

The Name of Jesus/New Year's Day
January 1, 2012

Luke 2:21
72-76-70/71-75

Enter the New Year in Jesus' Name

- I. Confident of God's forgiveness.
- II. Confident of God's faithfulness.

Dear Christian friends,

WHAT'S in a name? I believe Shakespeare once asked that question – I'm thinking it was in Romeo and Juliet (but I could be wrong!). Then he went on something like, "A rose is a rose no matter what it's called."

Mary and Joseph didn't have ANY CHOICE in picking a name for the Baby Jesus. God the Father had made clear to both of them HIS CHOICE for the Baby's name. "**Jesus.**" In Hebrew it's Joshua. It's because of this Baby named Jesus that we can enter 2012 with confidence. ENTER THE NEW YEAR IN JESUS' NAME and be confident of 1)God's forgiveness and 2)God's faithfulness.

I. Confident of God's forgiveness.

We certainly need forgiveness as we enter this new year. We may have entered 2011 with HIGH HOPES and dedicated determination that it was GOING TO BE DIFFERENT – but 2011 turned out just like all the other years. Every day was littered with **broken commandments** – marred with unholy thoughts, words and actions. WHERE will we find the forgiveness we need? LOOK NO FATHER than this one verse! "***On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise Him, they gave Him the name Jesus, the name the angel had given Him before He had been conceived.***"

Circumcision was the SIGN and SEAL of God's OT covenant with Abraham – a **covenant** that centered on God's promise of the **Savior coming** from Abraham's family. Circumcision was the OT equivalent of our **NT sacrament** of Holy Baptism. Both focus on the **Lord Jesus** and His blessings for us. THROUGH circumcision – **as through Holy Baptism** – the child was brought into a COVENANT RELATIONSHIP with God. When God gave Abraham circumcision He said, "***Any uncircumcised male will be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.***"

God specified the **eighth day** as the time for circumcision. It was not something for the parents to PUT OFF until a MORE CONVENIENT time. The child needed the blessings of circumcision – just as babies today need the blessings of Holy Baptism. Parents should not cheat their children out of Baptism's blessings BY WAITING a long time. Far more important than the **party or aunt so and so** being there are THE BLESSINGS of Holy Baptism.

AS MUCH AS **adults newborn babies need** God's FORGIVENESS and to be brought into a NEW RELATIONSHIP with God. When we talk today of needing God's **forgiveness** we must START with **God's forgiveness** of the sin we ARE BORN WITH – **His forgiveness** of ORIGINAL sin. God's Word clearly reveals that ever since the fall into sin all people are conceived and born SINNERS – **conceived** and **born** SINFUL. "***Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me,***" David confessed in Psalm 51. The GUILT and CORRUPTION of **Adam's sin** in the Garden of Eden have been passed on to all his descendants. Babies are not born CUTE and INNOCENT but little heathens and guilty sinners.

Our sinful natures were ALIVE AND KICKING throughout last year. In a devotion last week I read this, "Is there one commandment that we have not transgressed? Is there one day in which we have not sinned? Is there one gift for which we have been perfectly thankful and which we have used in complete accord with the will of the heavenly Giver? Is there one rescue from trouble for which we

have offered the proper praise to God? Is there one sermon, one exhortation to repentance, one call to faith, one encouragement to holiness with which we have fully complied? At each of these questions, must we not cast our eyes down in shame before the most holy God, beat our breast and say with the tax collector, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' With David, must we not sigh, 'If You, O LORD, kept a record of sin, O Lord, who could stand?'"

We NEED **God's forgiveness** and we can be confident that we have it – IN JESUS. That name Jesus means **"the LORD saves."** ***"You are to give Him the name Jesus"*** Joseph was told, ***"because He will save His people from their sins."*** This one verse brings home some IMPORTANT TRUTHS about HOW Jesus is our Savior.

Jesus is our Savior by BEING OUR SUBSTITUTE – by taking our place under God's law. We can see that here. Circumcision was FOR SINNERS to bring them into a **restored relationship** with God. Here the SINLESS SON of God is treated as a **sinner needing** God's forgiveness. Why? Because ALREADY FROM BIRTH Jesus was taking our place under God's law. Jesus didn't need circumcision FOR HIMSELF – but AS OUR SUBSTITUTE.

Another important truth about God's forgiveness is also seen here. We usually say that Jesus DIED to **"take away"** our sins. That is true – but BEFORE Jesus **could die** for us He had to live for us – live a perfect life for us. God's law demands two things from us – 1) PERFECT OBEDIENCE to **all** the commandments and 2) PUNISHMENT for **all** disobedience. Jesus has taken care of BOTH for us. Jesus perfectly obeyed ALL the commandments ALL the time. Then **on the cross** Jesus was punished for our sins. Jesus endured the death and the hell we had coming because of our sins.

We can be confident of **God's forgiveness** because our confidence is NOT IN OURSELVES but in our Lord Jesus. **Our forgiveness** is not based on ANYTHING WE DO but on **what Jesus has all done** for us. Jesus did it ALL – and ALL BY HIMSELF. Jesus didn't leave anything for us to do. God wants us to BE CONFIDENT of His forgiveness. We hear it again and again in His Word. ***"Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you. The blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin."*** There are plenty more passages just like those. Then top it all off with our Lord's own precious Supper. Come and once again ***"eat and drink"*** the very body and blood your Lord Jesus gave and shed for the forgiveness of all your sins. Enter this new year IN JESUS' NAME and be confident of God's forgiveness.

II. Confident of God's faithfulness.

For many people New Year's Day is a time for MAKING RESOLUTIONS. You know what usually happens with those resolutions. BY THE END of the **first week** many have been long forgotten. People may have HAD GOOD INTENTIONS **when they made** those resolutions – but that's often as far as they got. We just don't have a GOOD TRACK RECORD when it comes to keeping promises.

With God it's TOTALLY DIFFERENT. ***"God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?"*** So we read in Numbers. Paul simply wrote, ***"No matter how many promises God has made they are all 'Yes' in Christ."*** We can see that here. Enter the new year CONFIDENT of God's **faithfulness**.

"On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise Him, they gave Him the name Jesus, the name the angel had given Him before He had been conceived." Circumcision was not simply a RITUAL but a SIGN and SEAL of **God's promise** to Abraham of the Savior coming from Abraham's

family. God HAD GIVEN Abraham His Word. Abraham and those following COULD COUNT on God to keep that promise. **Circumcision** was to be a constant reminder of that promise.

FOR GENERATIONS nothing really happened with that promise. God kept repeating it. The Jews kept circumcising their baby boys. But NO SAVIOR. **In the meantime** it looked and felt as if God had COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN about that promise. But **“when the time had fully come”** God kept that promise. What God had promised TO ABRAHAM – what circumcision had pointed to – God fulfilled that **first Christmas**.

Why the BIG DEAL about Jesus’ **name**? Jesus would still have been the **eternal Son** of God and **our Savior** if He had been named George or Sylvester or whatever. You can say the same thing about Jesus being born in Bethlehem. If Jesus had been born in **Nazareth** or **Capernaum** or **Athens** He would still have been the **eternal Son** of God and **our Savior**. But it WAS A BIG DEAL because God had promised that the Savior would be born in Bethlehem and be named Jesus. God IS FAITHFUL down to the last little detail. God never says, “OOPS!”

So enter this new year CONFIDENT of God’s **faithfulness**. We really have no idea what 2012 will bring us. Look how many curves last year threw us! We can’t even be sure we will MAKE IT through this year. **If we do** – will we be RELIEVED it’s over or DISAPPOINTED that it’s ending so soon?

We can be confident as we enter 2012 **because our confidence** is NOT IN OURSELVES but in our faithful God and His precious promises. **“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him. Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** If this is the year we must die – or carry loved ones out to the cemetery – we have our Good Shepherd’s promise, **“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand.”** CONFIDENTLY ENTER this new year because every minute of every day IS COVERED by God’s promises.

God is faithful to His promises. God may TAKE HIS TIME **as we see** it – God may have some STRANGE WAYS of keeping His promises – but God always comes through. God so wants us to CONFIDENTLY TRUST Him and His promises. Really, that’s also the comfort of Holy Communion. Here Jesus says, “Do YOU WANT PROOF of My love – My forgiveness – My faithfulness – that you will live with Me forever in heaven? Then come, take eat and drink My body and blood – given and shed IN LOVE – for your forgiveness – JUST AS PROMISED.”

“On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise Him.” Time marches on. **Another year** has come and gone. IN THE NAME of Jesus we enter this new year 2012 CONFIDENT of God’s forgiveness and **faithfulness**. IN THE NAME OF JESUS – Happy New Year! Amen.

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