

NAMING THE CHILD – Jesus

Matthew 1:18-25

Sermon for Peace Church

December 25, 2009

PURPOSE – to invite the congregation, along with Joseph, to name the new-born Messiah, “JESUS” – the one who saves them from their sin.

MAIN IDEA – In obedience to God’s revelation, Joseph named Mary’s newborn son, “JESUS” – the one who does, is and will save us from sin’s curse.

I. INTRODUCTION

Let’s turn in our Bibles to Matthew 1:18 (p. 1497)

1. “Mary, Mary, what you gonna name that child?”

- Lord? Shepherd? Savior? King?

(i) We’ve been asking that question through Advent this past month here at Peace Church.

- What’cha gonna name that child – whose birth gathers us today?

It’s a question EACH OF US is invited to answer.

2. Biblically, to name a child is a way of expressing hopes for the life of a child – giving them an identity & calling to live out. (i.e. – For many of the prophets, their name represented the gist of their ministry: Zechariah – “The Lord remembers”; Zephaniah – “The lord protects; Micah – “Who is like the Lord”?)

Names give IDENTITY & CALLING

(i) PERSONALLY, to name someone is a way of establishing relationship & exercising power in that relationship.

I.e. – It’s one thing to say, “Hey, you, I’ve got good news for you today ...”

... it’s another to say, “Rachel, there’s good news for you today.”

The name grabs attention. It establishes relationship ... and exercising a measure of power in the relationship.

It’s a way of claiming ownership in a relationship ... exercising dominion.

So NAMING a child is not just about finding a “nice-sounding” word (as it often is for parents today). Biblically ...

- For the child, it’s about expressing identity & hopes for that child
- For the “NAMER”, it’s about establishing relationship & having spiritual traction in that relationship!

MARY, MARY – what you gonna name that child?

PEOPLE, PEOPLE – what you gonna name that child ... today?

3. Through Advent, we’ve been considering titles that the prophet ISAIAH invited us to name Him: WONDERFUL COUNSELOR / MIGHTY GOD / EVERLASTING FATHER / PRINCE OF PEACE

- (i) Today we consider a name that the child’s FOSTER-FATHER was asked to give him:
The “name above all names” – JESUS

Read Matthew 1:18-25 / PRAY (God, may You help us to enter that word today!)

II. JOSEPH

JOSEPH, JOSEPH – What you gonna to name that child?

1. At the outset of our story, I think that Joseph had some pretty JUICY names in mind. He might have named him: DISGRACE, INCONVENIENCE, DREAM-WRECKER!

- I’m sure he had a whack of names for that Child, none too kind.

- (i) Tradition has Joseph being an older man – say in his thirties. Mary, his fiancé, a teen. They’ve connected – a great catch for him!

A. What’s brought them together is their spiritual compatibility. (Most important part in any marriage relationship.)

They both love the Lord. Joseph’s a man of integrity, a righteous man, considerate. Mary’s a woman of faith, humble, obedient

Together, they were set to build a future life, serving the Lord – godly marriage, kingdom-oriented family ... things were looking so PROMISING

(ii) UNTIL this child appeared!

= BABY-DISGRACE, baby-mistrust, baby-shamegiver, baby-dreamwrecker!

... > “Yea, that’s what I’ll name him!” (baby-I’m-out-a-here!)

2. WHAT DO YOU NAME THE CHILD TODAY?

I doubt that you’re ANGRY about his presence in your life, like Joseph would have been at the outset of our story.

Then again, maybe this child is a PAIN to you. (Life would be simpler without him!)

Or maybe you only name him:

- Baby- tradition (it’s our family routine to spend time with him)
- Baby-boredom
- Baby-What’s the big deal about?

What would you be inclined to call this baby if you WOULD NAME HIM TODAY?

What word or title accurately describes who this child is to you?

3. Joseph was told WHAT to name him by SPECIAL REVELATION.

An angel came to him in a dream and told him what to name the child: JESUS

- In Hebrew, Y’shua – meaning, “The Lord Saves”
- Y’shua / Jesus – because “this baby will save his people from their sins” (v. 21)

(i) Christmas – and all of its wonderful hoopla (lights, songs, food, parties, gifts, color, music) – comes once a year ESSENTIALLY like that angel – to deliver a message to us in the midst of the season’s dream-like glory:

NAME THAT CHILD JESUS / YESHUA – in order that he might save YOU from your sins.

Will you name him that today? (Above any other name you’re inclined to give Him?)

III. SALVATION

Ye-SHUA: “Ye” – from “Jahweh” = the Hebrew word for “The Lord”

“SHUA” – The Hebrew word we translate “save” has a root meaning of FREEDOM – It conveys the idea of SPACE ... in contrast with the RESTRICTION, CONFINEMENT & distress that sin brings to our life.

This child will FREE YOU from your sins by FREEING YOU from the CURSE & BONDAGE that sin puts on your life. So I invite you to name Him: JESUS!

Let me describe this salvation by explaining to you the

PENALTY OF SIN

POWER OF SIN

& THE PRESENCE OF SIN (3 “p”s) – all of which this Child FREES His people.

1. The penalty of sin is EVERLASTING DEATH – or what the Bible calls, “Hell”.

Jesus describes it, borrowing words from Isaiah, as a place where *“the worm does not die and the thirst is not quenched”* (Mk. 9).

= images of anguish & torment, the result of being eternally separated from the goodness of God.

(i) This “DEATH” is sin’s penalty; just as heavenly “LIFE” is obedience’s reward.

- The problem is we’ve all sinned ... and our obedience falls short of the reward of true life.
- So we are subject to the CURSE of sin – and our destiny is everlasting death.
- Unless Jesus was a liar, this is the penalty of sin for which we are guilty.

(ii) The Child born to Mary came to SAVE His people from the PENALTY of sin.

- He lived the obedient life as only EMMANUEL – “God with us” could
- He died the cursed death – taking upon himself the PENALTY of sin – the anguish & torment of eternal death. “He descended into hell.”
- He paid the debt that His people owed to the holiness of God.

So in the words of A.B. Simpson:

The gospel tells rebellious men that God is reconciled, that justice is satisfied, that sin has been atoned for, that the judgment of the guilty may be revoked, the condemnation of the sinner cancelled, the curse of the Law blotted out, the gates of hell closed, the portals of heaven opened wide – eternal life, now & forever ... the Fall into sin is UNDONE!”

JOSEPH, name the child Jesus – because He will save His people from the PENALTY of sin.

2. ... and the POWER of sin, as well.

The salvation this child brings also HEALS His people from the EFFECTS of sin in their life.

(That’s the root of the Greek word for salvation – “Healing”)

(i) Spiritually, so much JUNK has accompanied our fall into sin.

Satan appealed to PRIDE to lead us there – “You shall be like God” – and ever since then, pride is a disease of the heart. We’re naturally prone to set ourselves up as God.

- We measure other people by ourselves
- We compare, we compete, we put down ... rather than serve & lift up.

Yet in doing so, we’re readily INSECURE – we have fears & anxieties within

- Who am I? What do others think of me?
- How do I measure myself? What makes me a man? A woman?

We cling to FALSE IDENTITIES / FALSE IMAGES of the self

- My lusts make me a man
- Clinging to temporal measures of worth

And, in all this, we’ve become self-centered & overly self-preoccupied.

A. Mark 7:21 – *For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.*”
= the POWER of sin.

(ii) How can we ever get healed & FREE of this?

ONLY with a new heart! ... a NEW SPIRIT ... a HOLY SPIRIT.

- Which is the very gift that Mary’s Child has come to bring His people.

A. By living the righteous life & dying the sinner’s death, not only has the Child paid the penalty of sin, He has offered to the Father His HOLY HUMAN SPIRIT (= perfected obedience) – which God SEALS into the heart of the people who name Him their Savior.

- so they are RE-BORN ... they have NEW LIFE.

(iii) And in that NEW LIFE, they begin to be saved from the POWER of sin.

- Jesus’ obedience within CONVICTS us and, as we repent, we are transformed from self-centeredness to God-centeredness

HIS LIFE GROWS IN US:

- Addictions & false identities lose their grip
- Lives of love & service are built
- Demons of fear & pride & anger are cast out

A. The Child is the Prince of Peace - God’s SHALOM = wholeness & well-being

- And we are transformed into His image, from glory to glory.

(iii) JOSEPH, name this child Jesus because He will save His people from the POWER OF SIN.

3. Third, He will save His people from the PRESENCE of sin.

(i) In the Bible, salvation is described in 3 DIMENSIONS (3-D):

Christians HAVE BEEN SAVED, are being saved and WILL BE saved (past, present, future)

A. A Christian HAS BEEN SAVED from the PENALTY OF SIN (= once done, forever – “passed from death to life”-Jn. 5:24)

B. Christians too ARE BEING SAVED from the POWER of sin – that’s the PRESENT sense of salvation – we’re being “sanctified”, made like Christ – every true Christian is.

C. But there’s a 3rd dimension to salvation – Christians WILL BE SAVED from sin. This refers to salvation from the PRESENCE of sin. Freed completely! No more curse of sin to wrestle with!

(ii) Who will save us from the complete PRESENCE of sin? Mary’s child, born this day!

The apostle Paul described a Christians struggle with sin in Romans 7. (Even as we’re overcoming the powers of sin, it’s yet a wrestling match!). Paul writes, *“I don’t understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.”*

- You ever feel that way?

Then Paul takes consolation in the fact that if he doesn’t do the godly thing he WANTS to do, then who he most TRULY IS – in his deepest self- is that DESIRE of his new heart. That’s great comfort – because it reminds him that He is a new creation of God!

However, the WRESTLING MATCH IS STILL WEARYING!

- And at the end of the chapter he writes, *“Wretched man that I am. Who will rescue me from this body of death?”* (He realizes that as long as he lives his new life in this body, it’s going to be subject to struggle!)

A. Is there anyone who will eventually SAVE ME FROM THE PRESENCE OF SIN?

Romans 7:25 – *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord ... I WILL BE SAVED.*

(iii) WHEN WILL THAT DAY COME for his people?

When this Child comes again, not in the humility and quiet of a manger birth ... but with trumpet sound ... in the glory of the skies ... for all to see! (To usher the final judgment & new heavens & earth.)

Then the dead in Christ will be raised “imperishable” in the glory of a sin-free transfigured, resurrection-body, like our Lord’s.

Until that day, we see our Lord now “as in a mirror dimly” ... but then we shall see Him face to face ... *AND BE MADE LIKE UNTO HIM!*” (1 Jn. 3) ... HALLELUJAH – Glorification!

Joseph, name this child JESUS because not only will He save his people from the penalty & power of sin, he will save them from the PRESENCE of sin ... COMPLETELY!

IV. CONCLUSION

Our passage concludes with these words:

1. *Verse 24 – “When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name JESUS.”*

= that’s the name I give you!

(i) For Joseph to name this child JESUS – it wasn’t simple or easy.

A. He trusted the revelation – but I’m sure there were times of doubt – was that really an angel from God that came to me ... or just too much peanut-butter?

B. He chose to marry a woman who was pregnant with another Being’s child – you swallow a few lumps of pride there, (as we often do in following God’s will).

C. He chose to honor Mary by refraining from sexual relations with her until the son was born.

D. He chose to become that child’s foster-father – ask any person who has fostered another child – Who knows who that child will be? What that life will involve? There’s a lot of uncertainty. And there would always be a degree of “strangeness” in his relationship with this child – “Who are you?”

E. Joseph chose to build a life together with that child – like every true believer does. He gave up his life to serve the destiny of that child.

F. He chose to train him to be a carpenter. More importantly, he mentored him to be a strong, righteous man who knew wisdom and was unafraid to stand up for God in His day.

Naming the child was not a flippant matter. Joseph acted in faith, gave up pride & independence ... and gave his life to serving the destiny & glory of this child.

2. Will you so name the child? And if so, what will you name Him? ... Will you name him Jesus?

Martin Luther said, *“The life of Christianity consists of possessive pronouns. It is one thing to say, ‘Jesus is a Savior’; it is quite another thing to say, ‘He is MY Savior and MY Lord’. The devil can say the first; the true Christian alone can say the second.”*

This is the child who has come to save his people from their sins – past, present, future – from the penalty, power and presence of sin.

Acts 4:12 – Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

Will YOU name Him “JESUS” TODAY?