

## **THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THAT NAME**

**Luke 2:21**

**Christmas Day**

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**Pastor Nathan J. Thompson**

What does your name mean to you? We all know that your name and mine represent who we are; they tell a lot about ourselves. When someone hears our name that usually stimulates some kind of impressions about us in their minds. They may remember what we look like; something about our personality; they may remember something about the kind of relationship we have.

Therefore our name is a very precious part of our lives. It represents who we are, and we certainly want it to be respected and thought of highly by others. We don't want anyone to make fun of or put down our names, because in doing that our self-image and pride can be deeply hurt.

In Biblical times the Hebrew tradition was that every name had a meaning and therefore people named their children with a name that they wanted to have special meaning for their child. For example, the name Sarah means "princess," and the name John means "God is gracious," and the list goes on and on. In Biblical times the meaning was as important as the name.

Thirty four years ago, when Kim and I received our adoption referral papers from Korea telling us about and showing us a picture of a newborn baby girl who would soon be a part of our family, one of the first things we needed to do was to give her a name. Being Korean, we didn't feel that a Norwegian or Scandinavian name would really fit her.

We wanted a name that would be unique, but we also wanted it to have a special meaning. Therefore we named her Karis, which is the Greek word which means "grace." The word grace, of course, means love that is totally undeserved and unmerited, love that is given completely as a gift. We wanted her to be named Karis because we wanted her to always know that we truly believed that she, as well as any child, are totally undeserved gifts of God.

We wanted her to know that God gives the gift of children and whether a child is biologically born into a family, or whether a child is brought in through adoption, that God is the one who gives these precious gifts; all children are equal gifts of his grace and love. We also wanted her to always know that God's love, forgiveness and salvation are gifts of his amazing grace.

The central message and meaning of Christmas is also centered in a name. In our text from Luke 2 it is proclaimed that on the 8th day "*he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.*" And this passage, of course, refers to Matthew 1:21, where the angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "*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.*"

The naming of Jesus therefore is very significant, because the name Jesus means, "*he will save his people from their sins.*" The original Hebrew of the name Jesus was Joshua, which means

“savior.” Now it is important to realize that at that time there were many people named Joshua and Jesus, so to distinguish between the others the followers of Jesus used various designations like, “Jesus of Nazareth,” or “Jesus son of David,” to make sure that people knew that this was not just any old Jesus, but was the one announced by the angel.

Among the early followers they also began using the title “Christ” when referring to Jesus. Christ or Christos, we need to remember, was not his last name. Rather, the name Christ means “the anointed one,” or “Messiah.” People then began to use the name “Jesus Christ,” or Jesus is the Christ,” to make clear to everyone that Jesus was the anointed one of God, the Messiah, the one who was to save his people from their sins.

This phrase Jesus Christ and Jesus the Christ became one of the first confessions of faith. When Jesus asked Peter in Matthew 16:16 who he was, “Peter said, *“You are the Christ, (the Messiah), the Son of the living God.”* Such a confession meant that one believed that Jesus was the Savior who had been prophesied of old; that Jesus was the one who through his death and resurrection, would bring forgiveness and salvation to all who would believe.

Through the years the name of Jesus has been, and continues to be, a comfort to countless numbers of people. No other name has been talked about so much. No other name has been preached and proclaimed so widely. No other name has given so much peace and comfort to those sick or dying. No other name has given so much strength to those facing hardships or persecutions. No other name has been used as much in songs and hymns, or has been the focal point of so many prayers.

The song writer, Gloria Gaither, says it so well with these words, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, there’s just something about that name. Master, Savior, Jesus, like the fragrance after the rain. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, let all heaven and earth proclaim. Kings and kingdoms will all pass away, but there’s something about that name.”

There is something about that name. Max Lucado tells the story about Matthew Huffman, the six year old son of missionaries in Brazil. One morning he began to complain of a fever. As his temperature went up he began losing his eyesight. His mother and father put him in the car and raced him to the hospital.

As they were driving and he was lying on his mother’s lap, he did something his parents will never forget. He extended his hand in the air. His mother took it and pulled it away. He extended it again, and again she took it, and again he pulled it back and reached into the air. Confused, the mother asked her son, “What are you reaching for, Matthew?”

“I’m reaching for Jesus’ hand,” he answered. And with those words he closed his eyes and slid into a coma from which he would never awaken. He died two days later, a victim of bacterial meningitis. Of all the things he didn’t have the chance to learn in his short life he had learned the most important thing, who to reach for in the time of death. He knew the name and person of Jesus, and Jesus took him by the hand that day and brought him to eternal life.

There's something about that name. When you and I were baptized, we were marked with the sign of the cross, and on that day we were given a new name. Our name became Christian, we became part of Christ's family, and as Christians we also bear the name of Jesus. Our name is now Nathan Christian, or Susan Christian, or whatever. Our name is now Christian, which means "Christ in us," which means that Christ lives in our hearts and lives.

There's something about that name. You and I, my friend, if we are living by faith in Jesus Christ, bear that precious name. We, therefore, are to live and proclaim that name in all that we do. We are to lift high the name of Jesus so that all people may come to know and believe in him. We are to lift high the name of Jesus, so as Paul says in Philippians 2, *"that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God and Father."*

There is an old poem my father used to quote that says:

*"I know of a soul that is steeped in sin, that no one's art can cure, but I know a name, a name, a name, that can make that soul all pure. I know of a life that is lost to God, bound down by the things of earth. But I know a name, a name, a name that can bring that soul new birth. I know of lands that are sunk in shame, of hearts that faint and tire. But I know of a name, a name, a name, that can bring that soul new birth. Its sound is a brand, its letters flame, like glowing tongues of fire. I know a name, a name, a name, that will set those lands on fire."*

There is something about that name. May this Jesus live in your hearts and lives on this Christmas Day and throughout the year to come! A blessed Christmas to all!!