

The Naming and Circumcision of Christ  
Year A - 1/1/2017

Numbers 6:22-27  
Psalm 8  
Galatians 4:4-7  
Luke 2:15-21

**In the name of the Trinity; Creator, Redeemer, and Life-Giver...**

Have you thought about your name lately?? It was only the other day when I was talking with a friend about family traditions regarding names. He had a middle name which was given to all of the first-born males in his family, and he had made the decision to not pass it on to his son - a choice which had been intentional, but also painful, as his father felt a sense of betrayal over the issue. There are many other traditions around names. For example, it is a tradition in some Catholic families to give a child the name of the Saint on whose day they may have been born (whoever the Saint of that day might have been), so that you could end up with the unusual name of Seamus Thomas Mary O'Flaherty!!

Then there are names that seem to be given as some kind of joke. There was the couple in Detroit at the beginning of the space age who named their first child "Sputnik" - after the Russian space capsule. Musician Frank Zappa named his daughter Moon Unit -- How would you like to be named "Moon Unit Zappa?" The Chicago Tribune told about the woman who named her daughter "Nevaseea" -- because the girl's father died before she was born and never saw her.

No wonder 50,000 people a year go to court to have their names changed!

In the Bible, the choosing of a name is not just important, it is momentous. The name is as important as the person who receives the name. Biblically, a person's name represented their character. Your name was who you are.

A name in the Bible tells much about who and what a person is, and biblical names are frequently changed to match who a person is. God changed Abram's name to Abraham which means "the father of many".

Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter meaning "A Rock". And who more than Judas has a name that tells what a person is all about?

As we were reminded on Christmas Day, eight hundred years before Jesus was even born, the prophet Isaiah spoke of the Messiah's birth and cried out:

"For unto us a child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Is. 9:6)

When we understand the importance of a name in scripture, one of the verses in our text today will stand out -- listen to Luke 2:21:

And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. There are four things the name of Jesus tells us about:

#### 1. Salvation

The name of Jesus tells us that from the time of his conception, he was destined to come into the world as Messiah -- the One who would bring reconciliation between God and God's people. Jesus in Hebrew is "Yeshua"- a form of "Joshua". Jesus is the One who saves - "Savior." "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," the Bible says, "But, the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Paul writes, "All who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

## 2. Power

The name of Jesus is a powerful name. In the gospel of John, -Jesus said, "If you ask anything :In My name, I will do it. When we conclude our prayers, we say, "In Jesus name we pray." No wonder we sing, "All Hail The Power of Jesus Name."

It is the power of Christ that helps us through our toughest times -- "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength," Paul wrote. He also said that when we are earnestly praying, the power of Christ is at work within us.

## 3. Healing

The name of Jesus is a healing name. When Peter and John saw a crippled man begging at one of the gates of Jerusalem, Peter said, '...In the name of Jesus, rise up and walk." The name of Jesus is whispered over a sick child's bed, spoken at the farewell of an aged parent and praised at the hearing of good news.

## 4. Purpose

Finally, in Jesus Christ we Christians find our purpose -- our destiny. Jesus said to His disciples, "As the Father has sent Me, so send I you." We are sent to serve in the name of Jesus. As he brought mercy, grace and healing to the world, we are called to do the same. "As you have done it to the least of my brethren, you have done it to Me," Jesus said... and again -- "If you give a cup of water in my name, you have done it for Me." In fact, the Apostle Paul tells us that for Christians, all of life has to do with our relationship with Jesus Christ. St. Paul urges us by saying, "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus."

We are given our name by our parents, but it is in the act of Baptism that we are affirmed as one of Christ's brothers or sisters and as a member of Christ's body on earth.

On this day, where we anticipate the coming of the Magi, and we celebrate the naming of our Lord, we stand at beginning of a whole new year. What a wonderful time to reaffirm our trust in the name of Jesus. We are children of God through faith in the name of Jesus. Let us decide to bring great honor to the name of Jesus as we continue our journey into this new year!

In the name of God. Amen.