

**New Year's Day/Name of Jesus****“Bowling at the Name of Jesus”****Philippians 2:9-11**

Today we celebrate the beginning of a new and different year. Finally! Unlike any other time in memory, we have been wanting to get rid of the old year for many months. We are hopeful that a new year will bring us better conditions, an improved situation and greater results for our lives than what we have experienced over the last 12 months of 2020. The beginning of any new year, though, is a time of hope, anticipation and excitement. It is a quick change. In one moment of time we move from an old year into a new one.

The ancient Christian hymn that the Apostle Paul quotes in his letter to the first-century Philippians describes an even more exciting and profound change. It is the shift from the humiliation of Jesus to His exaltation. It is the move from His lowly life as our suffering servant to His high honor as our heavenly Hero. Now His name is above every name for us to confess Jesus Christ as Lord to the glory of God the Father.

The catechism describes the humiliation of Jesus in this way, that as man He did not fully or completely use all His divine power. This voluntary limitation of Himself began on our behalf with His conception and then birth as Bethlehem's baby. On this 8<sup>th</sup> day after His birth Jesus was circumcised, as was every male descendant of God's covenant with Abraham. Already as a tiny child Jesus is putting Himself in the place of His people, shedding His own blood as part of His mission for our salvation.

Jesus later will win that salvation in the forgiveness of our sins by His sacrificial suffering and innocent death on the cross. What the Romans inflicted upon Him was the worst form of death known at that time, perhaps the worst type of punishment ever devised in human history. By virtue of His obedient life to win our forgiveness, His substitutionary death to defy the devil and His victorious resurrection to defeat our death Jesus deserves the highest place of honor as

the only Lord of our lives and our only Savior from sin. Ascended into heaven Jesus now has that exalted place. The catechism tells us that now, as man, Jesus always and completely uses all of His divine power.

On this 8<sup>th</sup> day after His birth Mary's baby boy is given His name officially. It is the name which has been given to Him by His true heavenly Father and revealed by angelic messengers to His earthly parents Mary and Joseph. These are two people who did not need to go through the sometimes agonizing deliberation of what to name the baby. Months before a child's birth the parents may develop lists of boy names and girl names. They may consult a book of names. They may survey family and friends as to possible names for their baby. Finally they settle on a name, perhaps in honor or memory of a relative, maybe after a favorite actor, actress or athlete, or one that just sounds good. Even if that name might seem strange or out of the ordinary at first, that child grows into the name given by its parents.

In the ancient world a name was more than just a way of identifying a person. One's name was given in the hopes of that person developing the characteristic to fit the name. A name was intended to reveal one's inner being. A name was to be part of the personality of the one who bore that name. As such the name Jesus is history's greatest example of the most perfectly appropriate name, for it means "God saves." The purpose of Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection is God Himself saving us from our sins.

Over the past two millennia the name Jesus has become the way to say that our God loves us, forgives us, wants us for His very own people. The name Jesus shows us our God and tells us about our Savior. So very rightly Jesus, and all that His name means for us, is worthy of our praise and worship. And He does not deserve just our honor and glory, but that of every creature in heaven and earth and under the earth as Apostle John describes in the heavenly view of Jesus' ascension that he records in Revelation chapter five.

We join with those saints and angels in heaven when we here on earth unite our voices to worship Jesus. We truly praise God when we say to Him what He first has said to us. In His revealed Word of the Holy Bible God says to us, “Jesus Christ is Lord.” In our worship, works and witness we say back to God and to the world around us, “Jesus Christ is Lord.” This confession of Jesus shows God and tells others that we are not in charge of our lives, that we cannot win our freedom from sin, that we will not save ourselves from death.

Instead, our confession of “Jesus Christ is Lord” says all of that belongs to Jesus. He has done, is doing and will do them all for us. He has earned the right to be the Lord of our lives. In the face of anything and everything this rebellious world throws at us during the year 2021, whatever fear, whatever threat, whatever anger, whatever temptation, our answer to it is our confession of faith, “Jesus Christ is Lord.” This is the work of the Holy Spirit within us active in our world, our church and our lives through God’s Word of the Bible and Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

We make this confession of faith in Jesus to the glory of God our heavenly Father. He is our Creator who has made us His own. We ran away from Him in sinful selfishness to our spiritual death. He bought us back and gave us new life through the work of His own Son. The one named Jesus, “God saves,” and called Christ, “Anointed One” is the One we now confess as the Lord of our lives and our Savior from sin.

The year 2021 is brand new, less than 12 hours old. We celebrate this newness today not knowing what is to come in the next 365 days. But the name of Jesus is not new. It has been around for over 2000 years. Today, at the beginning of this new year, we celebrate this name of Jesus once again. We know what is to come when it comes to Jesus. One day all of His creation will see Him return in glory and will recognize by sight what we now know and believe by faith, that Jesus Christ is Lord. All glory be to God our Father. AMEN (stand) Te Deum