

Preacher: Vicar Tim Redfield

Date: December 31 and January 1

Text: Philippians 2:9-13

Theme: Give Glory to Jesus' Name

New Year's Eve and New Year's Day are holidays that we use to reflect back on the year that has just ended and to look forward to the year ahead. We think about all the good times that we enjoyed, and remember some of the times that were not so good. We see that we have been blessed in many ways. When we look to the year ahead we usually make some big plans for things that we want to get done. Maybe those plans come in the form of New Year's Resolutions. As we look at the year gone by and as we look forward to the year ahead, we keep our Savior in mind. Our Savior has blessed us in so many ways and he will continue to bless us. Out of love for all that our Lord has done for us, we will give glory to Jesus' name. God's Word shows us how the name of Jesus is above every name and we see that we, as his believers, live to give glory to his name.

Part 1: His name is above every name.

This section of Scripture starts by telling us that God has exalted Jesus to the highest place and that God has given him the name that is above every name. We know that Jesus deserves this high place because of all that He has done. He humbled himself to come to this earth to save us. He resisted temptations over and over again to be our perfect Savior. He suffered and died to accomplish God's plan of Salvation. He rose from the grave and ascended to his throne in heaven. We saw these gospel truths in 2007 and we look forward to hearing more about them in 2008.

Before Jesus went back to heaven, he told his disciples, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). God has given all authority to his Christ. Jesus rules over the entire world and all nations on the earth. He directs everything so that God's Will is done. Jesus really has been exalted to the highest place. One day he will come again as the Judge of the entire world. Then all people will see that his name is above every name.

Jesus is the greatest human being ever to live on the earth. As true God and true man he carried out our salvation. He is now to be given praise and honor because he is our Savior. God gave him a name that tells us exactly what he was sent here to do. Jesus means "God saves." Jesus did precisely what his name says, he saved all people. All people should honor the name of Jesus.

Paul reminds us that Jesus should be honored when he says, "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth." Paul is letting us know that every knee should bow in respect before Jesus. All the angels in heaven bow in respect to Jesus and they obey his will. All the demons have to obey him because he has authority over them. They are forced to bow before him. They know that he is God. There are many examples of times that Jesus exercised authority over demons during his ministry.

Paul also says that every knee on earth should bow to Jesus. Can you imagine what that would be like? Sadly, there are many people on earth who do not bow to Jesus because they reject him as their Savior. Those people will be surprised when they are forced to bow to the authority of Christ on Judgment Day.

We bow in respect to our Lord every time we come to worship him. We are here to worship our Lord because we know that he is our Redeemer. Still, there are times in our lives that we do not bow in respect to our Savior as we should. We sometimes find poor excuses for missing opportunities to hear about our Savior's love. We find things to do with our time other than spending time with our Lord. We become too busy even to make time for a 10 minute daily devotion. We can see that we did not always give Jesus the respect he deserved in the past year.

Verse 11 tells us that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. When Jesus asked the disciples who he was, Peter confessed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Believers give the honor to Jesus that he deserves when they recognize him as the Christ, the Messiah sent to be the Savior of the World.

Some people sin by not recognizing that Jesus is 100% true God. He is equal to the Father. Jesus said, "The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him" (John 5:22-23). When people do not give glory to Jesus, then they are not giving glory to the Father.

Unfortunately, we also sin by not always confessing our Lord and Savior. We confess Jesus in our worship and in activities at church, but there are many times in our lives that we do not confess Jesus. Anytime when we use our mouths for sin, we are not confessing Christ. James writes, "Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be" (James 3:10). We also sin when we fail to mention Christ. There are many opportunities in our lives to share our faith and we often miss or avoid those opportunities. For example, at Christmas time when people think too much about giving and receiving gifts, we should direct them to the true meaning of Christmas rather than remaining quiet about our faith.

Thankfully we have a merciful Savior who fulfilled the law in our place. We see that Jesus gave glory to God by taking time to worship and by constantly having his mission on his lips. When Jesus entered a town he would go to the synagogue and teach the people. He always honored the Sabbath Day. He took time out of his busy schedule to be alone with God, and made time for prayer and meditation. As Jesus became more and more popular with the people, he made time to be alone so that he could pray to his Father (Luke 5:16). He fulfilled this part of God's Law for all those times that we have failed. Jesus covered over our sins in the past year, and he will cover over our sins in the new year.

He was always telling others about his mission. He told people that he was the Savior even though he was persecuted for it and eventually tortured and killed by the Jewish leaders. For all the times that we are afraid to share the message, Jesus fearlessly shared the message. Again, Jesus covered over our sins in the past year as he will also do in the new year.

Part 2: We live to give glory to His name.

Since we have the comfort of our forgiveness, we are motivated to live a life that gives glory to Jesus' name. Paul tells the Philippians and us to continue to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (2:12). This sounds strange at first. We know that salvation is a free gift from God that we do not have to obtain. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast." If Paul were saying here that we had to work out our own salvation, then he would be contradicting what he said elsewhere in scripture.

So then, what is Paul saying when he writes these words? Since he talked about the obedience of the Philippians earlier in the sentence, we know that he is talking about the Christian life. The Christian life here on earth is a daily struggle against sin. We want to obey our God but our sinful nature is constantly with us. We live our Christian life with fear and trembling because we know that our sins and the devil could destroy our faith and rob us of our eternal salvation. Just like we were attacked by sin and the devil this last year, we will have new temptations in the year to come.

We always have the comfort of verse 13. There it says that God works in us to will and to act according to his good purpose. This verse gives us comfort when we have that "fear and trembling" because of our sins. God is the one who works in our hearts so that we can live that life of obedience to God's will. He works in us by sending the Holy Spirit into our hearts to work faith in us. He starts faith in us and he continues to strengthen our faith through the Means of Grace. The Gospel in Word and Sacrament is the life line of the Christian. That Gospel is what makes us able to live a life of faith.

We are strengthened in this way every time we receive the Gospel. When the Holy Spirit came to us in the waters of Baptism, he worked faith in our hearts and washed us clean from sin. When Jesus gives us his true body and true blood in the Lord's Supper we receive that forgiveness that he won for us by giving up that same body and shedding that same blood on the cross. We have many ways of receiving God's Word. We have weekly worship services as well as many special worship services throughout the year. We have Bible studies. There are many devotional books you can read. Every one of us can pick up a Bible and read about God's amazing grace that he has shown to all people. We will have many opportunities to learn of God's grace in 2008.

As we live our lives of faith we continually give glory to our Savior. Even though sin will always be a part of our lives here on earth, God strengthens us in our faith so that we are people who give glory to the Lord. Think of all the ways that we give glory to God: with our beautiful hymns, confessing our faith with the Apostle's and Nicene Creeds, praying in the way our Savior taught us using the Lord's Prayer. Our hearts grow in faith as we meditate upon the words of the sermon. Every part of our worship gives glory to Jesus.

Our entire life is a confession of our Savior. People notice that there is something different about us. People notice our kindness and our generosity. People notice the love that we show to others. The love that our Savior has shown to us overflows in our hearts and guides our entire lives. The light of our faith shines in this sinful world. Jesus tells us, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). When unbelievers see our good deeds, we have an opportunity to point them to our God.

Conclusion

When you look back on the year that has just gone by, think about the ways that you have been blessed as a follower of Jesus. Our Lord has strengthened us in the past year through our worship services. We have confessed and proclaimed the name of the Lord. As you enter this New Year, continue to give glory to God. Continue to remain in his Word and Sacraments which will strengthen your faith. We give Jesus the glory that he deserves as the ruler over the whole earth. We praise our Savior for covering over all of our sins. We continue to give him glory as we live a life that displays the faith that we have in our hearts.