

Daniel Waldschmidt – January 1st 2017 – Isaiah 45:20-25

In the name of Jesus, dear Christian friends.

Today our theme is that the Lord is our only Savior. That little baby in the manger is our only Savior. What happened in the days after the manger and after the stable? What happened in the days after the birth of Jesus?

Today is the eighth day after Christmas. We celebrated the birth of our only Savior Jesus on December 25th, eight days ago. The eight day after birth of a boy was important to Jewish families because the eighth day was when a Jewish family would circumcise the little baby boy and it was also the day when they would name the little baby boy. God told Abraham to circumcise his children on the eighth day and that command was also written in the Law of Moses. Joseph and Mary were very faithful to the Law of Moses and so they had Jesus circumcised on the eight day as we read in Luke's Gospel: **"On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived."** (Luke 2:21)

And so on this eighth day after Christmas we will think about the circumcision and the naming of Jesus. Usually now a days, parents spend a lot of time thinking about what they will name their child. There are websites and books that give endless lists of possible names that you could name your child. Cori and I spent a lot of time reading lists of names and deciding which ones we liked and which ones we didn't. Joseph and Mary didn't have to spend any time looking at lists of names. They didn't spend any time even talking about possible names because before Jesus was even conceived, God told both Mary and Joseph what the child's name would be. We read in Matthew 1 – **"an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."** (Matthew 1:20-21). And in Luke we read: **God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." ... ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus."** (Luke 1:28, 31) So Mary and Joseph didn't have to spend any time thinking about names because God told both Mary and Joseph, his name will be Jesus.

Now the name Jesus comes from the Hebrew word "Yeshua" which means "the LORD saves." And it was the perfect name for this baby because as the angel says: **you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.**" (Matthew 1:20-21). Jesus is our only Savior. That's even what his name means: Savior.

Jesus' name tells us what Jesus is all about: Jesus is the Lord who saves his people from their sins. I can't think of a better summary of what Jesus is all about: he saves us from our sins. Jesus is the only one who could save us from our sins. As our passage from Isaiah says: **"And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. ²² Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth."** (Isaiah 45:21-22) The Lord Jesus is our only Savior. He's the only one who could save us from our sins.

Now how did Jesus save us from our sins? Well, it starts with his circumcision. Jesus saved us by keeping the Law perfectly for us and one of those laws was circumcision. Circumcision was what marked the descendants of Abraham as the people of God. Circumcision was how God marked little babies and said these are my people. And so in the Law the LORD commanded that little baby boys be circumcised. Now little baby Jesus is God. And so the one who gave the Law is now submitting himself to the Law. From beginning to end, from a little baby until he gave his life on the cross Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to the Law. And he gives that life of perfect obedience to you because that's what you needed to get into heaven a life of perfect obedience to the Law. So even as a little baby the Lord Jesus has already started his work of saving us by being circumcised. The Lord Jesus is our only Savior.

Once Jesus was circumcised, circumcision was fulfilled. New Testament believers do not need to be circumcised anymore. In the Old Testament circumcision marked little babies as belonging to the people of God. In the New Testament what marks people as belonging to the people of God? Baptism. The apostle Paul links baptism and circumcision in Colossians 2 when he says, **"In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead"** (Col 2:11-12). Baptism is just as inclusive as circumcision. That's one reason why we Lutherans baptize babies. In fact baptism is even more inclusive than circumcision because circumcision could be applied only

to men. But baptism can be applied to both men and women. In circumcision God puts his mark on the Old Testament people and said you are my people, you belong to me. In baptism God puts his mark on you and says you belong to me. That's why we baptize in the **name** of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. When you were baptized God wrote his name on you. Why do you write your name on something. You write your name on something if it belongs to you. When you were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit God wrote his name on you and said you belong to me. When you were baptized God wrote his name on you and claimed you as his own. In baptism you were claimed by the only God who saves. Baptism saves us by connecting us to Jesus. In baptism we are connected to Jesus our only Savior.

There are lots of names of other gods who don't save. Isaiah talks about that: **"Ignorant of those who pray to idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save" (Isaiah 45:20)**. Many of the people of Isaiah's time prayed to false gods. Those gods had names like Ball and Ashtorah and Molech. But those gods couldn't save because they don't exist. The only God who exists and therefore the only God who can save is the LORD. The LORD is our only Savior. Other gods can't save because they don't exist.

Things haven't changed since Isaiah's day. Still today there are many false gods. Those false gods have names like Allah and Buddha. And some today will say that all the different names really just refer to the same God. Some call him Jesus, some call him Allah, some call him Buddha. But all those names really refer to the same God. Isaiah wouldn't agree with that. Elijah wouldn't agree with that. Remember the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal? Elijah didn't say, "There's one God and you call him Baal and I call him the LORD but it's really the same God we just call him different names." No! Elijah said wither Ball is God or the LORD is God and we are going to have a contest to show which one is the true God. And the LORD sent the fire and Baal didn't and all the people said, "The LORD, he is God. The LORD he is God."

It's like Isaiah said, **"In the LORD alone are deliverance and strength" (Isaiah 45:24)**. The LORD is our only Savior. He's only God who can save us from cancer. He's the only God who can save us from our guilt. He's the only God who can save us from death and hell. The LORD is our only Savior.

The remarkable thing is that the New Testament takes these words about God and applies them to Jesus. In our Isaiah passage God says: **"Before me every knee will bow."** So the Old Testament says: "Before God every knee will bow." The New Testament in Philippians chapter 2 says: **"At the**

name of Jesus every knee will bow.” So the Old Testament says: “Before God every knee will bow.” And the New Testament says “Before Jesus every knee will bow.” The only logical conclusion is “Jesus is God.” And since Jesus is God, that means Jesus is our only Savior.

Today we have considered the name of Jesus and that Jesus is our only Savior. When you hear someone’s name, it immediately calls to mind everything you know about that person. When you hear the name Jesus, it reminds us of everything Jesus has done for us. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Jesus submitted to the Law when he was circumcised. Jesus lived a perfect life in our place. Jesus died on the cross to take away our sins. Jesus who rose from the dead to guarantee our resurrection. The LORD Jesus is our only Savior. Amen.