

PASTOR JANNEKE'S PAGE

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH, SIOUX FALLS, SD

DEC. 24 & 25, 2016

THE NAME SAYS IT ALL

The gift is beautifully wrapped and waiting underneath the Christmas tree. But what makes this gift so exciting is not just the impressive presentation or even what might be contained within, but the fact that there's a gift tag on the box and *your name* is carefully written in as the recipient! Someone cared enough to prepare a gift especially for *you*.

Maybe you'll have that experience of receiving a personal gift this weekend. However, whether or not you'll be giving or receiving many gifts this year, Christmas is all about God's Greatest Gift. And best of all, this gift of God's Son is for *you*!

It's as if Jesus' swaddling clothes have a gift tag on them with your name on it! But the same could be said about Jesus' entire life, from His baptism to His teaching ministry to His institution of the Lord's Supper—it's all for you!

Above Jesus on the cross was a notice saying, "King of the Jews." That placard could just as well have said "for you." The same goes for Jesus' empty tomb! Your name is written all over *everything* Jesus did in coming to this earth and fulfilling all righteousness for you (Matthew 3:15).

Not only is it powerful to know that Jesus took on our human flesh with you and me in mind, but *His* names are particularly powerful. Let's look at seven names for our Lord in the Christmas story and in the preceding prophecy to better appreciate God's great gift of His Son:

"She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Every time you hear the name "Jesus," it's meant to be a gospel reminder of who He is and why He came. "Jesus," or *Yeshua* in Hebrew, literally means, "The Lord saves" or "The Lord is salvation." So Jesus = Your Savior!

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call His name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)" (Matt. 1:23). Although our sin separates us from our sinless Creator, God Himself descends to be with us and even to take on our flesh. But not only was Jesus with us during His earthly lifetime. We also have the promise of His presence today: "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Although we often call Jesus, "Christ," this is actually His *title*. Christ means "Messiah" or

"Anointed One." (Jesus' ancestors, the kings of Judah, were anointed with oil for their royal offices.) When we hear Jesus' title, "Christ," it reminds us that He is the promised "King of the Jews" (Matt. 2:2), yet He's a King who wore a crown of thorns and gave His life for the world on the throne of the cross!

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given ... and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor" (Isaiah 9:6). The Holy Spirit revealed to Isaiah centuries before Christ that God's Chosen One would be born for us. As true man, Jesus' birth was rather ordinary. Yet as true God, divine titles like "Wonderful Counselor" can apply to Christ. He needs no one else's counsel. Instead, His counsel is God's saving plan that we find revealed in Scripture. And as the greatest Counselor, Christ also stands ready to listen and respond to your prayers.

"Mighty God" (Isaiah 9:6). What a wonder it is that this helpless baby boy in the manger is also our Almighty God! The God of Israel, who rescued His people from Egypt, has come to rescue all people from their sin!

"Everlasting Father" (Isaiah 9:6). We know that Jesus is eternal—He was present in the beginning and brought the created order into existence (John 1:1-3). But it might sound strange to hear Jesus called "Father." While Jesus affirmed that He and the Father are one (John 10:30), Isaiah doesn't seem to be making a point about the Trinity. Instead, Jesus is "Father" of all His faithful people, the children of God. Even though He is the mighty King of all creation, Jesus personally loves and cares for you like the best of all fathers.

"Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). It's fitting that Isaiah concludes the list of the Messiah's names with a message of peace. Peace is a universal human longing. As we hear of terrorist attacks, senseless shootings, and political power plays in the days prior to Christmas, we're reminded again and again that all people need this Prince of Peace! Yet Jesus came to achieve a peace that is so much greater than an absence of war or violence. Jesus' peace is peace with God Himself—an eternal relationship with Him. Jesus' peace is the peace of knowing that your sins are forgiven and that you are treasured by God! Because of the peace Jesus has given us and the perfect peace that awaits us, we seek to be people of peace in today's world.

**His names say it all! Merry Christmas!
Peace in Christ,
Pastor Kory Janneke**