

## WHAT'S HIS NAME?

### 2018 Christmas Eve Meditation

Text: Isaiah 9:6-7

Whenever a baby is born, the first question on everyone's lips is ... what? *"Is it a boy or a girl?"* The second question usually follows on the heels of the first: *"What's his/her name?"* Well, in Luke 1 we read the angel Gabriel had told Mary, *"You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, the Son of God."* So for Mary, the first two questions were answered even before her baby was born! It's a boy, and His name is Jesus.

The name "Jesus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua; it means quite simply *"The LORD saves."* In Matthew 1, we read the angel told Joseph, *"You are to give him the name Jesus, because He will save his people from their sins ... and they will call him Emmanuel, which means, God With Us."* So, we know it's a boy, and we know His name ... we think.

Actually, we seem to have been given quite a few names! His name is Jesus. He is also called Emmanuel, He is also the Son of the Most High, He is also called Christ, or, if you speak Hebrew, Messiah. He is also called the Son of God. And seven centuries earlier the prophet Isaiah gave four more names to add to the repertoire, as we read in our Call to Worship:

- (1) **He will be called "Wonderful Counselor."** Isn't what every human being yearns for? Someone who really and truly understands, someone who can give us good counsel with sound advice (*and not advice that is 99% sound and 1% advice, like some earthly counselors*) and who can give us counsel that can work wonders?
- (2) **He will be called "Mighty God."** Isn't this also what we have always yearned for? Someone who can shove aside the darkness and the chaos in our lives just as God shoved aside the darkness and chaos at creation and brought light and beauty and harmony out of the mess that existed?
- (3) **He will also be called "Everlasting Father,"** and isn't that, too, what we have yearned for? To be known and loved and watched over by a father who will nurture us and care for us through all of life with grace, truth, wisdom, and a love that knows no conditions? We earthly fathers may aspire to such gracious and wise fatherhood, but painfully fall short more often than not.
- (4) **He will be called the "Prince of Peace."** And certainly, this is also what we've yearned for. Someone who can bring us peace ... shalom, wholeness and well-being. Someone who can pull all the fractured pieces of our lives together and make our lives truly **whole**, holy.

Jesus, Emmanuel, Christ, Son of the Most High, Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. These are all extraordinary names for a child! How can a child live up to such names?

BECAUSE THIS IS ABOUT THE INCARNATION OF GOD. Christianity is about God becoming one of us. That could not happen without Him taking on all of our human frailty. So the Savior arrives as vulnerably as He possibly can -- as a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a manger. Fully God, yet fully human. Jesus came to earth, of course, for many reasons: He came to teach truth. He came to show us how to best live. He came to reveal God's love. He came to heal the sick, to minister to the needy. But all those reasons are incidental to His ultimate purpose. He could have done all those things without being born as a human. He could have simply appeared, without literally becoming a person. But, He was made like us in all things. He walked our roads in life. He felt our hunger and our loneliness. He cried the tears of those who grieve deeply. He knew all about injustice and betrayal. Jesus was a man of sorrows, well acquainted with our grief. But He was also well acquainted with our joy. He had friends He dearly loved. He delighted in children, dinner parties, and wedding receptions with dancing and lots of wine. In Jesus, we have a Savior and a Wonderful Counselor who knows all about the highs and lows of our lives because He lived it all among us. He was like us in every sense -- and as such, He is the perfect sympathizer, the perfect Counselor, and the perfect Father, the perfect Sacrifice, the Prince of Peace Who is at the same time the Mighty God ... and His name is Jesus.

One more thought. What's *my* name? I'm called Pastor Clark. "Clark" is my name; "Pastor" is my title. Pastor is not my first name; my first name is Stephen ... and that came as a surprise to some of the younger kids when I said that at the earlier service! In the same manner, **Jesus** is the name; **Christ** is the title. So often is that title used for Jesus that many have come to think of it as His last name. His legal last name may have been Jesus "Davidson" or "Josephson", I don't know ... but I do know His last name wasn't "Christ."

The meaning of the title "Christ" is the Anointed One, which is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "Messiah." In fact, whenever one says Jesus Christ, he or she is making a theological affirmation, whether he or she recognizes it or not! By saying Jesus Christ, one is asserting Jesus IS the Christ, the Messiah, the long awaited Anointed One of God. So, next time you hear someone mutter, "Oh, Jesus Christ," try responding,

**"Amen! That's RIGHT! I couldn't agree more! Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Messiah, the son of the Living God!"** Say that and see what kind of reaction you get. Just as an aside, I can imagine Jesus saying in such situations, *"If you're going to curse, use your own name."*

The title Christ, Greek for the Hebrew "Messiah," means the Anointed One. For the Jewish people, there were three offices which required anointing: the office of **Prophet**, the office of **Priest** and the office of **King**.

THIS ONE NAMED JESUS will be the **Prophet** Who brings God's saving and life-giving message.

THIS ONE NAMED JESUS will be the **Priest** who makes intercession for the sins of the people; in fact, He will be the one High Priest Who offers the ultimate sacrifice of Himself for all God's people.

THIS ONE NAMED JESUS will be **King**, the One to lovingly reign over our lives as Lord of our bodies, Lord of our homes, Lord of our nations, Lord of the universe.

THIS ONE NAMED JESUS will do all this as **Emmanuel**, which means "God with us."

THIS ONE NAMED JESUS is the Wonderful Counselor, the one whose counsel brings sure guidance, life, hope

THIS ONE NAMED JESUS is the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, because He and the Father are One.

THIS ONE NAMED JESUS is also the Prince of Peace, and as a Prince, He will ascend to the throne of King once His work is done ... and He will sit at the right hand of God the Father Almighty until that final day when, at the name of THIS ONE NAMED JESUS, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord. *"King of kings, and Lord of Lords ... and He shall reign forever and ever."*

It's a boy! And His name is Jesus. And that's a Name to be treated with all the reverence, respect, adoration, honor and gratitude it deserves. Let us stand to affirm our faith together:

## **Affirmation of Faith and Prayers of the People**

The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth,

**AND WE HAVE BEHELD HIS GLORY, ALLELUIA!**

Jesus, Son of the living God, splendor of the Father, Light eternal:

**GLORY TO YOU, O LORD!**

Jesus, King of glory, Sun of righteousness, born of the virgin Mary:

**GLORY TO YOU, O LORD!**

Jesus, Prince of Peace, Mighty God, perfect in holiness:

**GLORY TO YOU, O LORD!**

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, the Wonderful Counselor,  
the Way, the Truth, and the Life:

**GLORY TO YOU, O LORD!**

Jesus, Joy of the angels, and Crown of all the saints:

**GLORY TO YOU, O LORD!**

**IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME, O FATHER, YOU SENT YOUR ONLY SON JESUS CHRIST TO BE OUR SAVIOR. IN HIM, YOUR WORD, DWELLING WITH YOU FROM ALL ETERNITY, BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US. THEREFORE WE PRAISE YOU, JOINING OUR VOICES WITH THE CELESTIAL CHOIRS AND WITH ALL THE FAITHFUL OF EVERY TIME AND PLACE, WHO FOREVER PROCLAIM THE GLORY OF YOUR NAME. ON THIS HOLY NIGHT DRAW US INTO THE MYSTERY OF YOUR LOVE. GIVE US A PLACE AMONG THE SHEPHERDS THAT WE MAY FIND THE ONE FOR WHOM WE HAVE WAITED, JESUS CHRIST, THE MESSIAH AND LORD, WHO LIVES AND REIGNS WITH YOU IN THE UNITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHO TAUGHT US TO PRAY, "OUR FATHER ...."**