

**CALL HIS NAME JESUS**  
**Fourth in an Advent Series: Power in the Name**  
**December 21, 2014 –Festival Sunday –Matthew 1: 18-21**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

How will Christmas come about for you and your family this year? Well, the angel in the passage from the gospel of Matthew we just read says this: *“Now the birth of Jesus took place in this way.”* (Matthew 1: 18) And it concludes this way: *“She (Mary) will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”* (v. 21) It suggests that Christmas comes about in a particular way – and it says this particular way includes the birth of Jesus into the world and the naming of the Christ Child a particular name...the name above every name, the name JESUS...Pretty straightforward the way Christmas comes about.

The name of Jesus has significance. It is derived from the Hebrew name, Yeshua, which is also translated “Joshua”. The name in Hebrew means “salvation”. So the angel tells Joseph to name the child the same name as Joshua, the successor to Moses, who conquered the Promised Land. *“You shall call his name Jesus.”*, says the angel. (v. 21) You shall call his name “salvation”, as the angel says, because *“he will save his people from their sins.”* (v.21) Salvation is His name and salvation is what He does. There is significance in the name of Jesus. There is POWER in the name of Jesus. *“There is no other name under heaven...by which we must be saved.”* (Acts 4: 12) And this salvation isn’t just pie in the sky bye and bye salvation; it isn’t just about when we die and go to heaven kind of salvation. No, this is about here and now salvation; this is about Jesus entering the world and entering into our lives and setting things right, and bringing health and bringing new life and bringing a second chance to a world that is pretty messed up and desperately needs a second chance. The birth of Jesus comes about in this way; not some other way. It is the presence of God born into the world to save the world and not to condemn the world; to give the weary world a fresh start, a second chance, and new life. When we name the name of Jesus, then Jesus comes. When Jesus comes the Holy Presence of God comes. When the Holy Presence of God is reborn into the world then God’s work of salvation, of bringing new life into the world comes. When we invoke the name, we invoke the presence. When we invoke the presence, we invoke why God sent Jesus into the world in the first place. Naming the name of Jesus is important, nay, critical. There is POWER in the name of Jesus. That’s what we’ve been preaching about in December.

So, how do we try to have Christmas come about this year? We often hear people say, “Let’s keep the Christ in Christmas.” I agree. But consider now the word “Christ”. Christ means “anointed one” in the Greek. It is the same as the word “Meshiah” or “Messiah” in the Hebrew. It is a title, not a name. It is not the same as the name above every name, the name at which every knee will bow and every tongue confess Him as Lord. No, that name is JESUS. Christ is his title; Christ is not his name. It would be like referring to me as “Reverend” or “pastor”; I know who you’re referring to but its not the same as my personal name. My name is Stu or Stuart; not “pastor”. There is a difference. Using the title Christ is not the same as naming the name of JESUS. Let’s keep JESUS in Christmas. There is POWER in the name of Jesus. Christmas shall come about in THIS PARTICULAR WAY, says the angel. YOU SHALL CALL HIS NAME JESUS.

Or the greeting “Happy Holidays”. For some when they use this I think they are trying to be more polite than saying “Merry Christmas”; more generic, less offensive. Happy Holidays is a contraction of the phrase “Happy Holy Days”. This is the greeting for the Jewish holiday Hanukah, not for Christmas. I don’t mind being greeted with “Happy Hanukah”; I’m not offended by it; I just want to point out that

you're not wishing me a Merry Christ-mass when you wish me "Happy Holidays". There is no JESUS in this greeting, to be clear. And the birth of Jesus, which is what we ostensibly are celebrating, came about in this particular way, says the angel, and concludes with his naming, and YOU SHALL CALL HIS NAME JESUS.

Or our favorite Christmas songs. I saw a list of the top favorites, Berl Ives singing "Holly Jolly Christmas", Bing Crosby singing "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas", Gram ma got Run Over by a Reindeer, "Chestnuts roasting on an Open Fire", Sleighride. You may search them all and you will not find the name of JESUS mentioned even once. The angel says that the birth of Jesus comes about in a very particular way and that way includes the revelation of the new name of God in Bethlehem as JESUS. Maybe, if we were truthful, we should add to the list Frank Sinatra crooning out, "I did it MY WAY". Because it would appear this is not Christmas, God's way.

Or our advertisements on television. I think this really tells us a lot about what people want Christmas to be. I mean, advertisers spend millions of dollars, many consumer surveys, many focus groups and then regurgitate to us what we really want. Gone is the little Santa going over the snow in the Norelco ads –evidently No-elco is not politically correct enough anymore. Gone is the KDKA ad with the little star being picked up by the Christmas Tree. We are left with kids in green T-shirts standing in front of red signs. Perhaps some vague Christmas song being played in the background. Or a brief homage to Christmas with snow or a Christmas Tree in the background of some advertisement. Or the one I dislike the most, the little child surrounded by his family all using computers and smart phones, who says, "Connect us all, every one." No, the line from Charles Dickens "A Christmas Carol" is "God bless us all, every one." Even Santa seems to be disappearing. He is mostly on advertisements for expensive, high end automobiles, hawking luxury cars. As if buying an expensive car is really celebrating the birth of a child born in a manger feeding trough. I am sure their surveys show that even the image of poor old Santa mostly induces those age 50 and up (the primary buyers of luxury cars) to feel like Christmas and for those under 50 it does nothing. This suggests in a few years even Santa will not be in advertisements. And by the way, you will not ever hear the name JESUS uttered in an advertisement. The name JESUS does not mean Christmas anymore. If it did, we would see the name JESUS in every advertisement. But the name of Jesus has been intentionally taken out of everything related to Christmas, other than in the church. But I like to think of that as just "truth in advertising". We get the Christmas we want. We get the advertisements we want. We celebrate the "Happy Holidays" the way WE WANT, not necessarily the way GOD WANTS. Truth in advertising –there is no more JESUS in our Holiday; the world has removed the name above every name. The angel says, "*Now the birth of Jesus comes about in this way...*" But we don't want the birth of Jesus to come about in that way anymore. Remember the old Seinfeld episode where George came up with a new holiday so he could get off work? He called it "Festivas". I think we should change the name of Christmas to "Festivas". Whatever this thing is that we have turned it into, you know, that begins the day after Halloween and is WAY OVER some time on the morning of December 25<sup>th</sup>, whatever this thing is, it has nothing to do with the name of JESUS. "Happy Festivas" –a made up name for a made up Holiday, the way we want it, not the way it was meant to be.

And my question then is this –if indeed there is POWER in the name of Jesus, and that Christmas is to be about naming the name of JESUS. And in invoking the name we invoke the Presence. And basically, naming the name of Jesus is the very thing which brings the Christ Child alive into our world and has Him be born and reborn into our hearts. And there is no birth of Jesus without naming His name and there is no salvation apart from His birth and His name, then, then, then what does it mean that we are intentionally excluding the name of Jesus from Christmas? It means we are having a holiday without the

name, or the presence, or the power, or the spiritual work, or the saving presence and nature of Jesus, right? Happy Festivas!

St Francis of Assisi, in an age where also the people had forgotten what Christmas was really about, came up with the idea of a Live Nativity Scene. You think Christmas comes about in your WAY, St. Francis said, but I will show you the way that Christmas comes about. He paraded the town of Assisi by the Live Nativity Scene. You will see a small baby, wrapped in rags, that's what swaddling clothes are. And you will see a Mother far too young to be a Mother. And you will see a newborn child out in the cold. A homeless Holy Family. Babe born in a feeding trough. Surrounded by animals. Not much. Not very exciting as the world might consider exciting. Doesn't make a good TV commercial. But that's the WAY GOD CHOSE TO COME. Not the way we want Christmas to come; the WAY GOD CHOSE CHRISTMAS TO COME. The birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way...not that other way. The reason why we have a Live Nativity Scene today is to remind us all that this is the way God chose to come. Naming the name of Jesus, Jesus is then born into the world and into our heart. Jesus brings new life and salvation for a people who walk in darkness and need to see a great light; but only when we name and love His name. Because when we invoke the name, we invoke the presence. And when we invoke the presence, we invoke the power. Beloved, there is POWER in the name of Jesus. The angel declared --**You shall call His name JESUS**...for He will save His people from the mess they have made of Christmas. And Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*