

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I bet you're looking at the Gospel reading today and saying to yourself "oh how exciting! Pastor's sermon is going to be 2 or 3 minutes long and we'll get out of church early!" After all, how much can a pastor preach on a Gospel reading that's one verse long?

Well you'd be surprised to know that God has packed into this one little verse so much wonderful, theological meat, that we need to spend some time parsing it out.

The circumcision and naming of Jesus is one of those highs, those pinnacles, up there with His baptism, the transfiguration, the Lord's Supper, and yes, even with His death on the cross. For St. Luke, it's the first time Jesus' name is even used.

Now we might first look at this phrase "at the end of eight days" and say "psh, big deal." We might even question why Mary and Joseph would wait 8-days before they would give Jesus His name. I mean today, we name our children when they're still in the womb.

But there is something very important about the 8<sup>th</sup> day, important for us as Christians, and certainly important for Jesus.

The 8<sup>th</sup> day marks a turning point in creation; it's the day AFTER God rested from His 6 days of creating all things. Jesus was put to death on the 6<sup>th</sup> day, rested, and was raised from the dead on the 8<sup>th</sup> day. Jewish children were to be circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day where they were marked as new members of God's holy and set apart nation – Israel.

Here's an interesting thing to consider about the number 8 as well: Jesus bled for us 8 times. He bled for us when he was pierced with a spear where blood and water flowed; he bled for us when nails were pounded into his hands, and again when a nail pierced his feet; he bled

for us when he was beaten by the soldiers; he bled for us when he was crowned with thorns; he bled for us when he was flogged 39 times; he bled for us when he was in the garden of Gethsemane, sweating drops of blood.

Now that's 7 times, and we still have one more. Jesus bled for us when He was circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day. And this wasn't just normal blood being shed but holy blood, the blood of God being shed as atonement for the people.

Consider back in the Old Testament how the blood of lambs and goats and bulls was sprinkled all over the place and used in the ritual sacrifices of atonement for the sins of Israel. And it wasn't holy blood. But in Jesus, holy blood was shed 8 times for us, each time more severe than the next until he finally shed his holy blood on the cross and died.

The 8<sup>th</sup> day is an important day because it is "new creation" day, the day when God makes all things new through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is why He shed His blood 8 times – this is why male children were to be circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day. This is why God worked, 6 days, rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, and this is also why the Church chose to worship on the 8<sup>th</sup> Day rather than the 7<sup>th</sup>, calling this day the Lord's Day, the day He rose from the dead.

We have our 8<sup>th</sup> Day, new creation day, when we are born anew with water and word in Holy Baptism. We have our own 7<sup>th</sup> Day rest, and as we learn in the book of Hebrews, our Sabbath is NOW, today, every day, as we rest in Christ our Lord. Our 7<sup>th</sup> Day rest concludes in the day of our death, and our the 8<sup>th</sup> day begins, our resurrection day, the day we are with our Lord forever in paradise.

See? Jesus was circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> Day not only to fulfill old testament law, but also to show us that He is the Christ, the savior, who

shed His blood to save us. There are no coincidences in Scripture; and when God mentions, even briefly, something like an 8<sup>th</sup> day circumcision, we dare not brush it off as unimportant or a passing thought.

And this gets us to Jesus' circumcision. As I said before, when He was circumcised, he certainly kept the law, showing us that He is the Christ who fulfilled the law in our stead. I also said that this was the first time He shed His holy blood for us. But there is one more important facet I want you to see here.

From the very moment the angel announced to Mary that she would bear a son, God has been the solo-actor in our salvation. We cannot lift one finger, make one step, one good decision, one right move toward our salvation; because from the beginning it is God who is the breather of life, the creator of light; He is the tree of life, He is the door, the way, the truth, and the life, and He is the One, the only One, who has acted, BEEN ACTIVE in our re-creation, our 8<sup>th</sup> day new birth of water and spirit, our 7<sup>th</sup> day rest in His salvation.

When it comes to our being saved, receiving the gifts and promises of God, the benefits of His life, death, and resurrection, God is the actor, and we are the receivers – there is no free will involved.

We must think of ourselves as helpless, little children in the arms of a loving God. What can a child do but simply receive the benefits, the protection of mom and dad? When a child is in the womb being created, is that unborn child, by WILL, creating itself? Does that unborn child say "I choose to have blue eyes," or "I choose to grow 4 fingers and a thumb"? No. Ridiculous, we'd say? It's nature, we'd say, or if we're more theological in our thinking we'd say it's God and His power doing the creating of that child in the womb.

Should we think any differently when it comes to our salvation? No. We are born “dead” to God, enemies, sinful, hostile. I’m just quoting Scripture. I’m not making this up. We are born unable to change our status, our relationship with God.

But God has, and again quoting Scripture, God has chosen, He has “decided,” He has done the work, the solo work, of saving us. He didn’t just die and rise again and then stop and say “now the rest is up to you, time for another sabbath rest” no. Ridiculous, we should say, right? A child is born because of the will of mom and dad and not because of the will of the child. A Christian is born anew because of the will of God through His holy church, not because of the will of the unbeliever.

And through the circumcision of Christ Jesus on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, as announced by the holy messenger of God, it is clear that we, his holy and beloved people – his Church – are born into His kingdom, not by man’s blood, not by man’s will, but by God’s will and God’s blood. No other child could shed circumcision’s blood or even be nailed to a cross, by will or otherwise, and save the world, except the Son of God, and He – only He – willfully chose to do this for us.

And not only did He choose to be born in our flesh, and to have His flesh cut, to bleed, to die for us, but He also chose His own name – Jesus.

When the angel announced to Mary and Joseph that Jesus will be her son’s name, it’s because Jesus is the name God chose to give Himself as a proclamation to the world that He came to save the world from sin.

Now if we look back to the Old Testament, to the time of ancient Israel, who was it that was to bear the holy name? It was God’s chosen, the Jews, Israel, that was given the name – that were to carry God’s holy name to the world. But time and again they failed; time and again they

blasphemed God's holy name, mocked His name, and abandoned the holiness and righteousness they were called to exhibit.

And while millions of people throughout a long history of rebellion, worshiping false gods, could not BE the name God had called them to be, one man, whose name is Jesus, could. The Israelites were the epitome of the Old Adam, the sinner, the transgressor who could not live up to the name they were given. But Jesus is the epitome of righteousness, the New Adam, the one who could and did everything the Father required.

Jesus is the name-bearer of the New Israel, the Church, we who are God sons and daughters. And we have been given the name "holy" and "righteous" because of what Christ has done for us on the cross.

God chose to save His people long before Mary and Joseph, the prophets, the kings, the judges, before Abraham, even before Adam and Eve, God had in mind to take on human flesh, subject Himself to a human name, bleed for His people, die for His people, be raised from the dead for His people, and to save His people from their sins.

We are His people, His bride, His church, and there is no other name by which anyone can be saved, except the name Jesus.

And Jesus' name isn't just a name equal among names, a philosophy equal among philosophies, a doctrine equal among doctrines; a religion equal among religions. For by His religion, His doctrine, His philosophy, His name, and ONLY His name, can men be saved. Buddha cannot save people from hell; Allah cannot save people from hell; the gods of Hinduism cannot save people from hell; ancient pagan gods of the north, of Greece, of Africa, of South America, native American animal gods, cannot save people from hell. For when anyone calls on the name of those gods, no answer will be given because there is no one on the

other line to hear the call, those gods don't exist; they're inventions of the mind.

But the one God, who made all things, and His only Son Jesus Christ through whom all things were made, He hears our call. When was the last time you told your best friend or a family member to make a phone call to someone who doesn't exist? Why would we do that?

Instead we tell our friends, our family, or neighbors, to call on the One Name, the Lord's Name, Jesus' Name, because we know that He is there to answer. And He doesn't want to be called just any name. There aren't many different lines, a multitude of paths, a slew of beliefs all leading to the same place.

God wants us to call to Him by HIS Name! In the waters of Holy Baptism, we are each given His name, and His Name is the only name that saves.

It is important, especially in this day and age, that we are clear, and bold, and consistent when it comes to the Name of our Savior and Lord, Christ Jesus, lest we lead people astray by opinions and fantasies.

God is absolute, we are dust; God is eternal, we are, as St. James writes, a passing mist, here today and gone tomorrow.

Thus we, by God's Holy Spirit, confess His name and only His name, our savior and Lord who bled and died for us on the cross and rose again on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, "new creation" day. We thank and praise Him whose name is Jesus. Amen.