

Our New Year's Security.

Text: Luke 2:21

Suggested Hymns:

552, 559, 36, 288, 554

1) How Jesus received His name

2) Why Jesus received His name

3) Our duty towards this name, Jesus

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 2:21, 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.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we cross the threshold of a new year of grace. It has been another twelve months of successes and failures, plans and frustrations, fond expectations and disappointments. All these things lie behind us. We have passed another milestone of earth's journey.

But today we begin a new lap of life's course. We are treading on virgin ground. Our footsteps are halting and uncertain. We have not passed this way before. The future lies shrouded in mystery before us. What will it bring?

Will God permit us to see the close of this year? Will success follow our efforts and happiness mark our lives during this year of grace? Will our families be preserved intact? Will good health be our portion? Will our congregational work go forward? Will our plans for building the Kingdom be crowned with success? Will God's promises once again exceed our fondest expectations in their fulfilment? And how shall we fare nationally and internationally? Will World War III break out in unparalleled fury this year? These are some of the questions that rise up in this hour to fill our minds with uncertainty for the future.

Psychologists tell us that a craving for security is one of the basic drives of human nature. In their search for such security people will be driven to strange extremes. Scores of types of fortune-telling flourish in our supposedly enlightened times because people in their determination to know the unknowable

will devote their time and spend their fortunes in the patronage of occult practices.

But what have the lines of the palm, the cut of the cards, the formation of tea leaves, the position of the stars, or such superstitions as black cats, rabbits' feet, horseshoe charms, unlucky numbers, and the like, to do with the future?

However, let us be reminded today that there has been one, and only one, sure Guide for the path of life, and that is the Child who today just over twenty centuries ago began to shed His lifeblood for our redemption. This tiny Infant received the name above every name, the only-begotten Son of the Father, called Jesus at His circumcision. Of Him our text records, 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.* On the basis of these words let us see that we find that security for the New Year is in Jesus alone. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. How Jesus Received His Name

The festival season through which we have just passed has pictured in vivid details to us the miraculous circumstances which accompanied the birth of Jesus, the Son of God. Supernatural light bathes the plains of Bethlehem to reveal to the wondering, startled gaze of shepherds an angel who announces the birth in the *“city of David”* of *“Christ, the Lord.”*

Myriads of angels, rising tier on tier into the far reaches of heaven, stir the realms of glory with never-to-be-forgotten melody as they sing *“Glory to God in the Highest.”* A miraculous star appears in the East to guide learned wise men in their quest for the newborn *“King of the Jews.”*

Although all of this signals the arrival of God *“manifest in the flesh,”* nevertheless the immediate visible surroundings of Jesus' appearance in human flesh are decidedly common-place, and even humble. An ordinary Judean maid is His mother; a common Galilean carpenter is His foster father; a lowly cattle stable is the place of His birth; a manger crib is His hard bed; swaddling clothes are His first garments. Yes, Jesus Christ who is the Possessor of all the limitless wealth of heaven and earth for our sake became poor *“through His poverty might become rich.”*¹

Let us look at the meaning of Jesus' Circumcision. In today's text we see the Babe of Bethlehem at the age of eight days suffering pain for us and shedding the first drops of His blood, as He undertakes the fulfilment of the first step of the Ceremonial Law for a Hebrew male child in His circumcision.

We instinctively inquire "Why?" Way back in the days of the Old Testament patriarchs, God commanded Abraham and his descendants according to the flesh that they observe circumcision as a token of the covenant between them and Him.

Accordingly, Jesus in obedience to that custom, which still was in force in His day, submitted to the rite. But circumcision was intended to remind the Jews of their sinfulness. Why, then, did the heavenly Father cause His holy, sinless Child to be circumcised like any other Hebrew son?

St. Paul solves this mystery for us in Galatians 5:3, ³ *And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.* And so, by this act the Father intended His only-begotten Son to assume the obligation to fulfil the "**whole Law**" of God, just as Paul remarks in Galatians 4:4-5, ⁴ *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.* By His circumcision when eight days old Jesus took the first step to redeem men from the curse of the Law and to secure for them the blessing of adoption into the household of God. Should this not give us a new sense of security for the new year?

Certainly God, who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, will from the same love not withhold any needful blessing from His children.

So how are Circumcision and Baptism related? Circumcision was intended only for the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh. Along with the other Old Testament ordinances it lost its significance and value with the arrival of the Redeemer, in whose blood God made a new covenant.

Hence Jesus gave a new meaning to circumcision, as Paul points out to the Colossians, in Colossians 2:11, ¹¹ *In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.* This New Testament counterpart of circumcision is Baptism, Paul goes on to reveal. And an effective argument for Infant Baptism is the fact that the Jewish male infant was circumcised.

Under the New Testament dispensation Baptism is likewise a covenant, a covenant which promises far greater blessings than its Old Testament prototype, for, as Luther puts it, *“it works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation.”* Shall we, then, deny our infants the security that Baptism offers them? Shall we not resolve, on this first day of the new year, to give any unbaptised children in our midst the benefit of this Sacrament for the security of their immortal souls?

According to custom Jesus received His name at His circumcision, the name *“named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb.”* A glorious history lies behind the name of Jesus, which the Son of God received here. An angel from heaven was sent to declare to Joseph, *“you shall call His name JESUS.”*² And Mary, too, before the Child *“was conceived in the womb,”* was directed by an angelic messenger to give the fruit of her womb the name Jesus.

Certainly, in view of the celestial origin of the Saviour’s name, no earthly title, such as Carpenter’s Son, the Great Galilean, or the Judean Teacher, will ever substitute satisfactorily for His real name of Jesus, inasmuch as it appropriately was given by God Himself and transmitted by a heavenly messenger. And because the name of Jesus originated with God, it should give us a peculiar sense of security each time we repeat it in song, prayer, and conversation.

Let us also note that the obedience of Holy Family is a model for us also. Both Mary and Joseph implicitly obeyed the angel’s command to call the Son of God Jesus, for our text records as though it was an obedient echo: *“His name was called Jesus.”*

Indeed, it was a most commendable feature of both the mother and the foster father of the Saviour that, when they received divine direction, they always followed unquestioningly.

Today we need more such fathers and mothers who in all things will follow the divine will for their home life. Experience shows how directly children are influenced by their parents’ conduct. Young minds are moulded far more by parental influence and home habits than by schools and even churches.

Frequently exclamations are heard from the lips of growing children, such as *“My father does this!”* *“My mother says that!”* to indicate what a force for good

or evil parents can be. And so, if parents fail to heed the Word of God in their home life, whom but themselves do they have to blame if their children grow up to be rebels, scoffers, and criminals?

Today we are seeing the tragic consequences of parental neglect. This year again we may expect to see increases in serious crimes, such as murder, robbery, burglary, and vandalism, committed in our country. Such deplorable conditions cannot be corrected merely by more legislation, or by better law enforcement, or by educational campaigns.

We must have more of the spirit of Christ, more of the unquestioning obedience in our homes to the divine will which the Holy Family exhibited, if we are to have abiding security for the future.

2. Why Jesus Received His Name

The importance of the Saviour's name may be inferred from the fact that the heavenly Father saw fit to send the angel Gabriel to both Mary and Joseph with the divine message that named the Son of the Highest, Jesus.

The name Jesus occurs more than six hundred times in the New Testament. Some two hundred other titles have been given to the Redeemer, but Jesus was His personal name as distinguished from Christ, which referred to His office as our Prophet, Priest, and King.

What is the meaning of the Name Jesus? Had the name Jesus not been given to the Son of Mary directly from heaven "*before He was conceived in the womb,*" it would not have been unusually significant, for the name was quite common among the Jews.

It was the name borne by Joshua, who led the Children of Israel into the Promised Land. Then there was the high priest Joshua, who with Zerubbabel returned the Israelites from the captivity of Babylon to Jerusalem. The New Testament also mentions one "Jesus, which is called Justus." In addition, Josephus enumerates no less than twelve other persons by the name of Jesus. Yet it is remarkable that after our Lord was called Jesus, this name fell into disuse among the Hebrews as though it were a sacred title reserved only for the Son of God.

And so, when applied to Christ, the name of Jesus assumes its special significance of “*Jehovah is Salvation,*” for “*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*”³ Liberals and unbelievers may refer to Him as “the Master,” “the Great Teacher,” “the greatest man,” or by similar designations, but Jesus, the Son of God and Mary’s Son is, as His name implies, “*The Lord of Salvation.*” Announcing His approaching birth to Joseph, the angel foretold, “*He will save His people from their sins.*” And so Jesus is called Salvation because He is in truth and fact our salvation.

One thing for certain is that we need a Saviour. Man, having issued forth perfect in every respect from the hand of the Creator, fell into sin. By instigation of the Evil One he rebelled against his Maker. And, driven from the Garden of Eden in punishment for his transgression, he had children in his own image, in the image of sin.

Henceforth the road back to God through man’s efforts to redeem himself was closed. Men sank ever deeper into the degradation of sin and ruin. Temporal death and eternal perdition became their inevitable lot. But God in His limitless love had compassion on His wayward children. In the fullness of the time He sent to earth His only-begotten Son in the person of Jesus to seek and to save that which was lost. Thus in the person of our Redeemer the name of Jesus takes on a new meaning. It means salvation. But it means more.

Jesus means full salvation. We can add nothing to His perfect and completed redemption. When Jesus bowed His head in death on Calvary’s Cross with the cry “*It is finished!*” He left nothing undone for our salvation. Our deliverance had been accomplished once and for all. Our salvation was complete. Surely in Jesus there is full security.

Jesus also means free salvation. If we had all the gold lying buried in vaults of the world, or all the billions of dollars represented by our staggering national debt, we could not purchase forgiveness for even a single sin.

What all the financial resources of the world can never secure, the cleansing of our souls, is freely offered without money and without price in Jesus. God assures us in Ephesians 2:8-9, “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone*

should boast. Accordingly, with the hymn writer of old we exult: *“Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy Cross I cling.”*⁴ There at the feet of Jesus is free security.

Jesus means universal salvation. He offers deliverance to all people without exception, to the rich and poor, the learned and unlearned, the great and the lowly, the strong and the weak. The Lord is no respecter of persons. His offer of redemption transcends every barrier of colour, rank, or culture.

In Jesus freedom and security are offered, not to a select few, but to the masses of mankind. Our Redeemer Himself said in the days of His flesh, recorded in John 3:16, ¹⁶ *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* Regardless how frequent our sins or how low we may have fallen, we can find security in Jesus.

Jesus means our only salvation. Although redemption is provided for all mankind, it is to be had only through Him. We read in Acts 4:12, ¹² *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* This is the divine decree pronounced by Apostolic lips before the Jewish Sanhedrin.

Many roads may lead to eternity’s edge, but all are detours to hell except the road back to God through Jesus, who said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*⁵ In Him alone have we security amidst all the reverses and adversities of life. *“Other refuge have I none, Hangs my helpless soul on Thee. Leave, ah, leave me not alone, Still support and comfort me,”* is the plea of the hymnist.

Finally, Jesus means sure salvation. There can be no doubt about the truths He proclaimed, no uncertainty about His work. His promises are *“yes and amen.”* He has proved His power in the lives of millions of His disciples, many of whom have forfeited their lives for their convictions. Whoever has seen in faith this Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, finds hope amid change and decay, truth to guide them with unerring precision on the way to heaven, and the sure pledge of life that survives beyond the grave. When we look into the uncertain future of tomorrow, our security is sure in Jesus.

Jesus is our eternal, unchanging salvation. The heavens and the earth are subject to change and decay. All that we see with the eye will pass away. All nature is growing or going. Fashions and human theories change with depressing haste. Generations replace generations with maddening regularity.

But Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His Gospel is everlasting. Speaking of the last times, the Saviour said, ***“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.”*** And so we preach a changeless Christ to a changing world. Similarly, neither does your security change. Its terms and nature never alter. *“On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.”*⁶

3. Our Duty Towards This Name, Jesus

At the close of the year we undoubtedly took spiritual stock of ourselves. We reviewed our sinful weaknesses, our coldness and indifference, our smallness of faith, our woeful neglect, our many sins of omission and commission.

Today, strengthened in our meditation by the power and pardon of this name, Jesus, which is above every name, we rise from the slumber of sin, and prepare to traverse another span of earth’s journey opening before us. As we mingle with our fellow travellers along the road of life, gratitude to Jesus for what He has done for us should distinguish our conduct.

The least, we can possibly do, as His disciples is to show a reverent regard for His name, *“at which every knee should bow.”* But our country is probably the most profane nation on earth. Forgetful of God’s blessings our countrymen blaspheme the sacred name of the Saviour with shocking disregard and reckless abandon. In newspapers, magazines, and books, over the radio and television, there is an ever-growing filthy-minded, foul-mouthed profanity that slurs all that is holy and mocks the God of the heavens.

It is only natural that even the children of God should be affected and infected by such moral filth. Hence, professing Christians must always be on guard against the threat of contamination by this evil. Such unbecoming conduct offends God and every consistent Christian, as well as incurs most surely the righteous punishment of the Almighty, who threatens: ***“The Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”***⁷

Conversely, we must accept the name of Jesus as our only hope for time and eternity, trust in it for our salvation, defend it whenever attacked, and make it the focus of our prayers, relying on the Saviour's promise in John 16:23-24, *Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.*²⁴ *“Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.* Take the Lord at His promise!

Pray fervently. Contritely bow before Him. Penitently acknowledge your sins. Fervently implore His blessings. Come into His courts with thanksgiving. Worship Him in your home. Adore the Triune God in word and song as your Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

Confess the name of Jesus fearlessly and aggressively by word and act before men. Help spread throughout our land and beyond the seas the Gospel of this name, which alone can save. Pray the Lord of the Church that He would grant you His Holy Spirit's guidance and help to surrender your life to His service. Say with Paul: *“For me to live is Christ!”* Then, regardless of what this new year or the years to come may bring, we shall always safely rest in the arms of Jesus. Our security shall be assured. This universal longing of the human soul for safety and security will then be a living, vibrant reality.

Finally let us note that the climax of faith is security in Jesus. This security is illustrated in the dying prayer of Luther was: *“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, Thou faithful God!”* With such faith in our hearts, and such a confession upon our lips, our future is clear and sure.

Whether this year will bring us to the end of life's journey or our stay here below be prolonged for many years to come, we can have the firm assurance in Jesus' name that when earth's last hour for us shall strike, we shall be translated from the Church Militant here to the Church Triumphant.

Then, not for a day, but for all eternity, our longing for security will reach its fullest consummation in Jesus, whose we are, and to whom we live, forevermore. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 2 Corinthians 8:9

² Matthew 1:21

³ Acts 4:12

⁴ Hymn 330

⁵ John 14:6

⁶ Hymn 331

⁷ Exodus 20:7