

January 1, 2023 - First Sunday of Christmas - Name of Jesus

First Reading: Numbers 6:22-27 – the Aaronic benediction

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them, The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.

One of my favorite roles as a pastor was to share the benediction with the congregation at the end of the service and bless them.

Genesis 27: 2-4 – Isaac to Esau – "See, I am old; I do not know the day of my death. Now then, take your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field, and hunt game for me. Then prepare for me savory food, such as I like, and bring it to me to eat, so that I may bless you before I die."

Genesis 27: 41 – Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

Genesis 32: 26 – Jacob to the man with whom he wrestled until daybreak – "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

Gary Smalley and John Trent – "The Blessing"

Psalm: Psalm 8

Whenever you feel badly about yourself, read Psalm 8.

God created you with dignity and gave you dominion.

What difference does and/or can that make for you today?

3-4 - When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars you have set in their courses,
what are mere mortals that you should be mindful of them, human beings that you should care for them?

5 - Yet you have made them little less than divine; with glory and honor you crown them.

6-8 - You have made them rule over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet: all flocks and cattle, even the wild beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, and whatever passes along the paths of the sea.

Second Reading: Galatians 4:4-7

Redemption from the curse of the law – adoption as children of God – the Holy Spirit – the ability and privilege to call God Father – what wonderful blessings are ours because of Jesus

4-5 - When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.

*When the fullness of time had come – at just the right time – cf. Bethel New Testament 1
All of the ways in which God's timing for the birth of Jesus was perfectly right*

A universal language – dispersion of the Hebrew people – Roman peace (Pax Romana) – privileges of Roman citizenship - Roman ships and roads – spiritual hunger and longing because of the violence and cruelty of the day

6-7 - And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Romans 8: 15-17 – When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

Gospel: Luke 2:15-21

21 - After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Isaiah 9: 6 – He is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace

Matthew 1: 21 – Angel to Joseph – "She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Matthew 28: 18-19 – "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Luke 10: 17 – The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!"

Acts 4: 12 – Peter to the rulers of the people and the elders – "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

Acts 16: 18 – Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

Philippians 2: 9-11 – Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

James 5: 14 – Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.

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*All hail the power of Jesus' Name! Let angels prostrate fall.
Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all.*

*Jesus, Name Above All Names, Beautiful Savior, Glorious Lord,
Emmanuel, God is with us, Blessed Redeemer, Living Word.*

*How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear!
It soothes the sorrows, heals the wounds, and drives away the fear.*