

Name of Jesus
1/1/2017
Luke 2:15-21

My gift of choice to families with new babies

Is often an item that displays the new baby's name.

I know for us,

Whenever we received something with our new baby's name on
it,

It was so special.

Because here was a brand new name for a brand new child.

A name we had deliberated over and decided upon while the child
was still in the womb,

A name that suddenly was no longer an idea,
But now attached to a human being.

And because of that,

The name now meant something.

It wasn't just scribbled on paper in the drawer of my nightstand.

It was on a birth certificate,

Embroidered and printed on bibs and blankets.

Spoken aloud at the doctor's office when called from
the waiting room.

Hearing and seeing the names we had chosen for our children was
always a sort of surreal experience for me in those first few weeks.

In a sense,

Their names made them even more real.

We are reminded in our Gospel this morning that Jesus' name had long
been his name—

That the angel had given him this name even before he was
conceived in the womb.

At his circumcision on the 8th day,
Jesus is formally named, as the naming of the child is part of the
Jewish circumcision ceremony.

His name was spoken,
And perhaps, for Mary, Joseph, and others,
Hearing the name of this child, Jesus, made him even more
real.

Here he was.

Here was the child announced by the angel.

Here was the child who grew for months in Mary's womb.

Here was the child about whom prophets had spoken,
And for whom God's people waited.

Here was the child,

And his name was Jesus.

'Yeshua' in Aramaic,

Meaning "to rescue, to deliver."

Here was the deliverer,

The Savior.

In one name,

In one child,

All creation finds life and redemption.

There's power in that name—Jesus.

And it's not like a magic word—

Like when I used to pray in Jesus' name for things I so desperately
wanted,

Because I took very literally Jesus' words when he says in John,

"I will do whatever you ask in my name."

I trust the power these words,

But no longer do I see them as a means to get what I think I need,

Or to protect me from my fears.

Tagging Jesus' name in my prayers didn't magically make my requests valid or worthy of his listening ear.

So what does Jesus' name do?

In a sense,

It makes him real for us.

When we can name something,

We can claim it.

We can identify it.

We have a relationship with it.

When we can name something,

That something is real to us.

When we say the name of Jesus,

Jesus is even more real to us.

And we claim Him,

We have a relationship with Him.

Jesus's name is a verb—

"to deliver, to rescue"

And therefore Jesus's very name is active in our lives,

Saving us,

Freeing us,

Claiming us as children of that Holy Name.

The name of Jesus is an active,
Living,
Powerful name.

*The name of Jesus charms our fears,
And bids our sorrows cease.
Sings music in the sinner's ears,
Brings life and health and peace.*

The third verse from "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing"
Tells us a bit of the power in Jesus' name.

The name of Jesus charms our fears—
Not in some magical way—
In the Jesus way.
Which controls our fears,
Puts them back in their place,
Reminds them who is really Lord of all.

The name of Jesus bids our sorrows cease—
Not in some magical way—
In the Jesus way.
Which puts our sorrows in their place,
Reminds them who is really Lord of all.

The name of Jesus sings music in the sinner's ears,
For how else do we know and trust and believe that our sins
won't get the best of us?
How else can we possibly hope for forgiveness and
redemption than through the name of the One who came to
forgive and redeem all?

The name of Jesus brings life and health and peace.
Sounds a lot like what we all wish for ourselves and for each other
at the dawn of a new year.
And we don't just have to wish for it—

It's not magic.

It's the gift given in Jesus' name.

And so we gather today,

On this first day of a new year,

In the power of Jesus' name.

The power of a name that meets us in water, bread, and wine—

Splashing and washing us,

Feeding and forgiving us.

An active,

Living Lord Jesus is here.

And he is so active,

So alive,

That his very name is active and alive, too.

Thanks be to God.