



The Circumcision and Naming of Jesus

January 1, 2017 - 10:15 a.m.

Rev. Todd Goldschmidt, Pastor

Theme: God Blesses Us With Everything In and Through His Name!

Sermon Text: Numbers 6:22-27 New International Version (NIV)

The Priestly Blessing

²² The LORD said to Moses, ²³ "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:

²⁴ ""The LORD bless you
and keep you;

²⁵ the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace."

²⁷ "So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."



Happy New Year! Many fellow Americans are still fast asleep. They'll wake up to watch football all day and stuff themselves with fattening food. Others will kick off the year with a flurry of well-intentioned activities designed to meet certain goals they've set for the year ahead. But today, I'd like you to look *back* to the day you were born. You were totally reliant on your parents for every aspect of your life. They fed you, changed your diapers, housed you, consoled you when you cried and sheltered you from harm and danger. The cost of raising a child is estimated at \$250,000. Yet your folks have never billed you for their work in your behalf. Why not? It's because you belong to them; you bear their family name.

It's the same with your relationship with God. On the day you were baptized into Christ, God assured you that you belonged to Him; He made you part of His family! He did the same for me. We're utterly dependent on God for every aspect of our new spiritual life that His Son, Jesus, won for us thru His death and resurrection. Not only did God the Father do everything necessary to secure our salvation. He also hand-delivered those blessings to us by His Spirit at our baptism. In those sacred waters, God washed the "dirty diapers" of our sins away, and He washes them clean every time we return to the font, confess our sins to Him and cling to His pardon. The Apostle John wrote: "If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Since we're His children, God vows to hear and answer our prayers in ways that are always best for us, to work everything out for our good, to send His angels to protect us from harm and danger, to feed our faith with Jesus' true body and blood in His Supper and to welcome us into heaven the very moment we leave this veil of tears. We enjoy these amazing blessings—and so many more—as members of God's family. Our membership in God's family cost His beloved Son, Jesus, His life, mind you. Yet we've never gotten a bill from Him. And we never will. Why not? Because we belong to Him; we're His adopted children who bear His name. On the 1st day of the New Year, we rejoice as fellow members of God's family that

God Blesses Us With Everything He Is and Has Through His Name!

God blesses us thru, and *only* thru, His name. A week to the day after Christmas—or by Hebrew counting, 8 days after Jesus' birth and the day on which He was circumcised—is also the day Joseph named Him "Jesus" as God's angel had directed him to. Jesus literally means, "God saves." It's no coincidence that on the day when Jesus was named He was also circumcised and in that act the very first drops of His holy, precious blood were shed as a sign that He belonged to God and had come to do His Father's will. He came to restore us to a right relationship with God; to suffer and die in our stead in order to secure our place in God's family. He died so we could have a fresh start in life and be reborn by water and the Spirit! He rose again so that we could live forever with Him in His Father's house! He went home to get our rooms ready, to intercede for us and to send His "angels" as "ministering spirits" to "serve those who will inherit salvation" (Heb. 1:14).

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9 am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org

Page 2 of 4



Just as having our parents' name assures a special bond with them, so having God's name means that we share a unique relationship with Him. That's only true in so far as the Christianity is concerned. Every other religion treats God as if He were an employer. That's a serious temptation for us Christians, as well. The idea is that we serve God and He pays us in return. At work, you're paid for what you do; you earn your wages. If your boss isn't satisfied with your performance, you'll be demoted or fired. But if God were an employer, we wouldn't even qualify to hire on with His Company. Why not? Because of who He is and what He expects. Jesus said, "Be *perfect*, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). And how do we fare compared to that impossibly high standard of morality? King Solomon—the wisest man who ever lived—wrote in Ecclesiastes: "Indeed, there is *no one* on earth who is righteous, *no one* who does what is right and *never* sins" (7:20).

You don't earn your salvation. You *can't*. The Bible states that "without faith it is *impossible* to please God" (Heb. 11:6). So, *none* of us are righteous, and apart from faith in Jesus we *can't* do one thing to please God. Thank God that He's not your boss! And praise Him even more that He's your dear Dad! The Bible is the only place where you can find that good news. The entire Bible—cover to cover, from Genesis through Revelation—is God's inspired, inerrant Word. There "the Lord" reveals Himself to us like He did to Moses on Mt. Sinai, as a "compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin" (Exodus 34:6-7). This year, as we celebrate the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's Reformation of the Church, it's worth noting that this is exactly what that movement was all about. Luther taught that God loves us not because of what we do or don't do, but for who we are through Spirit-worked faith in His only Son, Jesus. We're His children! He put His name on us at our baptism, and He keeps on blessing us by His name daily.

Looking back on the past year, we know how often we've defamed God's name. We've neglected our spiritual life, although we vowed a year ago to worship more regularly, read the Bible daily and spend more time in prayer. We let our anger toward a fellow believer fester, although we knew that speaking to them right away would've prevented that result. We vowed that 2016 would be the year we'd finally conquer that addiction that's had us in its grip for so long. But we're still self-medicating in a losing effort to alleviate our anxiety and dull our pain. We talked trash about fellow believers, were mean to our loved ones and spread the malicious seeds of gossip and innuendo at a break-neck pace. When it comes to being faithful stewards of the financial resources God has given us, our priorities remain out of whack. We continue to rob God and turn His Church into a beggar.

As a Father, God doesn't ignore His children's sins and shortcomings. He exposes them, so that we not only see our need for His forgiveness, but look to Him to receive it. Through the shed blood of His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, the Father freely and fully forgives every single sin of those of us who bear His name.



Having God's name means everything, because outside of God's name there's nothing but the curse of sin and death. The Apostle Peter said as much in his bold remarks before the Jewish Ruling Council, who forbade him to testify about Jesus publicly. He refused to acquiesce to their request, and said of Jesus: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other *name* under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). On this 1st day of the New Year thank God for putting His name on you at your baptism and blessed you abundantly as a result!

For over 3,400 years God's representatives have spoken this blessing over His children. It's as familiar to us as it's been to hundreds of generations before us. You know the words well: "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace." In the wilderness, the LORD told Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites.'" And that's the same way pastors who serve as God's representatives over the flock that He's placed them over convey His blessings to His children even today. And when he does, God vows, "So they will put my name on [my children], and I will bless them." Did you catch that? God says, "I will bless them." When God's name is placed on us, God Himself blesses us through His representative. When I, as your called pastor, speak God's name over you at the font or at communion, in the invocation or the benediction, I convey God's blessings to you as if He Himself was standing there in my place!

My dear brothers and sisters, fellow sons and daughters of the King of kings, all of your sins of the past year are forgiven and forgotten by God. Did you neglect your relationship with God last year? Did you let your anger against a fellow member boil over? Did that addiction you've battled for so long get the best of you? Did you give your family members less than the best of your kindness and love or sully someone's good name by spreading rumors about them? Did you squander the wealth the Lord bestowed on you by spending what He gave you on your own selfish pleasures instead of honoring Him with it? In Christ Jesus, all is forgiven! But don't forget what Jesus told the woman who was about to be stoned to death for adultery after He pardoned her: "Go now, and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11).

Whenever we invoke God's name—whether here in church or in our own personal prayers—we have God's undivided attention. And He bestows His best blessings as a testament to His undeserved love for us. We began this worship service in the name of the Triune God. Before the close of this service, we'll have been blessed to hear God's name proclaimed in Scripture readings, sermon and songs of praise. We'll have called on God's name in prayer and been blessed to receive the pledge of His pardon in the very body and blood of His only Son, Jesus, given and shed for us. The blessings of God's name also includes a peace that passes understanding. As this service ends, God will bless you once more as He sends you out into the world, so that you can carry the blessing of His name into your daily life in the week ahead. In the name of the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—Amen.

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9 am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org

Page 4 of 4