

**ST. JOHN’S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
COMPASS, PA**

January 2, 2022 – HOLY NAME OF JESUS (CHRISTMAS II) / YR. C

The Rev. Dr. Nina George-Hacker

Homily: “*The Name of Jesus is Powerful Enough for All Our Needs*”*

Numbers 6:22-27	(God pledges to give His Name to the Israelites and bless them)
Psalm 8	(Praise to the Lord, whose Name is exalted in all the world)
Philippians 2:5-11	(At the Name of Jesus, every knee should bend)
St. Luke 2:15-21	(Jesus receives His name chosen by God, announced by the angel)

In 2020, the Social Security Administration reported the top ten most popular names for girls were: Olivia, Emma, Ava, Charlotte, Sophia, Amelia, Isabella, Mia, Evelyn, and Harper. For boys, the top ten came in at: Liam, Noah, Oliver, Elijah, William, James, Benjamin, Lucas, Henry, and Alexander.¹

In first-century Palestine, the name Joshua—*Johoshua* or *Ye’shua* in Hebrew, translated as *Iesous* or “Jesus” in Greek—was a popular, common name for boys, just as *Miriam*, or Mary, was for girls. Today “Jesus” is a common name in Arabic- and Spanish-speaking countries. This was the name the Angel Gabriel told Mary and Joseph that the Holy Child should be given, because the name “Jesus” means, literally, “God saves.” And, as such, it is not a name to be taken in vain, used as a swear word, or in any other non-spiritual manner.

This child, who was God incarnate, would later acquire the title, “*Christus*,” or “Christ,” meaning “God’s anointed One.” Altogether, “Jesus Christ” translates as “The One Anointed to bring God’s Salvation.” And that is precisely what His mission and ministry were about.

In the 19th century, J. C. Ryle, the first Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, wrote this, about Jesus’ Most Precious Name: “Jesus is a very encouraging name to weighted-down sinners. He, who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, might lawfully have taken some more high-sounding title. But He does not do so. The rulers of this world have often called themselves great, conquerors, bold, magnificent, and the like. The Son of God is content to call Himself Savior. Those seeking salvation may draw near to the Father with boldness, and have access with confidence through Christ.

It is His role and His delight to show mercy. ‘For God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through him’ (John 3:17). Jesus is a name, which is especially sweet and precious to believers. It has often done them good. It has given them what money cannot buy—that is, inward peace. It has eased their wearied consciences and given rest to their heavy hearts. The Song of Solomon describes the experience of many, when it says, ‘Your name is oil poured forth’ (1:3). Happy is the person who trusts not merely in vague notions of God’s mercy and goodness, but in ‘Jesus,’ the Name above all Names.”²

In addition to the name *Jesus*, the Bible uses many other expressions to describe Our Lord’s mission and ministry. Evangelical Pastor Charles Stanley writes: “We use many names for Jesus—Messiah, the Christ, Prophet, Preacher, Teacher, and King, among others. But one name, Lamb of God, stands out as comprehensively describing the Lord’s purpose. Most people consider something they create or accomplish to be their greatest achievement. But Jesus’ greatest act was to die. His sacrifice was the heart of the Father’s plan for mankind. Since the beginning, God has dealt with the sins of His people through sacrifice.

In the Garden of Eden, He offered the first sacrifice when He killed an animal to use its skin as coverings for Adam and Eve. The fig leaves they were wearing could cover their bodies but could not cover their sin.”³

Thanks be to God! However, there is even more to Jesus’ name than a description of God’s purposes and plans for the world. What had been a relatively common name in Israel, now that it was given to the Son of God, made it far more powerful than any other name, either on earth or in Heaven. In Acts 4:12 (NIV), St. Peter declares, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” The Apostles demonstrated the power of Jesus’ name through their ministry and prayers.

We see in Acts 4:18 that those who opposed Jesus commanded His followers “not to speak or teach at all *in the name of Jesus*.” But in verses 29-31, the Apostles respond by praying: “Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders *through the name of your holy servant Jesus*. After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly” (emphasis added).

Earlier, in Acts 3:6, Peter ministered to a man who was disabled, saying to him, “I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have: *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*, walk.” And the man who had been lame for years stood up and walked!

Even while Jesus was still on earth, His name brought divine power wherever it was used according to God’s purposes. In Luke 10:17, Jesus’ missionary disciples who were returning from preaching, healing, and exorcising, excitedly tell Him, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” And St. Paul tells us in Philippians 2:10-11 that “at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and ... every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

The power and authority of Jesus’ name are what make it possible for us to pray effective prayers, “in the Name of Jesus.” That’s why Jesus says in John 16:23, “I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”

Christian author and Pastor Greg Laurie writes: “His name is Mighty God. This means that [He] has unlimited power for you as you encounter the demands of life. There are times when you probably have thought that it was very hard to live the Christian life. I have thought that as well. In fact, I think it is impossible to be a Christian apart from the help of the Holy Spirit. I am so thankful that the Mighty God is there for me to give me the strength to do what He wants me to.

Next, He is called the Everlasting Father. Because Christ came to die on the cross and pay for your sins and rise again from the dead, you have an Everlasting Father, One who will be with you forever. He will never forget about you. He will always be there to guide and help you through life.

His name is the Prince of Peace. Certainly we live in frightening times. We look at our world and see so many things that have gone wrong. How we need peace in our lives. If you look at the wars and problems we face today, they are, for the most part, the result of people who are breaking God’s commandments. But God will bring peace to the person who is well-pleasing to Him.”⁴

As we begin this new year, with an unknown road laid out before us, we can project from past experience that there will be no straight, consistent, or logical lines. There may even be paths that force us to make U-turns, reach a seeming dead end, or cause us to become temporarily lost. But let us remember that God is always with us in the person of Jesus Christ. In His Name, we are given all that we need: salvation, healing, peace, and answered prayer.

We are also protected, not from daily aggravations or temporary illnesses, but from ultimate evil, because in John 17, Jesus prayed specifically for us: “Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name that you gave me . . . My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.”

The Name of Jesus brings with it the very power of God. Therefore, we are to use it *carefully*. In the coming year, may we boldly share the beauty of that Name with those who do not yet know Our Lord. May we urgently call upon that healing Name when we are in distress. And may we intercede for the needs of others in that powerful and holy Name.

This morning, after the Prayers of the People that are in the form of a Litany of Thanksgiving, we will have an opportunity to recommit ourselves and our lives to God in Christ by praying together Fr. John Wesley’s “Covenant Prayer.” And I caution you, *only pray this prayer today if you sincerely mean it*. Otherwise, take it home and think about it some more. In past years, you’ve heard me refer to it as “spiritual dynamite”—it’s to be taken seriously and handled carefully.

On this second Sunday after Christmas, I’d like to close with a quote by the late Pastor Herb VanderLugt, a Protestant minister:

“There’s no reason for an after-Christmas letdown. We have the full story: Jesus came to die for our sins, and then conquered death for us by rising from the grave. We have more truth to ponder and more reason to glorify God than Mary and the shepherds did.”⁵

Amen!

* Adapt. N. George-Hacker, “The Name of Jesus is Powerful Enough for All Our Needs,” 4 January 2015, St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church, Cobleskill. Used with permission.

¹ “Get Ready for Baby,” [SocialSecurity](https://www.ssa.gov/oact/babynames/) <https://www.ssa.gov/oact/babynames/> 21 December 2021. Used with permission.

² Adapt. J.C. Ryle “The Gospel of Matthew” (Ch. 1), [Jesus.org](http://www.jesus.org/is-jesus-god/names-of-jesus/what-does-the-name-jesus-mean.html) <http://www.jesus.org/is-jesus-god/names-of-jesus/what-does-the-name-jesus-mean.html> 29 December 2014.

³ Adapt. Charles Stanley, “The Lamb of God?”, [Jesus.org](http://www.jesus.org/is-jesus-god/names-of-jesus/the-lamb-of-god.html) <http://www.jesus.org/is-jesus-god/names-of-jesus/the-lamb-of-god.html> 29 December 2014.

⁴ Greg Laurie, “So Many Names: What Do They All Mean?”, [Jesus.org](http://www.jesus.org/is-jesus-god/names-of-jesus/so-many-names-what-do-they-all-mean.html) <http://www.jesus.org/is-jesus-god/names-of-jesus/so-many-names-what-do-they-all-mean.html> 29 December 2014.

⁵ Herb VanderLugt, “Letdown,” [Christmas: Quiet Moments for the Season](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 2007), p. 59.