

The Sentinel-January 2018

New Year's Message FROM THE PASTOR

A Common Name with a Special Meaning

And at the end of eight days ... He was called Jesus ... (Luke 2:21)

New Year's Eve was exciting when I was a kid. We say goodbye to the old and ring in the new. With each New Year came all kinds of exciting opportunities, hopes and dreams.

Jesus has now reached the age of eight days (Jan 1) and something new is about to happen. Every Israelite boy who reached the age of eight days was required to be circumcised and receive his name. As we remember the naming of Zechariah and Elizabeth's son John, names were very important to the people of Israel.

Mary and Joseph have already been told the Name that God has given for His Son. So in obedience, they gave Mary's Child the Name of Jesus. It was a common name at the time. It means "The Lord is salvation" or "The Lord saves." In the Old Testament the names Joshua and Hosea are variants of the name Jesus. Every other Israelite boy carrying this name in effect reminded people to turn their attention to God, who is their salvation.

In the case of Mary's Son, it was completely different, however. In His case, the Name pointed to Himself as Lord -- the One who is now present to save His people from their sins. Many years from now His enemies will hurl His Name back at Him in mockery, as He hangs on the cross: "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He trusts in God, let God deliver Him now, if He desires Him. For He said, 'I am the Son of God'" (Matthew 27:42-43).

But there on the cross Jesus was fulfilling His Name -- the Lord saving His people from death and hell by suffering for their sins.

Family, as we enter 2018, what does the name Jesus really mean to you? Is it going to be the same-old-same old, just "common" as common can be? Or is it going to be different this year and years to come?

As we also embark upon our 160th year as a congregation, I pray that the name Jesus would have a special meaning to you and for you every day, just as you saw those gifts under the Christmas tree (especially when you were a kid) that had **your name** on them--"this one is for me!"

So, yes, at Jesus' birth, He entered this world as one of us for you. At His cross, He gave His life for you. At His empty tomb, He lives and still claims victory over sin, death and the devil all for you. And on that mountain, He ascended back to heaven to prepare a place especially for you. Therefore, family, may our Living Lord, Jesus, enable and empower us through His Word and Sacrament ministry to have a faithful, God-pleasing 2018 as we celebrate our 160th year! And as we celebrate, may the name Jesus be front and center as we bring His life-saving message to all people, even helping each other grow in our Christian faith, life and service.

In Christ Jesus,
Pastor Seehafer