31 December 2024 St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Eve of the Circumcision and Name of Jesus Vienna, VA

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"Your Name on Him"
Text: Numbers 6:22-27; Luke 2:21; Galatians 3:23-29

In the Name of (+) Jesus. Amen.

God told Aaron to ***put His Name on the people of Israel***. Because that's what you do when something's important to you - you put your name on it. These people belonged to Him. He would bless them. His face would shine upon them - He wasn't going to turn His back on them. He would be gracious to them and give them peace. They would have rest in a home of their own. They would have peace and security from their enemies. And God promised all this to them because from this people would come the human flesh of His Son, come to be the Saviour of the world. And so He put His Name on them.

An when *the fullness of time came, God sent His Son* (Galatians 4:4), which we remembered and celebrated six days ago now. Christmas is one of the most joyous times of the year - *which it should be*. For God keeping His promise, God sending His Son, the Son of God being born into this world - **is a big deal**. So we should make a big deal of it.

But we heard of something else God did tonight, that maybe doesn't always get the attention it deserves. And that is what happened on the eighth day of Christmas, the eighth day after Jesus' birth - and that is **His circumcision**. Luke records it for us in just one verse. No big narrative like Joseph and Mary going to Bethlehem, or like we heard Sunday with Simeon in the Temple. And maybe that's why we overlook it. For if it wasn't worth Luke's time and effort, then . . .

But that would be a mistake. Circumcision was a big deal to the Jewish people. It connected them to Abraham and the promise of God made to him. A physical sign that yes, they were a part of the covenant. Failure to have that skin cut off meant that YOU were cut off - cut off from the covenant, because you had rejected God and His promise. So to be a *real* Jew, you had to be circumcised.

But just that doesn't solve the confusion of why <u>JESUS</u> was circumcised, and why <u>HIS</u> circumcision is such big deal. So maybe this is a good way to think about it and help us understand: **it is the counterpart to what God commanded Aaron to do**. For if Aaron was to put God's Name on the people, when Jesus is circumcised is when **God**

puts YOUR name on HIMSELF.

Which means Jesus is now doing everything **in your name**, on your behalf. What you don't do, won't do, and can't do, He does for you. So all the commandments you break, *He keeps in your name*. All the things you should do but fail to do, *He does in your name*. When He ascends the cross, He dies the death *you* deserve, receives the condemnation of God *you* deserve. It is as if YOU are hanging there. And then when He rises from the dead, that's *in your name, too*. For you, too.

So all He does . . . it's like . . . in a big trust fund. That's what wealthy people often do - they put their wealth into a trust fund for their children so they are provided for. And when the children turn a certain age, they receive that gift. It was there all along, but *then* it becomes theirs.

So it is now with us. Except we don't receive all that Jesus did for us, in our name, when we reach a certain age, but **when we are baptized**. That's what St. Paul was talking about in the reading from Galatians tonight. Before baptism, all the wealth and riches of God are there, like with a trust fund, before the children reach a certain age and are still under a guardian. But when you are baptized, *it's all yours*. And it doesn't matter whether you are ***Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female*** - whoever you are, that trust fund is for you. *The riches* Jesus won for you - the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and the kingdom of God.

Now I don't know about you, but to me, **that's a pretty big deal!** And so Jesus' circumcision is a pretty big deal.

The other thing that happened that day goes along with this, too. This son born to Mary is given a human name: Jesus. It is, as Luke tells us, ***the name given by the angel*** - or we could really say, the name given by this Son's <u>*true*</u> Father, for the angel Gabriel simply spoke God's Word to Mary - ***it is the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb***. And this name was given because fits with what this Son would do: *save us*.

But as I said, this ties in with what is happening here with Jesus' circumcision. Yes, He receives His human name, but with that knife and His blood shed for the very first time, *He receives all of our names*. YOUR name is given to Him. And He bears it for you. And He fulfills HIS name FOR YOU - He saves YOU. For your sin, forgiveness. For your brokenness, healing. For your death, life. For your condemnation, salvation. All you need, He has done. All you need, He gives.

Which means that as we enter a New Year tonight, we rejoice in the gifts we have received from our Lord this past year, and look forward to the gifts we will receive

from Him this coming year. And know that with God's Name on us, and with our name on Jesus, we are His and He is ours. So like Israel of old, we have peace and rest, no matter what the future holds; no matter what happens in 2025, or beyond.

For this you know:

The Lord* <u>will</u> *bless you and keep you;
the Lord* <u>will</u> *make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the Lord* <u>will</u> *lift up his countenance upon you
and* [He will] *give you peace.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.