

## Sermon Transcript for January 2, 2022

Grace mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

All right. I don't know about you. This is the first time I've actually done the circumcision and naming of Jesus. Every other time, I've just done the first or the second Sunday after Christmas. So this was a new experiment for me to see what was the circumcision and Jesus naming, what were the readings for it, and what can we learn from it? And then I go and look at the Gospel lesson, and it's all of one verse. I go, "Really? The Gospel lesson is just one verse? What in the world is going on? How am I going to get a sermon out of one verse?" Fortunately, I'm able to do it. So don't worry.

So at the end of eight days, He was circumcised and He was called Jesus. Now, there's a lot going on in just that one little phrase. Now on the eighth day. We know that the eighth day is a day that every single Jewish male was circumcised from Isaac all the way through to this day, they're being circumcised on the eighth day. And I'm not exactly sure why they chose the eighth day theologically, although there is some connection I think with this understanding that the eighth day is sort of the next thing that is coming. So God created the world in six days and He rested on the seventh. And then the eighth day is the new creation, the new life that comes afterwards, that life that we live in the Garden of Eden. But also for us, the eighth day is this understanding of we are in this world. This is our seventh day. We are waiting for our rests when we will die, because then we will wake up and it will be the eighth day. And it will be the new heavens and the new earth. And we will be that new creation living for all eternity with God. So the eighth day has this symbolism and this understanding of the future, of the promise, of the hope of what God is giving to us.

And it's in some ways the same thing with circumcision, because in circumcision, that was the means by which God chose to mark everyone in the Old Testament as part of the Jewish faith. When you were circumcised, you became a Jew, end of story. Now why circumcision? It's a cutting off of a flesh in a very intimate place. And it was guaranteed that you would remember that something was different every single day. And so you would remember, I have been changed by God. God has done something to my flesh through the rabbi and I am now a different person. That was what circumcision was all about. It was meant to communicate that you were part of a different community.

And Jesus did the same thing. Now, where was Jesus circumcised? We don't really know. It just says on the eighth day, He was circumcised. Probably it was done in Bethlehem by the rabbi because the rabbi's job was not just to read the Scriptures and to take care of the people in his flock, in his synagogue in the area. It was also to circumcise. That was part of his job description. I'm really glad that that did not carry over into the pastoral duties. I really am. That I don't actually have to circumcise anybody. However, in a way, it has come to the pastoral office, but just not a circumcision of the flesh. See in Galatians, right before Galatians three, in Galatians too, it talks about a new circumcision, not a circumcision of the flesh, but a circumcision of the heart, of the soul, of the spirit. And that circumcision is baptism. And in baptism, the same thing happens, only more than what happened in circumcision. In circumcision, they became a Jew. In baptism, we become Christians. But it's more than just a removal of flesh. In fact, it's not a removal, it's a removal of our sin, but it's also a putting on of the Spirit of God, of Jesus Christ. In the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, we receive the Spirit of God. We put on the robes of righteousness that Christ gave to us. So rather than a taking off a flesh, we put on the Spirit of God. So in baptism, we become part of the family of God. And now we in Spirit can say, "We are now Abraham's offspring because we have been brought into the family."

Now, when we look at Jesus' circumcision, what is so significant about it? There are basically two things that we need to think about. First off, this was Jesus fulfilling the Law. If you notice in Galatians, it says that, "Until faith came, until Christ came to forgive our sins, we were all held captive under the Law. We were imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed." So Christ becoming flesh, and then having that part of His flesh removed, He submitted Himself and became imprisoned under the Law, just like you and me, except that He was able to fulfill the Law, unlike you and me. And so because He was able to fulfill the Law, He wipes out the Law and He gives us freedom from the Law.

We are now new creations in Christ and we are free from the burden of the crushing judgment of the Law of God. Now, does this mean we're free to do anything and everything we want? By all means no, but we are free from the curse of the Law. Now that we have been saved, now that the robe of righteousness of Christ has been placed upon us, we are then enabled to do good works to the glory of God, because He has prepared good works for us to do before the beginning of all creation.

You see, He came to fulfill what we could not. So that's the first thing. In circumcision, He places Himself under the Law so that He might fulfill it. All the way from His birth, eight later circumcised, He's fulfilling the Law perfectly, even from an infant. But secondly, and perhaps most importantly for us, in Jesus' circumcision, it was the beginning of the shedding of the blood of Christ for our salvation because when He was circumcised, He shed blood and it was the start of the sacrifice that He was going to make. You see, we were under the curse of the Law. So every time we needed more and more sacrifices to cover our sin. More and more blood needed to be poured out before the altar to cover the sin of us. And so blood is required. Life, which is in the blood, is required. And so in circumcision, He begins to give His life up for us. When we think about the blood of Christ, we look to the cross and His suffering on the cross, but it began all the way back in His circumcision. His shedding of His blood is always for us, even in His circumcision. Now, why does the circumcision of one man named Jesus or Yeshua, why is that significant? For that, we need to look at his name. And if you look at the cover of your bulletin at the name of Jesus, if you look at the first three letters, these are the first three letters again read from the opposite side of English. These first three letters are the first three letters of the name of God, of Yahweh.

So when we talk about Yeshua or Jesus, we have already in His name the first three letters of the name of God. And then the last letters mean salvation or saves. In other words, Jesus' name means "Yahweh saves". That's what Yeshua, Joshua, Jesus, that's what all of those names mean. Yeshua or Yahweh saves. Our God saves. And how does He save? He saves by the person who bears this name. Not only does Jesus' name help us understand what is going on, He Himself is the One by whom God saves us. And we can understand that a little bit better when we look at the Old Testament, Yeshua, Joshua. What did he do? He took the people of Israel out of the wilderness, through the water, into the promised land. And for us, this is what our Yeshua is doing for us. He's taking us out of the wilderness of sin, through the waters of baptism, into the promised land of the kingdom of God, where we are sons and daughters of God. And so this Yeshua saves, not just to give us a land or a piece of property, but He saves us by giving us His son and the kingdom of God, Jesus Christ resides with us. Or you can even look at it as this, that the wilderness of our lives, with all the trials and tribulations that we face in this life, we are brought through the waters of death into the promised land of everlasting life, into that eighth day where we will be with Christ for all eternity and praise Him.

Now, if you turn back to the Old Testament lesson, the Numbers lesson again, when I first looked at it, it kind of surprised me. I expected the Old Testament lesson to be the story of Abraham being told to circumcise

himself and all of his manservants and every child eight days old. That's what I expected, because it would make sense. We're going to talk about circumcision. We'll see what circumcision is in the Old Testament. But no. We have here the benediction, what I speak every Sunday, "The Lord bless you and keep you, and make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you. Lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace." Why is this passage here when we're talking about the circumcision? Notice what God says, what Yahweh says to Moses. "In this way, you will put My name upon the people of Israel." The blessing of God is the placing of His name upon us. And so when we talk about circumcision, it is God placing His name upon the Israelites and bringing them into the nation of Israel.

But with the new circumcision, our baptisms, it is God placing His name upon us and we are now children of God, heirs to the promise of salvation. So the blessing of God, this is the naming of Jesus and the shedding of His blood, the first shedding of His blood is the first act of redemption for us. And so it is through His act of redemption that we are blessed. It is through the act of the One whose name means "Yahweh saves" that Yahweh will bless us. And His face shines upon us through His Son. And He is gracious to us through His Son. And He has lifted up His countenance upon us because He sees us through the filter of His Son. And He gives us peace. We are at peace because He fell subject to the imprisonment of the Law so that He could free us from that imprisonment and we could have peace with God because His blood was shed for us.

"Yahweh saves" shed His blood so that Yahweh could save us. And He did through Yeshua, God, Yahweh saving us. His name when He was circumcised is the gift that is given to us that offers us peace. Let us thank the Lord and hold fast to His promises and be confident that no matter what may come in this wilderness of life, that He has promised to come on that eighth day and bring us home to be with Him.

May that grace, mercy, and peace be and abide with you always now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.