

Pastor's Post

⁹ *Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,*
¹⁰ *so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*
¹¹ *and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11 NRSV*

Dear Friends,

Names are important. We were all given names for a reason. Just as there are many names, I'm sure there are unique stories for each person on how they received their given names. I know mine was from my father whose name was John and my great grandfather who was named Henry (my middle name). Our children's names also had connection to family members as well.

Sometimes the naming process is a little more interesting. A priest I knew once told me the story how he had to baptize an infant in a hospital and when he asked the child's name, he was told, "Chanel". When the priest asked how they came about that name, they replied, "Well, there was this bottle of perfume on my nightstand by my bed..." I'm sure that will make for an interesting conversation with their child when she grew up and asked about the origin of her name!

Our first Sunday worship this year will be on January 1, the very first day of the year. It is a feast day in the church called the "Holy Name of Jesus". The day is determined because it is counted eight days after Jesus was born and according to Jewish tradition would have been circumcised, and then named "Jesus" as the angel directed Joseph in a dream before Jesus was born (Matthew 1:18-24). Jesus means "savior". In fact, the text from Luke for this day tells us "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" (Luke 2:21).

So what does it mean for us who are Jesus' followers, God's children because of Jesus?

Here are some thoughts. If the name Jesus means anything to us the first thought would be "savior". We by sheer faith in Jesus are saved from our sins, and promised eternal life. It is a gift of God and doesn't come by our efforts in any way shape or form.

Secondly, coming out of the first thought is how we see others. If we take the name of Jesus as his followers, and since it is his death and resurrection that won us eternal life, we ask God's help not to indulge in judgement of others. Too often the name of Jesus and Christians get caught up with judgmental actions. Because of Jesus we are saved by grace, and therefore "the ground is level at the foot of the cross" or as someone has said "there's not a choice between us".

Lastly, if we take the name of Jesus, we need to ask him for his love. This is the love of Jesus that welcomed seekers who felt shut out from God by the religious leaders of Jesus' day and age.

Today, there are still those seekers who feel shut out from God. If we take the name of Jesus, can we do no less but model, with God's help, Jesus' love?

May we take the time as we enter 2017 to consider what taking the name of Jesus means to us, and bearing witness to name of Jesus to others.

Blessed New Year to you all.

Your brother in Christ,
John

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Sunday Worship Times
8:30 & 11:00am
Sunday School
9:45am

