

“I Need Help!” – Pr Jim Sprengle – New Year’s Eve – 12/29/2021

- I. **Luke 2:21 and Philippians 2:9-11** - ²¹ “And at the end of eight days, when He was circumcised, He was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.” And St. Paul writes – ⁹ “Therefore God has highly exalted [Jesus] and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
- II. **What’s in a name?**
 - a. My wife Michele and I have been driving through town and noticed unique names given to different businesses.
 - i. Of course, a business wants to attract customers by the name, or at least give some idea of its purpose or the type of business it is...
 - ii. We joke around coming up with simple names that could be used for a restaurant name like “Lunch,” or “Supper”.
 - iii. Awhile back, a business down the street changed their name to, “The Busted Knuckle Lounge” – which made me chuckle because I was not sure they would attract the kind of customers that would help them succeed.
 1. It took a few weeks, but the name changed to something more in line with the type of business they want to portray to the public
 2. I can only imagine what took place before they made the decision to change their name... But naming your business, “Fight Club” or “The Smash Your Face In Café” seems a little counter-productive to an orderly place of work.
 - b. I read an article by an NYU professor name Adam Alter.
 - i. He makes the assertion that names have the ability to change the outcome of a person’s life... or a person’s name can become their destiny.
 1. “The technical name is ‘nominative determinism,’ which literally means ‘name-driven outcome.’”
 - ii. Some examples of this are:
 1. Chief justices with last name of Judge or Laws
 2. Anna Smashnova – professional tennis player
 3. Layne Beachley – a world champion surfer
 4. Stephen Rowbotham – an Olympic rower
 5. Or, Usain Bolt the fastest person ever recorded in 100 & 200M
 - iii. It’s probably a stretch to say that Usain Bolt would not have achieved his world records if he was named “Usain Plod”

- iv. The author concludes that research shows a person's name can be a driving force in what a person becomes.¹
- c. However, I have definitely seen the opposite happen as well... I will never forget Pastor Al Beck at the hospital – and he pointed to the white board with his assigned surgeon – Dr. Killingbeck... who got Pastor Beck going without a problem.
- d. So, what's in a name anyway?

III. **Tonight we celebrate the first step among many...**

- a. Yes, of course it is New Year's Eve and we may be celebrating the end of a year and the beginning of a new one – plenty of people are happy to see 2021 in the rearview mirror...
- b. But another celebration is in order because Jesus takes the first step after He is born to fulfill the meaning of His name – “The Lord Saves”
- c. It is the day of Jesus' circumcision and naming, which takes place 8 days after birth... and on our calendar, January 1.
 - i. Each male child whose family obeyed God's law was required to be circumcised – as it says in
 - 1. Genesis 17:12 - He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, and
 - 2. Genesis 21:4 - And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.
- d. In addition to the first blood that Christ shed for us, His name was made official by His parents.
- e. Just imagine, God Himself, in the perfect union with the Father and Holy Spirit – coming to be in our place – our world... and lowering Himself even to circumcision.
 - i. Yet, this is the God who would shed more blood in order to fulfill His name – in order to save us.
 - ii. Ultimately, as Paul says, Jesus has the name above all names (Phil 2:9-10) and every knee will bow to Him.

IV. **Our dilemma is not how we will make it through 2022.**

- a. Regardless of our expectations in the year ahead – whether they be high or low – Our trouble is how we see and understand the name of Jesus in our lives.
- b. Our great and wonderful God has gone the whole way to meet us – to save us – to die in our stead... and do we humble ourselves before Him?
- c. I know the pandemic has caused so much fear and trial in the lives of the faithful, but many are not placing their trust in the name of Jesus.
 - i. A new year is the best time to reset the habits and ways of the past – including when and how we place all things in His hands.
- d. You see, bowing down to the name of Jesus isn't an afterthought for us –
 - i. We don't bow down after we do and say whatever we want.

- ii. The daily walk with Christ means that we see His power and glory in all we have... in our very being!
 - e. What's in a name?
 - i. Well, for us, we are Christians – Christ followers
 - ii. It is a name that says we don't lead, but we follow... we don't make our own way, we bow down.
 - f. Jesus, our great and powerful God, has given us every reason to follow – to bow down, because of His name – God saves.
- V. **Yes, celebrating the circumcision and naming of Jesus is strange.**
 - a. However, we are the faithful people who see all of Jesus life and work as worthy of celebrating.
 - b. From the moment He took on flesh as a human being at conception to the moment He closed His eyes in death as a sacrifice for our sins of pride and ego... Jesus is worthy of celebrating, of bowing down to, of trusting fully.
 - c. In the year to come, we may see many different ways to improve ourselves, get healthy, or start some other good habits...
 - i. I would like to introduce a resolution for you to consider in the coming year – getting on your knees (if possible) each morning and praying to Jesus three simple words, “I need help.”
 - d. As you bow down and seek His will for your life, you are in the best place to live out your name... Christian... or Christ follower.
 - i. Of course that help and direction will come with the reading of His Word, of receiving the Lord's Supper, and remembering your Baptism daily – but the simple act of looking to God each day and saying, “I need help” is a powerful way to put Jesus in the right place.
 - e. So, yes, Happy New Year to all of you, and an even happier new year with Jesus at the helm. Amen.

¹ Source: Adam Alter, “Would Usain Bolt Run More Slowly with the Name Usain Plod?” *Science Friday* (4-4-13)