

Sermon Draft

Text: Matthew 1:18–25

Sermon: God With Us

The Gospel lesson immediately follows the genealogy in Mt 1:1–17. Matthew begins his narrative of Jesus' life and ministry with this genealogy divided into three different groups of fourteen names. The genealogy establishes that Jesus is the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, and the Christ. The genealogy also establishes a connection between the narrative of Israel in the Old Testament and that of Jesus that follows: the story of Jesus will continue and fulfill the narrative of Israel. The genealogy reminds the reader of Israel's election by God under the patriarchs and their eventual glory under kings David and Solomon. Yet the genealogy also recalls Israel's failure to keep the covenant with God and so their exile in Babylon.

As most of the names in the third group of fourteen are “unknowns,” this genealogy finally highlights how both the line of David and the entire nation of Israel have not fully been restored even after the exile. Israel’s present state of being humbled under foreign powers is the result of their national sin of rebelling against the Lord their God.

Smith, Miller, Mason—these are three English surnames that share something in common. First, the origin of all three names is found in a profession of some kind. A person first received the last name Mason because he worked with stone or brick. Likewise, a Miller milled grain and a Smith smithed metal—a blacksmith or a silversmith. These names had special meaning, as they defined what the person did as his vocation. The names were then passed on to descendants, some of whom may have shared the vocation of the original named.

Yet a second thing these names have in common is that most people carrying them today no longer participate in the vocation the name identifies. And so the names now have no special meaning. In the case of our text today, I ask you to think about the meaning a name does indeed have, for God's Son, Jesus by name, comes to save his people from their sins.

Jesus' name has special significance in that it points to what he will do. "Jesus" is the English translation of the Greek name *Iesous*. The Greek name is a translation of the Hebrew name Joshua. Joshua is a combination of the Hebrew word for salvation with Yahweh. Thus Jesus means "The Lord of salvation."

The angel told Joseph the reason Mary's child was to be given the name Jesus was "He will save his people from their sins."

God's Son thus has this name because of what he came to do.

His name is both vocational and missional, it shows us that his purpose is to be our Savior.

Jesus came to save his people Israel. They were chosen by God to be His people but they rebelled and disobeyed God, breaking the covenant again and again. So, God punished them by sending them into exile. Israel's condition at the time of Jesus' birth was the result of their national sin. David's throne has not been reestablished to this day. Israel is still under dominion of foreign kings. Their major problem, sin is that of not keeping the covenant with God.

So, God sent His Son to redeem and save. Jesus came on a mission and He healed diseases, cleansed lepers and cast out demons. He raised the dead and gave sight to the blind, forgiving sins and calling sinners to repentance and new life.

But then as now many rejected him and ultimately, he was hung on that tree giving His life as a ransom. Jesus lived up to His name.

Jesus came to save all people from their sins. Jesus' mission was Israel first, ***"Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."***

(Matthew 10:5-6): ***"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*** (Matthew 15:24)

So how do we Gentiles find our place in this story? We were not the covenant people. Our, ancestors were outsiders for whom idolatry was the norm. Though we were not guilty of Israel's national sin, we still inherited the sin of Adam. And just like the Israelites we too have rebelled against God's will. Before our Baptism, we were outsiders.

Jesus didn't leave us as outsiders, God revealed His Son to us also. Remember the Magi, God gave them a sign and led them to the child named Jesus. The Gentile centurion had faith that could not be found in all of Israel. And the Canaanite woman showed persistent faith. And ultimately Jesus would send his apostles out to make disciples of all nations.

This is where we find ourselves in the story of Jesus? We are those whom the word of the apostles has come, we are part of all nations. And in our Baptisms God claims us as His own. And as we grow we are taught by His Word and His Son is revealed to us.

Jesus—this is the name of God's Son and Messiah, our Savior. Like other names, the name of Jesus indicates what this man has done and does: he saves his people from sin and gives them new life.

But unlike other names, Jesus' name continues to point to him as Savior, because he continues to carry out his saving work through his Gospel. And because this is the most blessed work, for us Jesus remains the most blessed name. As the people he has delivered and made his own, we can confess with the apostle Peter, ***"There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"*** (Acts 4:12).

Amen