



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Those of you who know me well, probably know that my favorite Christmas album is Mariah Carey's Merry Christmas. This album released on November 1, 1994, has become the best-selling Christmas album of all time with more than 20 million copies sold and more each year. On the album there are wonderful uplifting songs but one in particular has stolen my heart: "Jesus, What A Wonderful Child". Just in case, you have not heard it the chorus goes like this:

*Jesus, what a wonderful child
So lovely, meek, and mild
New life, new hope,
New joy he brings
Won't you listen to the angels sing
Glory, glory, glory to the newborn king.*

Jesus what a wonderful child. It's not too late to listen to this amazing album. Remember it is Christmas for another 4 days, out of the 12 days! Today is the 8th day of Christmas on which our church celebrates the Holy Name of Jesus. For it is on this eighth day of Christmas that Jesus was circumcised and received his name.

The shepherds, summoned by an angel, have visited the baby in the manger. They return home, praising God for what has happened. Then comes the focus of today's celebration. "After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child, and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb." V 21 This circumcision of the baby was to follow the Law of Moses, so he too would become a participant in the covenant, a son of Israel. And so it was that the baby received his name as part of the ritual circumcision.

The baby born in the manger is named the name that Gabriel, at the Annunciation, tells Mary to name her child. The name of Jesus has heavy significance. It is the same as the name of Joshua, the Old Testament hero who leads Israel into the land of freedom. It was

not a name that was thought up by the parents. It was a name that came from God. The name of the Savior, the salvation he brings, and he himself all come from God.

I am sure we all have our stories about how we named our children. My Leigh Grace was to be Lee Henry after my grandpa and Rodney's dad, but somehow when she arrived it was not quite appropriate, Henry for a girl. And so, my mom got second billing using Grace as Leigh's middle name. Our son was named for Rodney's grandpa and my father, Frank James. Little did we think of the significance of that name as Jesse James's brother the outlaw. But together when I was angry with their behavior, I could say, "Frank-Leigh, my dears, I don't give a _____!"

Our Psalm today begins and ends with the words, "O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" We would be remiss if we took the name of Jesus as only a label, a way to distinguish one person from the next. The name of Jesus points us to who he is, who he is for us: the Savior, the one who delivers us, rescues us, leads us, as did Joshua. They both lead their people into a land of freedom, a different way of life. Jesus is a name that conveys to us the full grace of God. When this name is used by us with faith and reverence, it is for us a prayer. No other prayer is so simple, than His Holy Name.

In confirmation, we talked about using words that are not appropriate, as we discussed taking the name of the Lord in vain. I think that the students were surprised to hear me say that Geez, Jeepers, and especially God darn it, were using the Holy name of God for wrong purposes. But instead, we should rely on God and use his Holy Name in fervent prayer.

Isaiah in a prophesy said in verses 6-7 of chapter 9, "For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore."

And so, as we begin a new calendar year, I suggest to you that you be thunderstruck by what God did for us on that special Christmas Eve so long ago. God set in motion the eternal salvation of all creation that cannot be stopped by any power in all creation. God came down from highest heaven and took on human form to be among us. God is not distant ever again. Jesus is His name. Known by many other names, He is still God with us, Emmanuel. Jesus is our Savior yesterday, today, and tomorrow. We never know what 2023 will bring, but with Jesus in our hearts we can be assured that He will walk with us through any trail or tribulation.

So, continue to pray the Holy name of Jesus, as we do not know what lies ahead for any one of us. Look forward to the wonderful joys, new opportunities, unique blessings Jesus has to offer us, in the abundant life here on earth procured for us on the cross by our Savior, Jesus. Pray our Saviors Holy name with faith and fervor as you sing, Glory Glory, Glory to the Newborn King! **AMEN**