

Jesus and You in the New Year.

Text: Luke 2:21

Suggested Hymns:

554, 36, 552, 293, 161

1) Jesus is circumcised

2) Jesus is named

3) You and Jesus in the New Year

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 2:21, ²¹ *And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We have crossed the threshold of another year of our earthly life. We have started on another mile of our earthly pilgrimage. We have begun a new chapter in our biography.

How was the last year? How was the last mile? How was the last chapter? Forget it, someone says, *“You just cannot do that.”*

In business it is the time to do another *“Business Activity Statement.”* It is time to check receipts against disbursements, income against expenses.

And from time to time we are to examine ourselves whether we are in the faith. It is profitable to pause awhile in the mad strife for existence, to see how the year went, whether we were heading right in the last mile, whether the paragraphs in the last chapter make good reading. And that brings in our relationship to God and Christ in the past year, because we were not heading right if we went without God.

We know that God did His part. Did we do ours? The year simply wasn't a good year, if we did not live it close to God and Christ, if we did not fulfil our obligations to Him.

Thank God there is forgiveness for the sins of the past year in His Son. Let us, therefore, look to Him for forgiveness and forsake sin.

At the beginning of this New Year let us consider the subject, *Jesus and You in the New Year*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Jesus Is Circumcised.

You might ask: *What connection has the Gospel lesson for today, that one verse, to do with the New Year?* Let us see.

Just as John was circumcised and named on the eighth day, so it is with Jesus. St. Paul takes special note of the fact that Jesus was ***“born under law, to redeem those under law.”***¹ The circumcision is a part of Christ’s active obedience: He fulfilled the law perfectly in our place. And His circumcision brings to an end the need for us New Testament Christians to practice circumcision as a religious rite in fulfilment of the Old Testament law. In this sense, Christ is truly the end of the law.²

On the eighth day after His birth, Jesus was circumcised, as were all Jewish male infants, according to the command given to Abraham. Circumcision was instituted by God, and Abraham executed it in his day.

We read about it in Genesis 17:10-13, ¹⁰ ***“This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised;”*** ¹¹ ***“and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.***

¹² ***“He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.”*** ¹³ ***“He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.***

Circumcision took place in the home of the parents. We don’t know just where Mary and Joseph might have stayed while they remained in Bethlehem. Undoubtedly, they were able to find more suitable shelter than the stable after the rush of people had left Bethlehem following the census.

Circumcision is a sign of God’s covenant with Abraham and his descendants. As Luther says: *“God promised to be with those who had the mark of circumcision on their body and to regard them as His people. God said it shall*

be a token of the covenant between Me and you.” Circumcision was to be observed to the time of Christ’s coming but is now no longer needed because Christ fulfilled the Law in our stead.

Circumcision was commanded by God, and His people were subject to the Law of God. Now, in Galatians 4:4-5 we read that *when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

The Child Jesus, God’s Son, our Saviour, was circumcised, placed under the Law, not because He was a sinner but for our sakes — to redeem all, who were under the Law.

In the circumcision the first blood was shed by Jesus whose blood would flow on Calvary for the atonement of the sins of the world. What a fitting beginning for a New Year to be reminded that the Christ-child, whom we worshiped and adored last week, was indeed the Messiah, and that He is beginning immediately to place Himself under the Law to redeem those who were under the Law.

We enter the New Year seeing the Redeemer shedding the first drop of blood in circumcision, being placed under the Law for us. Jesus is doing His part for us.

When Jesus was 40 days old, they made the short trip to Jerusalem for the purification of Mary and the presentation of the Child in the temple. The law of the purification of a mother is found in Leviticus chapter 12. A poor person was required to bring two doves or young pigeons as her sacrificial offerings.

The law also required that a firstborn male was to be consecrated to the Lord.³ If the child was not given into the service of the Lord, the parents needed to redeem him by a payment of five shekels.⁴

Mary and Joseph did not make this payment since Jesus was consecrated to the Lord in the fullest possible way. On the 40th day of His life, Jesus was presented to the Lord in the temple.

As we enter the New Year, are we, for whom Jesus was placed under the Law, we, the redeemed of God, loyally and faithfully accepting the duties and obligations of the divine adoption which Jesus made possible?

2. Jesus Is Named

Before we develop this further, let us turn to our text, *His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.*

The angel Gabriel had revealed to Mary what she was to name her child. We read in Luke 1:31-33, ³¹ *“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.”* ³² *“He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.”* ³³ *“And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”*

The angel also appeared to Joseph, as written in Matthew 1:20-21, ²⁰ *But while [Joseph] thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”* ²¹ *“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”*

The name “Jesus” comes from two Hebrew words: *the Lord* (Jehovah) plus *save*. *He will save His people from their sins.* Truly an appropriate name for this Child!

It was the Jewish custom to name the child at the time of circumcision, just as we do at the time of baptism.

Mary’s Son is called Jesus — *“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*⁵

3. You And Jesus In The New Year

What an appropriate text for New Year’s Day! It gives us the account of what happened to the Child Jesus on that day, and it assures us of forgiveness and peace, happiness in Christ for the New Year and happiness forevermore because of Jesus.

And because of who Jesus is, and because of what He did, He stands always ready to forgive all who will come to Him. On the threshold of a New Year

Jesus turns to the world with outstretched arms and says, “²⁸ ***Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.***”⁶ On the threshold of a New Year Jesus assures you, “***Lo, I am with you always.***”⁷

You can count on His forgiving love, on His abiding presence, on His power, His wisdom, during all the 365 days and nights. Amid all the changes that the year may bring, amid all the difficulties and temptations that you may have to face, you can rest assured that Jesus who bears the name Saviour will never forsake you.

Where are your interests? What are your ambitions? What direction are you taking? What is your purpose in life? Another year is added to the past. We are another year closer to the grave; we are another year closer to life’s end; we are another year closer to eternity. What about you in the New Year?

Jesus is the same, year in and year out. Scripture says in Hebrews 13:8 that ⁸ ***Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*** And we can count on Jesus who was made under the Law for us because of our sins. We can count on Jesus who is our Saviour. Will we be found faithful? Will we live this year to Him as we should? Will we, who are saved from the Law, follow Him and strive to keep the commandments as a proof of our faith in Him, as a mark of our loyalty to Him?

What about the 365 days and the 52 Sundays? What about the hundreds of working hours? What about the hundreds of leisure hours? The time, will it be lived to Jesus? The work, will it be done to Him? The leisure time, will it be spent in conformity with His will?

Will we earnestly strive to overcome the enemies of our soul or will we join in with them? Will we fight them or will there be a truce with them? There is no flag of truce in the fight of faith. Let the banner of the cross fly high and let us swear allegiance to it anew at the beginning of the year.

If you are an earnest follower of Christ, a true believer, you enter this New Year as an adopted child of God. But too often God’s children go on from day to day, from month to month, from year to year, lacking trust and confidence in God. Grip the hand of the heavenly Father tightly, for you are a child of the Most High. He will lead you. He will comfort you. He will guide you. He will

protect you, and maybe — who knows? — He will lift you up into His holy and eternal presence before the year is ended.

Trust God unwaveringly. He placed His only-begotten Son under the Law so that you might become His son, or His daughter. Trust Him; He will not forsake you in life's darkest hours. He will not forsake you in life's worst storms. He will not forsake you in faith's hottest conflicts.

God's love for you, God's concern for you, God's faithfulness to you, is bound up intimately with the circumcision of His Son and the giving to Him of the name Jesus. You are His adopted child. Enter the New Year fully realising this fact — conscious of the blessings and benefits this relationship bestows and also of the duties and obligations it imposes.

Enjoy the blessings, meet the obligations, to the fullest extent. Because only too soon we know that the New Year will have run its course and have taken its place with the years that are past.

At the end of an old year and the beginning of a new one we read of records broken in sports, of new achievements in science and medicine, of great events and great catastrophes.

Now, what about our faith, our religion? Did we break any records in 2016? Were there any outstanding achievements in our religious life, victories over sin won? Any records broken in the race of faith? Were there any catastrophes, a dangerous neglect of God? The year just begun offers new opportunities for service, it offers you another chance to try again.

Let us enter the New Year determined to be true to God's Son, who was placed under the Law, and circumcised for us. Let us be determined to reach new heights of loyalty in serving Him who was named Jesus, our Saviour, so that He may be glorified and His kingdom.

May God bless every one of us today and throughout the year! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Galatians 4:4-5

² Romans 10:4

³ Exodus 13:2

⁴ Numbers 3:46, 47

⁵ Philippians 2:9

⁶ Matthew 11:28

⁷ Matthew 28:20