

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen

What's in a name?

- What is in your name?
- Do you know what it means?

Do you know how you got it?

- Some are given their name because their parents just liked the name.
- Some are given their name based on the name of another family member.
- For sure—junior's fall into this category.
- Some are given their name based on that being the name of a famous person or celebrity.

Just for fun and to introduce this subject, I took a look at the most popular baby names for 2022, and how that compared to 2021.

- The most popular boys name in 2022, and in 2021 was Liam.
- Noah was second in both years; but this year it closed the gap on being the most popular.
- Noah went from being a distant second in 2021 to a close second in 2022.

For what it's worth, the top 5 boys names in 2022

- At number 5 and in to the top 10 for the first time.....Mat E O (Matio)
- At number 4....Elijah
- At number 3....Oliver.
- And as I said, number 2, Noah; and number 1, Liam.
- Mason and Ethan were in the top 10 in 2021 but fell out in 2022.

How about for the ladies?

- The top 5 ladies' names for 2022 were also the same top 5 names for 2021
- Oliva, Emma, Amelia, Ava, and Sophia.
- Interesting that all 5 names end in "A".
- The top 10 names for girls remained pretty static for the last 2 years except at number 10 Harper fell out and Evelyn came in.

On a much deeper, more significant theological level we have in our Gospel reading today.....Jesus being given His official name. Of course the name "Jesus."

- This name, of course, was designated for Jesus before His birth.

- The angel, the messenger from God, informing Joseph that this child in the womb of Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit, was to be named Jesus.
- Matthew chapter 1 verse 21.....
- “The angel said to Joseph. She will bear a Son, and you will call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.

Often in the Bible, names are given with great meaning.....or, a new name is given.

- Sarai became Sarah. Sarah meaning noblewoman or princess. Sarah the wife of Abraham and from whom the descendants of Abraham would be.
- Abram became Abraham. And Abraham means the father of many nations.
- And, of course, Jacob became Israel. Jacob meaning supplanter and Israel meaning wrestles with or triumphant with God.
- These examples just to name a few.

The name Jesus, of course, has great meaning and depth and history.

- In Exodus chapter 3 when Moses asks the burning bush who should I say sent me.
- God replies, “I Am who I Am.” Say this to the people, I Am has sent Me to you.”

And God continued on.....

- Say this to the people of Israel. The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has sent Me to you; this is My name forever and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”

I Am, the name of God, translated in Hebrew, Yahweh.

- From that name Yahweh is derived Yeshua which means Yahweh saves.
- Yeshua translated into English is Joshua.

Joshua a forerunner of Christ.

- Who would take over leadership of the Children of Israel from Moses and would lead God’s people across the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

And now, some 1400 years later, the angel designates Jesus’ name to be Jesus.

- Joshua from Hebrew to Jesus in Greek.
- Jesus from Yahweh means the Lord saves.

Jesus’ purpose and mission was already falling in place and being carried out on the 8th day of birth.

- Designating Christmas to be December 25th, today is the 8th day after Jesus' birth.
- And in accordance with Mosaic Law, on the 8th day, young male boys were to be named and circumcised.

This was the forerunner of what is today baptism.

- It was one of the ways the Children of Israel were to be set aside from all other peoples from which Jesus our Messiah would come.
- Just as in our baptism today, we are set apart to be children of God in Christ.

And in keeping with Jewish Law and in accordance with Jesus' mission, our Gospel reading reveals His circumcision.

- On the 8th day after birth, Jesus shed his first blood for us and was given the name Jesus; which means the Lord saves.

The giving of a name to someone or something signifies dominance or control or authority over them.

- God gave Adam his name.
- And Adam means earth or soil.
- Adam came from the dust of the ground.

And God had Adam name all the animals.

- Genesis chapter 2 verse 19.
- "Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what He would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name."
- God gave man the responsibility for management and dominion over His creation.

And Eve was named by Adam, as he was the head of the household.

- And Eve's name means give life or living.

And on the 8th day Jesus was circumcised and given the name Jesus.

- The name given to Him from God the Father through the angel.
- Jesus, under the authority of and doing the will of God the Father in perfect obedience.

And the name Jesus.....a derivative of Yahweh designating the presence of the Lord dwelling in Him and His mission to save us from our sins.

- There can be so much in a name.
- Where the Lord's name is, there He is present to save.

Jesus was circumcised on the 8th day. The forerunner of our baptism.

- And praise be to Jesus, who through the cross, eternally saves.
- And in Holy Baptism we are given the joyous exchange that all our sins are placed on Jesus and His righteousness is given to us.

In the rite of Holy Baptism, one of the questions asked prior to the actual baptism is.....

- How is this child or how are you to be named?
- Many times I talk to the family ahead of time and alert them to this.
- I tell them, I didn't forget the name or get confused....it is actually in baptism where the child is given his or her name.

I knew a pastor, who, of course, on the occasion of a birth would visit the parents and child in the hospital.

- Church members would then ask the pastor about the child and its name.....
- And he would not reveal the name until he officially asked and was given the name in the rite of baptism.

The child or person is given his or her name in the rite of baptism.....

- And then right after that, the pastor says the name given and gives them the sign of the cross both upon their forehead and upon their heart to mark them as one redeemed by Christ the crucified.
- For giving them the markings for entry into the kingdom of God in heaven.
- And then in the actual baptism, again the name so designated is said and the child or person is baptized IN THE NAME OF the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- The name of the Triune God is placed on that individual and they can go forth as a child of God IN THE NAME of Jesus.

A lot is in a name.

- You and I go forth in the name we are given and in the name of Jesus.

Today is New Year's Day.

- We can even go forth as we think about a new year.
- The first day, the beginning of 2023.

- We all have expectations and desires and dreams for the year ahead.

I don't know what the year ahead has for any of us.

- But I do know whatever it is we face, we can do so if we go forth in the name of Jesus.

The Aaronic blessing is identified and given to us in our Old Testament reading for today.

- It is the words of the benediction that is given to you as you go forth each week from God's House, out into the world again.

Our Old Testament reading is very short. Allow me to read it to you again for emphasis.

- The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, speak to Aaron and his sons, saying thus you shall bless the people of Israel; 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 shall they PUT MY NAME UPON THE PEOPLE of Israel, and I will bless them.

God gave to Moses to give to Aaron, the high priest, these words to bless the people.....

- And we continue them today.
- What marvelous blessings the Lord gives to every believer of all ages.

It is pretty amazing that all this was given only a short time after the golden calf incident of idolatry.

- It shows the love and grace and mercy of our God.

God through Aaron was giving His people this blessing as they go forth in their wilderness journey.

- And does it not parallel us today?
- We also continue on our wilderness journey. Looking also to cross over to the Promised Land.

The name of God was placed on the Israelites (meaning triumphant with God) as He blessed them.

- We are the new Israel. And the name of Jesus is placed on us as we are called Christians (meaning followers of Christ) and He blesses us.

As the people of all ages put the name of Yahweh on ourselves, God bestows His favor on us.

- He is giving us protection and promises to guard and keep us.

Until at life's end, as the sign of the cross was given to us on our forehead and our heart as we are made one with Christ in Holy Baptism.....

- So as the Book of Revelation tells us.....
- Our NAMES are written in the Book of Life that we too enter the Promised Land.
- Eternity with Christ in a restored creation.

Knowing all this.....as we face the year ahead, we do so in the confidence and strength of the name of Jesus.

- Happy New Year.
- Walking in the name of Christ we need not fear or be timid.
- With Jesus' name on us, He will surely bless us.
- Together, led by Jesus and in His name may the year ahead be good for each of us together and individually here at Hope.

Dear fellow redeemed.....

- Go forth in the name of Jesus.
- The Lord saves.
- Amen.

(Please stand) And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Having heard the Word of God we now prepare our hearts and minds to confess together the words of the Nicene Creed as found on page 206 in your hymnal.