

And you shall call his name Jesus

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The Advent season is a time of preparing our hearts for the celebration of Jesus' coming at Christmas. That is where the word Advent came from. In Latin it means "coming or arrival".

It is a time to draw back from the rush, the noise, the stress of our lives, and once again allow God to turn our hearts back towards Himself. A time to refocus our lives on the Christ child in the manger.

The Jews were very familiar with this idea of preparing for the Messiah's coming. We read in the Old Testament, in Isaiah 9:6-7, almost 800 years before Christ was born, that God had spoken through the prophets promising a day when a Messiah, a Savior, would come to deliver His people.

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore."

So, they took these words and they waited. Century after century, generation after generation, but yet there was no sign of their Messiah. Have you ever been in a situation where you have been forced to trust and wait on God's timing? It is a difficult process of trust, obedience and patience. The Israelites continued to wait for 400 years, between the Old Testament and the New Testament. They heard nothing from God. Some chose to forget the prophecies, but some held on to the ancient scriptures and continued to prepare for the day that the Messiah would come.

We, also, are to prepare our hearts for the coming of the King during this season of Advent. In these next four weeks, may we make room in our lives for the presence of Christ. May we, too, put aside the clutter and distractions of this world, and in humility and wonder draw near to this Christ child in the manger.

Do you remember the old children's story of Hansel and Gretel? There are two children who live in the woods with their father and their wicked stepmother. They do not have enough money or enough food to eat, so the wicked stepmother devises a plan to lead the children into the forest and then to leave them there, thinking that they will not be able to find their way home. Fortunately for Gretel, Hansel has a plan. They had overheard the wicked stepmother's idea, so Hansel leaves a trail

of breadcrumbs and then small white stones that eventually leads them back home. I know that is a simple summary of the story, and I left out the whole scene with the wicked witch and the gingerbread house, but the reason that I refer to the story is the trail that led them home.

In scripture, time and again we see that our needs mark the trail that leads us home to God. It is in our time of need that God turns our gaze back towards Him and draws us back to Himself. It is as we experience His provision, His healing, His wisdom, and His forgiveness, that we return home and come to know God on a first name basis, more intimate than ever before. God declared this truth to His people throughout the Old Testament, as He declared His names to them in the midst of their desperate situations.

In Genesis 22:12-14, Abraham was about to obey God's command to sacrifice his son Isaac. At the last moment, God stopped Abraham and provided a ram caught in a thicket for the sacrifice. In these verses God is declared as **Jehovah-Jireh**, which means "Yahweh will provide". It literally meant "The Lord Who Sees". It is the idea that we are never out of God's sight. He never takes His eyes off of us. He is always watching over His children and He sees and will provide for our needs. He is **Jehovah-Jireh**.

Another place God's name appears in the midst of man's need is in Exodus 15:22-26. Moses led Israel on from the Red Sea. They journeyed into the wilderness and found no water. They came to a place called Marah where they found water, but the water was bitter and they could not drink it. The people grumbled to Moses, and he cried out to the Lord. God then showed Moses a small tree. When Moses threw the small tree into the water, the water became drinkable. God then revealed Himself as **Jehovah-Rapha**, "Yahweh, your Healer". It is interesting that name literally means, "The Lord who makes bitter things sweet." How often in our time of need do we need this Healer God, who works all things for the good, who makes bitter things sweet.

Once again, in Exodus 17:8-15, the need of God's people ushered them back into a desperate situation, where they came to know God by yet another name. The Amalekites came against Israel in battle. Moses stood up on a hill overlooking the battle. As long as Moses held up God's staff in his hand, Israel prevailed, but when Moses' arm came down, the Amalekites prevailed. Aaron and Hur eventually brought Moses a stone to sit on and held up Moses' arms to secure the victory. Afterwards, Moses built an altar and named it **Jehovah-Nissi**, "The Lord is my Banner". It was the idea of a country's flag still waving proudly after battle. This name proclaimed God's willingness and ability to bring victory on behalf of His people. God was showing Himself to be more than just a distant deity. He practically was our Father and Shepherd.

God continued to introduce Himself to us through different names, through the birth and the life of Christ in the New Testament. In our weakness, we would come to know Jesus as our **Mighty God**. In the midst of conflict, He would become our **Prince of Peace**. In the midst of strife, Christ would become our **Deliverer**. In the midst of our confusion and chaos, He would be our **Wonderful Counselor**. In the midst of our poverty, He would become our **Provider**; and in the midst of sickness, He would become our **Great Physician**. In the midst of our need, He would be our **Great High Priest**, **the Lamb of God**, our **Good Shepherd**, our **Redeemer** and **Lord of All**.

While many of God's names in the Old and New Testament met our needs, there is only one name that met us in our greatest need. We find it first in Matthew 1:20-21:

“Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’”

In Hebrew, the name is *Yeshua*, what we call in English, Joshua. In Greek, *Yeshua* is translated *īēsous*, what we call in English, **Jesus**. Literally, it means “Yahweh saves” or “Yahweh is salvation”. It applied to the life of Joshua as Yahweh led the people of Israel to conquer the Promised Land. It now applied to as Jesus would conquer sin and death.

If our greatest need would have been physical sickness, God would have sent a medical doctor. If our greatest need would have been money, God would have sent an accountant. If our greatest need would have been education, God would have sent a school teacher, but it wasn't. Our greatest need is the sin that separates us from God and condemns us to an eternity without Him. Because of our sin, God sent His Son, Jesus, the long-awaited **Messiah**, who is **the Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world.

Jesus lived a sinless life, and yet willingly died to pay for our sins. He was raised back to life on the third day. Through His death and resurrection, the way of salvation has been opened for all who will turn from their sin and believe in Jesus Christ. This is what lay ahead for the child in the manger.

The name Jesus had become very common for Jewish men in the first century, so much so that Jesus was often described as Jesus of Nazareth, so people would know to which Jesus one was referring. It is interesting how in this one name you find a connection to the divine “Yahweh saves”, and also the ordinary name of a carpenter of Nazareth. It fit the fact that Jesus was **Immanuel**, “God with us”. That God had taken on the form of ordinary man in order to save those who had been created in His own image.

This name, Jesus, was like no other. As we find in Philippians 2:9-11, ***“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”***

It is through the name of Jesus that sins are forgiven (Acts 10:43). It is in the name of Jesus that we are baptized (Acts 2:38). It is through the name of Jesus that healing and miracles were performed (Acts 3:16). It is in the name of Jesus that we pray (John 14:13-14). It is through the name of Jesus that every believer is to live their lives (Colossians 3:17). 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 4:11-12).

In the Ten Commandments we are told to not take the Lord's name in vain. Most of us were taught that this meant that we should not use God's name when cursing or saying bad words. While that can be included in this command, it means something far greater. When we take on the name of the Lord we gain all of the resources of the Lord.

In Jesus, we have fellowship with God. We are forgiven. We have been saved from ourselves. We are free. We have purpose. We are made new, transformed, and born again. We are known completely, yet loved unconditionally. We have eternal life. We have been made righteous. We have access to the fruit of the Spirit. We are treasured children of the King. And nothing can separate us from the

love of Christ. We are now on a first name basis with the **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, Everlasting Father**. In Jesus we are spiritual billionaires.

Where I am from, when a man and a woman get married, the wife takes upon herself the family name of the husband. When she takes on his name, everything that he has becomes hers as well. It is similar to us taking on the name of Christ. It is impossible to take on the name of Jesus without receiving all the resources of Jesus. But how many times as Christians have we had access to all that Christ offers, but then lived defeated lives as if we are not His? It is either ignorance or unbelief.

So how do we take hold of this spiritual inheritance?

- We don't let our needs drive us away from Christ, but towards Christ.
- We start with our needs. Where do you need God to work in your life right now? Where do you need to be made more like Christ? Submit your weakness to God's strength, your ignorance to God's wisdom, your poverty to God's provision, trusting that He will meet you in the midst of your need, and you will come to know Him on a first name basis. Surrender, seeking that God's will would be done in your situation.
- Open your Bibles. Get to know who God is and how he relates with His people. Let God's Word convict your heart and grow your faith.
- Trust and obey. As you rely on God's promises and commands, you will find that He is right and wise and good. You will be drawn to obey Him more and in turn experience Him more.

As we start this time of Advent, may we be taken back to that first Christmas and truly call on the name of Jesus, the One who has come to save us from our sins.

Discussion questions:

1. What did you find most interesting in this sermon?
2. In what ways can we draw near to Christ during this Christmas season?
3. What names of God or Christ from the Bible do you remember?
4. Can you remember a time in your life that God met your needs?
5. What did you learn about the name of Jesus in this sermon?
6. What does it mean to not take the Lord's name in vain?
7. We often live defeated lives because of ignorance and unbelief. What can we do to improve in these areas?
8. What do you need to remember from this sermon?
9. What do you need to do about that?
10. How can we pray for you?