is the very body which Christ offered up for us on the cross and the very precious blood which He shed for our sins. He presents it to us as we partake of the Sacrament of the Altar, in and with and under the form of the bread and wine. He gives us each and

every time what most men continue to say is impossible, His true body and blood. By eating and drinking the holy meal He provides, we are forgiven, and we are strengthened, and we are filled once again with His presence and His blessings of forgiveness and peace, life and salvation, for where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation!

Let us therefore celebrate Christmas. Open the gift and discover the Christ Child, His mission complete and your salvation accomplished. Our theme on this Christmas Eve is “His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” His name is the Name of your Salvation, for as Peter preached so long ago [Act 4:12], “There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, by which we must be saved.”

A merry and blessed Christmas to you all!