

“You Shall Call His Name Jesus” (Luke 1:31)

For Your Life in Christ the Fourth Sunday in Advent

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Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LC-MS)

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Introduction: What’s In A Name?

- A. A lot! When I first arrived to serve Saint Paul’s (the “first time around”) in 1996, one of the members in Laguna Beach enthusiastically greeted me by saying that the congregation was receiving “hope,” because my name “Espinosa” means “hope.” I felt self-conscious correcting him, but felt I should nip this in the bud immediately: I had to break the news to him that “Esperanza” means “hope,” and that *my* name means “thorny or prickly!” He was totally deflated and I was off to a great start as pastor of Saint Paul’s!
- B. There’s actually a little more to my last name than that, it is actually “Hawthorn” after the Hawthorn Trees in Spain that grace the lands of noblemen. The name implies “abundance,” so it is after-all a little better than “thorny or prickly.”
- C. Names are important, “Alfonso” means “bold, brave, and prepared for battle,” and “Traci” means “warlike and brave.” Now, if “Alfonso” and “Traci” get together one of two things happens: you either have two going at it in battle against each other, or two standing side-by-side as allies in battle. We are blessed by God to know the latter and to avoid the former!
- D. My son A.J. is named after me, but we threw in “James” because of the book in Scripture that attaches good works to faith; A.J. married Gaby whose name means “God is my strength”; “Elizabeth” means “God is my promise,” and she married “Andrew” whose name means “manly or strong,” “Danielle” means “God is my judge,” “Christina” means “Anointed One,” “David” means “Beloved,” “Esbeydi” means “Divine or Beautiful,” “Bryan” means “High, Noble or Strong,” and “Katherine” means “Pure.” Our pug “Henry” means “House Ruler”...and He is!
- E. It is fun to consider what names mean, but we should be

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serious when we consider what they represent. My mom raised me to be aware that what I did was a reflection of my parents; it was a reflection of my family.

- F. During my catechesis in becoming a Lutheran, my Lutheran pastor taught me that as a Christian – in bearing the name of Jesus Christ – I was to be aware that what I did was a reflection of my church and more importantly, a representation of Jesus Himself. As Christians we bear *His* Name.
- G. And at the end of the day, His Name is the only one that really matters. If you bear His Name...really bear it by grace through faith in Jesus, the Name above all Names, now you bear the Name that will make your name endure forever.

Part I: The Importance Scripture Places on Names:

- A. Scripture makes clear that Jesus’ Name is the Name above all names:

Philippians 2:0-10: *“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

- B. When our names are attached to His Name, everything in our lives change. We are now members of HIS family and know the benefits of His Name upon us. Jesus refers to a new name that will be yours in glory:

Revelation 2:17: *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.”*

- C. The white stone reminds us that in the ancient world special pebbles were sometimes used as admission tickets to banquets (*The Lutheran Study Bible*, 2203) and it is likely that the name you receive will be identified with the name of

Christ Himself.

Acts 4:12: “And there is salvation in on one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

- D. Thus it is God’s very Name that is Upon You! And so you were baptized in the “Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” And when this Name was put upon you in baptism, the water was poured out upon your forehead. That is significant because it represents the Name upon your mind, your new mind. You now live conscientiously with the Name of Jesus characterizing and energizing your new life. Where you go, Jesus goes.

Part II: In Other Words, Where You Go, the Light and Power of His Name Goes with You!

- A. This forces our environments to be transformed as our feet are fitted with the readiness that comes with the Gospel of peace (Eph 6:15).
- B. “Hawthorn/Espinosa” envisions land surrounded by abundant trees; “David” is “beloved” and you can picture the life of King David that was so richly blessed by the Lord!
- C. But consider the greatest vision but what is greater than just a vision in the Name of Jesus, because the Name is bound to the Person of the Very Son of God, the King of Kings the Lord of Lords! And this is the truth: He changes our lives by the grace of God that accompanies His saving ministry to us!
- D. One reason I bring this up is because our flesh wants to allow other names to rule our thoughts and lives. For example:
1. The words (name of the season) “Happy Holidays.” The world says, “Buy into this vision and reality: don’t make the season about ‘religion’ that divides, but “co-exist” in our culture of materialism.” As those who bear the Name of Jesus, we should say, “No thanks!” I love that fact that I know someone here today who has resolved that every-time she hears “Happy Holidays,” she returns it with a “Merry Christmas!”

2. The names of all the distractions of this season! The world says, “Make this season about decorations, parties, and presents.” Why is Christmas special to your children? Is it the presents? The presents that will be boring in a year – if they even make it that far – the presents that will break and eventually be forgotten? As many toys as I had as a kid, I do not have a single one that made it into my adult life and I can’t remember most of them! What is this time about? Whose NAME is it about?
3. And then there are the other names that sin and the devil try to fill your mind with: not Jesus your Savior, but the names of “depression” and “despair”...no more!

Conclusion: We Go to the Name that Defines Christmas and our Lives; the Name that Brings Salvation!

- A. The angel Gabriel said, “*you shall call his name Jesus (Luke 1:31).*”
- B. His Name “Jesus” means “Savior,” He is your Christmas present that will last for *eternity*!
- C. His Name saves you from the violence of sin and becomes your stronghold (2 Sam. 22:3).
- D. His Name gives you refuge from your enemies (Psalm 17:7).
- E. His Name means you have a Savior and Defender (Is 19:20).
- F. His Name means you have a Redeemer (Is 60:16), and that you have citizenship in heaven and a body that will be transformed like His glorious body (Phil 3:20).
- G. His Name means that His blood covers your sin and has put God on your side. The accuser tries to crush you, but Jesus has crushed Him for you. With sins forgiven, He raises you up by the power of His Name! Your sin is defeated, the world against you cannot overcome your Savior who holds you, the evil one cannot destroy you...the Name of Jesus is upon you so that you know that Jesus is with you.
- H. This is what makes Christmas Christmas: The power of His Name is yours! It is yours dear Christian! Rejoice!