

**Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,**  
**ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY**  
1 January 2024    Circumcision And Name Of Jesus - New Year's Day

**HYMNS:**        552   36   35   161   840   559

**INTROIT:**    Psalm 102:24-28

I have been saying, "My God, do not take me away in the middle of my days; Your years go on through all generations.

Long ago You laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Your hands.

They will perish, but You will stand firm; they will all be worn out like a garment; You will change them like clothes, and they will vanish.

But You are the same, and Your years will not be used up.

The children of Your servants will dwell undisturbed; and their descendants will be established before You."

**COLLECT:**    Lord God, You made Your beloved Son, our Saviour, subject to the Law and caused Him to shed His blood on our behalf. Grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit, that our hearts may be made pure from all sins; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*Welcome to all worshipping with us!*

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***Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.***

**READINGS:**    Numbers 6:22-27    The priestly blessing.

Galatians 3:23-29

Luke 2:21        He was named Jesus.

**Numbers 6:22-27**

<sup>22</sup> The LORD told Moses, <sup>23</sup> "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is how you shall bless the people of Israel. Say to them: <sup>24</sup> "May the LORD bless you and keep you! <sup>25</sup> May the LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you! <sup>26</sup> May the LORD look on you with favour and give you peace!"

<sup>27</sup> "In this way they will put My name on the people of Israel and I shall bless them."

## Galatians 3:23-29

<sup>23</sup> Before the faith came, we were being imprisoned by the Law, locked up until the faith came, which was about to be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore, the Law was our guardian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> However, now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. <sup>26</sup> For you are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup> because all of you who were baptised into Christ put on Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> Moreover, if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants and heirs according to the promise.

## Luke 2: 21

<sup>21</sup> On the eighth day, when the time came to circumcise the Baby, He was named "Jesus," the name that the angel had given Him before He was conceived in the womb.

## GOD'S TRUE AND PROFOUND LOVE FOR US IN CHRIST

### Sermon for New Year's Day 2024

## Luke 2:21

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel read before **On the eighth day, when the time came to circumcise the Baby, He was named "Jesus," the name that the angel had given Him before He was conceived in the womb.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We are familiar with the song, *The 12 Days of Christmas*. In that song, on the count towards the twelfth day, we hear how on the eighth day of Christmas, "*my true love gave to me, eight maids a-milking.*" Today, however, on the eighth day of Christmas, God's true love gave to me - and to you - the circumcision and name of Jesus.

That's what our text says, which reads again: "**On the eighth day, when the time came to circumcise the Baby, He was named "Jesus," the name that the angel had given Him before He was conceived in the womb.**" Just one verse, the shortest reading for any Sunday or festival in the church year. It is just one verse, but this text *speaks volumes about God's true and profound love for us in Christ.*

It was indeed on the eighth day of Christmas when this took place. On the eighth day from the time when Christ was born, counting inclusively - in other words, one week later - that is when Jesus was circumcised and named. On the eighth day was the prescribed time for a Jewish baby boy to be circumcised and to officially receive his name. Way back in Genesis 17, God had said to Abraham, *“This is My Covenant, which you shall keep, between Me, your people and your descendants after you: Every male among you must be circumcised! You shall have yourselves circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and that will be the mark of the Covenant between Me and you! When any boy among you is eight days old, he shall be circumcised, every male in your coming generations”* (v. 10-12). This sign of the covenant then became codified in the Law of Moses. Leviticus 12 says that if a woman conceives and bears a male child, then *“On the eighth day the boy shall have the flesh of his foreskin circumcised”* (v. 3).

The act of circumcising a male child was a sign showing that the sinful nature passed down from our first father, Adam, had to be dealt with. It needed to be “cut away,” if you will, for us to be right before God and live in a covenant relationship with Him.

Jesus, the Son of God, who came in the flesh, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary - Jesus had no inherited sinful nature to be dealt with. He was born *without sin*, yet He receives the sign of the covenant in His flesh, for Jesus is the fulfilment of that covenant. He bore our sins in His body and so took them away. God would deal dramatically and decisively with sin in the death of Christ on the cross. It is by Him, through faith in Jesus Christ, that we come into the new covenant of righteousness, redemption, and the forgiveness of sins.

On the eighth day, when Jesus is circumcised, He receives the sign of the covenant, and, at the same time, He is fulfilling the Law on our behalf. Already, at eight days old, Jesus is living in obedience to the Law that God had established. Christ’s perfect obedience, throughout His life, fulfils the Law for us.

This is in contrast to our many times breaking God’s Law. How often do we break God’s commandments in thought, word, or deed? Too many times to count. By actively doing, thinking, or saying the wrong thing, we show ourselves to be sinners. We likewise show ourselves as sinners by failing to do, think, or say the right thing. So, our righteousness will not cut it when it comes to being right before God.

But Christ's righteousness does cut it. His obedience to God's will does pass the test. He's the only one who does. No one else has always done the right thing, said the right thing, and thought the right thing. Jesus came to do the will of His Father, and He did it perfectly. As the Messiah, Jesus fulfilled what the psalmist prophesied: "*Look! I have come. It has been written about Me in the scroll of the Book. I delight to do Your will, O My God, and Your Teaching is inside My inner being*" (40:7-8). That's Jesus, and He starts that life of obedience to God's will even here in His circumcision on the eighth day. And that obedience will carry Him all the way to the cross. "*He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross*" (Philippians 2:8).

Jesus' keeping of the Law on our behalf is *redemptive*. It atones for our disobedience, sets us free, and changes our status. Galatians 4 tells us: "*When the time had fully come, God sent out His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive adoption as His sons. Moreover, because you are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who cries, "Abba! Father!" Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son. Moreover, since you are a son, you are also an heir, through God*" (4-7).

Jesus redeems us with His holy, precious blood. Because He is the very Son of God, His blood has infinite, universal power, able to cover and atone for the sins of the world, and His circumcision on the eighth day is the first time that Jesus sheds His blood on our behalf. Years later, there will come another day - Good Friday - when His shedding of blood will reach its goal when Christ is crucified for our sins. St. Peter says we were redeemed not "*with perishable things, with silver or gold... but with the precious blood of Christ*" 1:18-19). Christ gets on that redemptive mission right away, already in His circumcision.

So Jesus, on His eighth day, is circumcised. He receives the sign of the covenant in His flesh. He fulfils the Law on our behalf and sheds His holy blood for us, beginning what He will bring to completion on the cross. Here, already at eight days old, Jesus is doing what He came to do, which is to save us. Jesus came to save us. Even His name, "Jesus," tells us that.

Sometimes, parents pick out a name for their child because of some family member they wish to honour. Sometimes, they choose a name that is trendy or fashionable, or they name the child after some famous celebrity who was popular at the time. But that's not how Jesus got His name.

No, Jesus' name was divinely ordained, picked out in advance by God. Our text says that on the eighth day, **“He was named “Jesus,” the name that the angel had given Him before He was conceived in the womb.”** What's that about? What's that referring to? Well, a little over nine months earlier, the angel Gabriel had told the Virgin Mary, *“you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a Son and you shall call His name ‘Jesus’”* (Luke 1:31). So this name, “Jesus,” was not some random choice. Mary did not pick out this name because she liked the sound of the syllables. No, an angel from God told her to name the child “Jesus.”

Now the name “Jesus,” in the original Hebrew, is “Yeshua,” which in turn is short for “Yehoshua.” It's the same name as “Joshua,” really. Thus, “Jesus” would not have been an uncommon or unique name among Jewish baby boys then.

Joshua was one of the great heroes from Israel's past. Joshua was the one who succeeded Moses as the leader of the people and led them into the Promised Land. Well, now here comes one greater than Joshua. This Jesus is the One who will lead us into the promised land of heaven. Jesus gives us rest from all our foes, and we shall live long in this land, the land of the living, a land flowing with milk and honey and abundance on every hand. Jesus is our Joshua, who leads us into eternal life.

And this name, “Jesus,” what does it mean? Many of the Hebrew names in the Bible have a meaning, and this one is no exception. The name “Yeshua” or “Yehoshua” literally means “Yahweh saves” or “The Lord saves.” So Jesus' name is also His job description. His name tells us what He came to do: to save us, to be our Saviour.

You see, not only did Mary get told to name Him Jesus, but so did His adoptive father, Joseph. One night, an angel of the Lord told Joseph in a dream that Mary *“will give birth to a son, and you shall name Him ‘Jesus’! For He will save His people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21). See? “Jesus” means “Saviour.” But to save us from what? From the Roman Empire? From political or military oppression of our day? No. To save us from bad experiences in our life? Well, no, not that either, at least not for now. So what is it that Jesus will save us from? *“He will save His people from their sins.”*

Our sins are what we need saving from most of all. For those sins of ours would accuse us, condemn us to death, send us to the grave, and pronounce God's judgment upon us for eternity. And that's all there would be, for even the best of us, if not for God sending us a Saviour. With the giving of His name, we know who it is. It's Jesus, *“The Lord saves.”*

Dear friends, it happened on this day, the eighth day of Christmas. In our calendar, that's January 1, New Year's Day. How appropriate! We enter this year, and begin the year 2024 with the name of Jesus at the forefront. The focus, heart, and centre of our faith is the person and the work of Jesus, the Saviour of the world. Let Jesus

be the name that will carry us forward this year as a church body, as a congregation, and in each of our homes and lives. For on the eighth day of Christmas, God's true love gave to all of us the best gift of all: a Saviour, circumcised, named, crucified, risen, and coming again, namely, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### PRAYER FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY

Almighty and ever-living God, You have been our dwelling-place in all generations, and from everlasting to everlasting You are perfect in wisdom, power, and goodness. We worship You as our creator, protector, and provider, but, above all, for Your wonderful love in sending Your Son into the world to free us from sin for a life of joyful obedience to You.

We praise You, in particular, for the name given to Your holy Child, for it is a sign for all ages that Jesus alone is the source of all redemption and salvation for sinful mankind. We praise You that You have set Him at Your right hand in the heavenly realm, far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion, and above every other name, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. Help us always to hallow the name of Jesus by a living faith in Him, and by obedience to His teaching and example. Help us to trust in His death for us that our hope might be built on His blood and righteousness, and not on any efforts of our own.

We offer our thanks this day for the blessings of the past year and for the way You provided for our many needs. We thank You for family and friends, for home and harvest, for food and clothing, for health of mind and body, for work and leisure, for law and government, for peace and order, for our preservation in the faith, and for those precious hours in which we were able to worship and commune with You. Forgive us where we have sinned. Heal the hurt we have caused others. Forgive us the good we have left undone. Deliver us from the consequence of all our mistakes and transgressions.

Father in heaven, let Your blessing rest on us during the coming year, that we may grow in understanding of Your mercy in Christ, that in sorrow or joy we may know and accept Your loving will, that in prosperity or trial we may experience Your power working in us and know the hope to which You have called us. Give us Your Spirit so that everything we do or say may be done in the name of the Lord Jesus as we give thanks to You, our Father, through Him.

Be the shepherd of our youth, the guardian of all children, the health of the sick, and the support of the aged. Grant that in whatever happens to us we may see Your loving hand and have the sure confidence in Christ that in all things You work for good with those who love You. Be the defender of Your people everywhere. Be the constant guard of our nation. Prosper us in everything that leads to peace and righteousness. Protect us from every evil of body and soul. We ask these things in that one name in which there is salvation, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Article: LIVE IN YOUR BAPTISM THIS NEW YEAR

On this day, the eighth day, Jesus suffered for sin and was given a name. Many couples struggle with what to name their child. Should we give him or her a family name? Should we give a popular name? Should we give a name that isn't like anything or anyone else? Joseph and Mary didn't struggle to name their child. They were given the name by the angel Gabriel. Not only the name, but His job description as well. *"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take your wife Mary home with you! For what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you shall name Him 'Jesus'! For He will save His people from their sins"* (Mt 1:20b-21).

*Jesus* means "The Lord saves." A long-promised hope fulfilled. The Lord saves! His name is a sign that by His mark and scars He will save us who have been marked with sin and death and scars. At just eight days, we see clearly what Jesus is going to do. He is going to save us. He is going to heal us. He is going to give us peace with God by the shedding of His blood, His death, His victory over death, and His resurrection.

The signs that mark our bodies and the scars we wear always tell a story. The external signs and scars are easy to see. It's not uncommon in our world today to see someone with an artificial arm or leg. These are the signs of war, of accidents, of disease. They are very clear signs of the brokenness of sin in our world and in our lives.

The closer we look, the more signs and scars we see. It doesn't take long to see the signs when you look into the eyes of someone who struggles with dementia or Alzheimer's. Confidence replaced with confusion, gentleness replaced with anger. It can often also be very clear if you're looking into the eyes of someone who smiles and says, "I'm fine. Really. I'm okay," to see the scars and struggles she's trying to hide.

The signs we can see also leave scars we can't see. We can't see them, but we can name them. Alzheimer's. Divorce. Mental illness. Addictions. Every holiday season we see an increase of mental illness and suicide. We hope that time with family and friends would be joyful, but many times the reunions bring up unforgiven events or guilt because of those we've hurt or who've hurt us. We try to cover the scars and put on a happy face, but the reality of our scars is too much.

These scars are the very reasons Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day. He was marked and shed His blood for you. It is by His marks we are healed. Isaiah writes, *"Surely, He has taken on Himself our sufferings and carried our sorrows. Yet we considered Him to be wounded, struck down by God and afflicted. However, He was pierced for our rebellious acts. He was bruised for our wrongdoings"* (Is. 53:4-5a). Jesus was marked and scarred by nails and spear as He completed what was started on the eighth day.

On Good Friday, *"The chastisement that brought us peace was on Him, and through His wounds we have been healed"* (Is. 53:5b). The scarred, marred Son of God was

laid lifeless in a borrowed tomb. His work was complete. By His wounds, by His shed blood, first at His circumcision and completed on the cross, we are forgiven. Everything that should scar us for eternity is gone, forgiven, and forgotten by the scarred Lamb of God named Jesus.

For the first day of the week, the third day after Jesus' crucifixion, is also the first day of a new creation. When God completed His first creation, He rested on the seventh day. When God the Son completed His work of redemption, His body rested in the tomb on the seventh day. But the next day, then, was a new eighth day. On that eighth day, Jesus, the firstborn from the dead, rose victorious over sin and death! In His victory is your forgiveness, peace, and hope. On that eighth day, the day of resurrection, you see His victory over every sin that marks and scars you. Because of His resurrection, your bodies that are marked with death and disease or accident will be restored and renewed in the resurrection of all flesh. Alzheimer's and dementia, sin, sorrow, and sadness will be no more. Death will be no more. Mental illness will not exist.

Today is the first day of 2024, a new year. It's a time when many look for new hope. They try to put the failures and scars of last year behind them. Resolutions to eat less and exercise more. Instead of new resolutions, trying to make yourself better, ***live in your Baptism!***

In your Baptism, you're joined to both of Jesus' eighth days, to His circumcision and then to His resurrection. The firstborn from the dead, Jesus, gives His blood-bought victory to you. When the water is washed across your head, you have God's eternal, saving sign watermarked upon you. "The Lord saves" is now the Holy Trinity's promise to you. You are given faith to believe that the shedding of Jesus' blood has paid for all your sins. Your identity is now child of God, heir of God, and fellow heirs with Christ Jesus (Rom 8:17). Paul assures us that Jesus' eighth days are also your eighth days. "*Do you not know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, so that, as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might begin to live a new life. If we have been planted together with Him in the likeness of His death, then we shall be planted together with Him also in the likeness of His resurrection*" (Rom 6:3-5).

Living in your Baptism is far more powerful than any resolution you can make. By the power and promise of God, you are covered in the white robes of Christ's righteousness. You are eternally marked as a forgiven and redeemed child of God. You are promised that whatever scars and demons you are dealing with, they are not more powerful than the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, who has put His name upon you and forgiven you by the shedding of His blood. Happy New Year!!!!

### **WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

This coming Sunday, 7 January, 10.00am OAK HC Parish Praise & Thanksgiving Service followed by a shared lunch.