

Text: Luke 2:21 (ESV)

Name of Jesus/New Year's Day.

January 1, 2017.

Grace and peace are yours through Jesus in the New Year and for all eternity. Amen.

Jesus. Did you know that name is a one-word sermon? Yeah! One-word sermon. We can all go home now. Well... Do you know what that one-word sermon is? The Lord saves. That's what the name Jesus means. The Lord saves. That's a cool sermon! So that name Jesus was actually very popular, for thousands of years. That's right. The name Joshua is the Hebrew, or Old Testament equivalent of the name Jesus. Joshua, like Jesus, means, the Lord saves. Even into the New Testament, the name Jesus was a common name. The New Testament book of Colossians in chapter four, verse eleven mentions a guy by the name of Jesus and not our Savior who died on a cross. Acts chapter thirteen verse six, a guy named Bar-Jesus, which means son of Jesus. And here's the real interesting one. Barabbas. Do you know Barabbas? He was a murder and insurrectionist. He was in prison for inciting a rebellion. When Jesus, our Savior, was on trial, there was a custom to release a prisoner. Well, the judge, a man named Pontius Pilate, was trying to free Jesus our Savior. So Pontius Pilate offered the people two choices of whom to free, either Jesus of Nazareth, who is called the Christ, or Barabbas. But his name was actually Jesus Barabbas. We've just kind of left off the Jesus because we don't want the name of our Savior to be connected with this murderer. Have you noticed that Jesus our Savior is often called Jesus of Nazareth? That's to distinguish him from all the other people named Jesus.

Whew, that was kind of a tiring explanation. What's the point? The name Jesus was common. Until about 2000 years ago. But now? Do you know any one named Jesus? That would be a lot to live up to! You might have a Hispanic friend or acquaintance named Jesus, but beyond that, it's almost like the name Jesus has been retired, similar to retiring a jersey number for a sports player. Jesus. I say that name and you know about whom I'm talking. Jesus. The best one-word sermon ever. Jesus. The Lord saves. Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. Jesus!

Jesus began his life as Savior with a relatively minor incident in the verse in front of us. This verse is kind of like whoever followed the Beatles on Ed Sullivan. You have probably heard of the Beatles, but who followed them? Don't know. The verses right before this might be the most well-known, most-memorized, most-recited, most-heard part of the Bible, the account of Jesus' birth. If I started Luke chapter two verse twenty, you could probably say it with me. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the thing they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. Here ends the lesson. The recitation is done. The children's Christmas service is over. What comes next? What did Jesus do?

He was circumcised. Kind of a strange thing. I'll let the parents explain to the children later.

Circumcision. What good could this possibly do? Why would God pick this ritual rather than something else? This harms the body. And why this part of the body? It makes no sense. We could say that this is a very personal way to show your dedication to God. It's a very permanent way to show your life is committed to God. There could even be a connection between circumcision and the fact that God promised a human offspring would be the Savior. I'll leave it at that. But isn't there something more to circumcision? Often God operates in a way that makes no sense to us. Put a few drops of water on a baby's head and the baby's sins are washed away?

There's a deeper reason for Jesus to be circumcised. Read Galatians chapters five and six. Anyone who is circumcised is obligated to obey the entire law. The entire law! Wow! The entire law. Jesus was circumcised to take our place and obey the entire law. Always gladly and perfectly hear God's Word. Jesus kept that one. Always gladly and perfectly show respect to your parents, to authorities in the

government. Jesus kept that one, in our place. Always be kind and forgiving. Always show respect to marriage. Jesus kept all those, in our place. Even all the Old Testament laws, like circumcision that we don't have to keep, Jesus kept them all. In our place. To be our perfect Substitute.

Think about this. The lawgiver fulfills the law for those who couldn't fulfill the law and he pays the price for those who failed to fulfill the law. Wait, what? Imagine a police officer pulls you over and he pays the fine for speeding, while you drive off for free, without even points taken off your license. Imagine a judge finds you guilty and then sends himself to prison and you don't even have a record. That's Jesus. That's the meaning of his circumcision. The one who gave the law, kept the law and paid the price for those who should have kept the law and didn't. Mind-boggling. That's Jesus.

Oh. One more thing about Jesus' circumcision. It's the first account of divine blood being shed. It was likely only a few drops, but those few drops of blood at Jesus' circumcision were drops of blood flowing from God. Those few drops were divine blood. Those few drops would become a river of blood, a torrent of divine blood, but that torrent started here, with a few drops, at his circumcision. You can see the love and sacrifice of Jesus even in his circumcision.

Jesus! What didn't he do for us? Jesus! What an amazing sermon. Jesus. The Lord saves. Jesus! What a name! At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow. There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. Jesus. It is the name above all names. Jesus. The name was given by an angel, an angel, before he was conceived in the womb. That's a very vivid picture. He was conceived in the womb, by the power of God. He was conceived without a human father, circumcised or uncircumcised. He was given the name Jesus. His name was given by God. His name was delivered through an angel. Twice! Once to Mary, Jesus' mother. Once to Joseph, Jesus' earthly father. Jesus. And how too quickly we avoid the name. It's been easier to go with the flow and say, "Happy holidays." So that's what we said. We'll talk about faith and not connect it to Jesus, as though faith in Santa Claus is just as good. In Catechism and Bible 101 class when I ask, "How will you get to heaven?" The most common first answer is, "Believe in God." Is Jesus in there anywhere? We might call Jesus a nice teacher, as though our biggest problem in the whole world was lack of education. I heard a comedian once say, "Do you notice how people get weird as soon as you mention the name Jesus? Even the pope says, 'Hey, I leave work at work.'" And sadly, we can relate. At least the guy whom I watch shave can. Jesus! It's not a name to hide. It's a name to shout from the rooftops, on facebook, twitter, Instagram. Jesus. It's the best one-word sermon ever. The Lord saves! From our sin! The Lord saves. From hell. The Lord saves. From eternal death. Jesus! He did save us. Every day, he kept all of God's laws in our place. Jesus did save us on that one special day when the divine blood was not a trickle, but a flood from his head, his hands, his feet, each drop wiping away our sins, each molecule cleaning our slate with God. I know I already said this. But let's hear it again. The Lord saves! On that one special day, his blood shed, his work finished, his body raised, he burst from the tomb. He saved us! Jesus! He lived. Jesus! He died. Jesus! He rose. Jesus! You start this New Year with a clean slate with God. You start every day of every New Year with a clean slate. That blood was poured. That life was given. That body rose. Jesus! The Lord saves.

Jesus. Did you know that 28 hymns start with the word Jesus? Twenty-eight? That's more than church or time or money or busy. Twenty-eight! Jesus more than anything. Jesus. When I first meet Vicar, the first three questions I ask are, "Do you love Jesus? Do you love the words of Jesus? Do you love the people for whom Jesus died?" It's not so much about church. It's about Jesus. Resurrection is not your Savior. Jesus is. Think of what that means for every conversation in the New Year. It's about Jesus! We will keep encouraging you to invite your friends to church. But what we really want is for your friends to meet

Jesus. You know, lots of people have a negative view of the church. But almost no one has a negative view of Jesus. Maybe those popular opinions are doing us a favor. We don't ultimately want to talk about church. We want to talk about Jesus. Finally our goal is not to get people to join the church. The goal is to get people to be followers of Jesus. Jesus. That's the goal. Jesus. That's the name. Jesus. Sorry the sermon was more than one word. But now you know the best one-word sermon. Ever. Jesus! Amen.