

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST
Sermon for New Year's Day, 2026
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 taken from Luke 2:21: “**And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel 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,

Eight days have now passed since Mary gave birth to her firstborn, wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger. The shepherds who had come to see the little Child have now returned to their fields, while the multitude of the heavenly host have returned to heaven. Little baby Jesus is now eight days old and begins to accomplish the mission He was sent to do, that is, to fulfil the Law for us.

Christ's blood first flows for us when He is eight days old and will flow once again when He is crucified on the cross.

Whenever we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we hear the words, “*The blood of Christ given for you.*” These words are spoken so easily and heard so readily that we often pass them by without really thinking. But let's consider them for a moment: A man is not God, and God does not have blood. Rather, the Christ is God, and a man has blood. Look at this eight-day-old Child. He is ‘*true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary.*’ Here is the personal union of the human and the divine natures. The attributes of each nature are communicated to the other, so that in this one Person a great miracle has come to pass – *God has blood, and this is Baby Jehovah!*

This is something that we, in our feeble minds, *simply cannot comprehend*. The blood of Christ is first shed for the world in His obedience to the Law — first shed when the Son of God and the Son of Man is circumcised on the eighth day. His name is Jesus. Jesus means Saviour, “*for He will save His people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21).

When Jesus was circumcised, He began His obedience to the Law as the Sin-bearer and continued to fulfil the Law of God until that ninth hour on Good Friday, when He died. According to the plan of God, conceived before the foundation of the world, the sharp knife began the flow of the blood of Christ when He was eight days old, and again on the cross, when the Roman soldier pierced His side. The blood of Christ poured forth to bear witness that the sacrifice was ***complete and sufficient***. At His circumcision, the Divine Law-Giver placed Himself under His unforgiving Law to fulfil it perfectly for you and for me. At His crucifixion, Jesus took your place under the wrath of God, endured the assault of the devil, and suffered the abuse of man. He paid the price for every single sin you have committed and will commit. The Apostle Peter reminds us, “*You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot*” (1 Peter 1:18-19). By His own blood, not that of goats or calves, Jesus entered the most holy place once and for all and became

the sacrifice for us, and all the blessings of Christ's circumcision became ours when we were baptised.

Baptism has replaced circumcision. In his letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul said: "*In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead*" (Col. 2:11-12).

The Old Testament circumcision, as God gave it to Abraham, was a sacrament, a means of grace by which God made the male children into members of the covenant line and sharers in the covenant promises God made to Abraham. Those covenant promises centred on the Saviour from sin that God promised to send from Abraham's descendants.

When Christ came, He fulfilled all those covenant promises. Before He ascended into heaven, He gave Baptism to His New Testament church. When they were baptised, Paul assures his readers, they were buried and raised with Christ through faith. Jesus died and was buried as the Substitute for all mankind. The sins of the whole human race were nailed with Him to His cross and buried with Him in His tomb. He bore the punishment that satisfied the Father's divine justice, and on Easter morning God raised Him up in a great declaration that His atonement had been accepted and the world was saved.

In Baptism, Paul says, *we have been made personal sharers in all of that*. Through baptism, we have been brought to faith or strengthened in faith, which has personally joined each of us to Christ. Through baptism, we have personally received the blessings Christ has won for us. By virtue of our union with Christ in baptism, God has regarded Christ's death, burial, and resurrection as if they were each believer's own death, burial, and resurrection. Through baptism, our sin-laden natures have been crucified and buried with Christ, and a new nature, created by the Holy Spirit in God's image, has arisen in our hearts. Our status had been changed from objects of God's wrath to members of His spiritual household. All these blessings and more were spiritual blessings bestowed by Christ, transmitted to us through baptism and received by faith.

Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God, the Saviour of the world, and that is the message that needs to be proclaimed to the world.

Sadly, however, this message isn't always received, and I can think of three reactions to it.

The first is by those *outside of the Church*.

These are offended by the Gospel, and it makes no sense to them. That the baby Jesus is the Lord God Almighty requires the Spirit-given gift of faith. Again, Paul writes, "*The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned*" (1 Corinthians 2:14). This Spirit-given wisdom makes no sense to a man of the world. Man as he is by nature—physical, material, concerned about things of this world—cannot understand God's ways because natural man is unspiritual. The Spirit of God is not in him to enable him to understand. The contrast between the person who has the Spirit and the person who does not have him in his heart is absolute. It's the difference between day and night, between life and death.

The second reaction is sadly often found *within Christian congregations*.

Some people are offended by the way God has worked out our salvation. They ask: "*This is foolish and crazy! Couldn't God find another part of the body but this one?*" While they hear and rejoice that the name of Jesus was given on the eighth day, they shy away from the circumcision of the Son of God and the shedding of the first blood of Christ. While they behold an empty cross, they are *offended*

at the sight of a crucifix with the Saviour pinned to the wooden beam and the blood of Christ from the wounds.

Such people usually react to the words of Christ when He declares, “*This is My body... This is My blood.*” And because of unbelief or at least doubt in these words, and the necessity to teach, we join with the apostle Paul and ask: “*The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a communion in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ?*” (1 Corinthians 10:16). In the Lord’s Supper every communicant eats Body-bread and drinks Blood-wine. Therefore, out of true and genuine Christ love and care, people need to be instructed before they partake of the Lord’s Supper, and those who do not believe in the real presence are asked not to commune. Luther said in his Large Catechism: “*For we do not intend to admit to the Sacrament and administer it to those who do not know what they seek or why they come.*”

One truth that we learn is of utmost importance in this account of the circumcision of our Lord is this: when God wants to come to the aid of His people, *He does so according to His ways and means*, which are often, as far as human discernment and judgment are concerned, nothing less than offensive and ridiculous. Namaan, the leper, was offended at the promise of God attached to the water of the Jordan River. He had expected something more spectacular from God and a charismatic response from the prophet. Namaan received neither and would have wasted away in his leprosy had God not had mercy on this Gentile sinner and given him the gift of repentance and faith. This brings us to our next reaction.

The third reaction is to *hear the Word of the Gospel and believe it*.

This reaction beholds the eight-day-old Son of Mary, the eternal Christ of God, being carried to the place where He sheds His blood and receives the name given by the angel “**before He was conceived in the womb**” – *Jesus*. This reaction says, “*thanks be to God,*” and this soul is comforted by the blood of Christ. It places all its trust in the merits of Christ. It ignores all those voices that encourage it to look within itself for comfort.

Therefore, dear friends, in this new year, as in the past, *look to the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of all your sins*. Through Him you will find life and salvation. Through Him, all your worries are gone, and you are now free. You will not have any doubts about the future but will instead focus on the future of your salvation. When you confess your sins and receive absolution, be assured that God no longer remembers your transgressions. Remember that the blood of Christ covers a multitude of sins. Be determined to be true to God’s Son, who was placed under the Law, circumcised for us, determined to reach new heights of loyalty in serving Him who was named Jesus, our Saviour, so that He may be glorified and His kingdom extended. Place your life in the hands of the Lord and remember He is with us, not just as a new year begins, but until the end of the age. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.