**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church**

**Watertown, WI**

**“He Will Save His People”**

Pastor Aaron Reseburg

The Nativity of Our Lord (Christmas Eve)

December 24, 2024

*Matthew 1:18-25*

In the name of Jesus, Amen.

There are names that mean things and there are names that don’t. In a poem called “Maple” by Robert Frost, Frost tells the story of a girl named Maple. Her mother died a few minutes after she was born, but before she died, she gave her the curious name Maple. Her father claims not to know why she picked that name, and although she is skeptical, she chooses not to press her father for more information. Maple spends the rest of her life searching for the meaning of her name. In many ways, trying to find out why her name is Maple and what it means shapes her life.

The name Jesus means something. Jesus is the English transliteration of the Greek name “Ἰησοῦς,” which is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name Yeshua, which is a slightly shortened version of the longer name Yehoshua. The name Yehoshua is transliterated as Joshua in English. So, Jesus and Joshua are actually the same name. When translated into English, the names mean “Yahweh saves.”

We see in our text from Matthew that Joseph didn’t pick this name out of a hat; it wasn’t a family name, it was a name that the Yahweh Himself had chosen for His son. His name was more than just a nice sounding name. In His name, Jesus received His marching orders. He was sent to earth to save His people. In His name, Jesus received a death sentence. Jesus was coming to earth to take the sin of the whole world upon Himself and to bear the wrath of God for it. Jesus was coming to earth to die.

Jesus came to earth as a baby in His mother’s womb, was born in a stable, lived a perfect life, and died on a cross so that God could save you and me from our sins. Jesus did not come to teach you how to live a good life or to be a good person. He didn’t come to make you feel happy or to show you who to vote for. He didn’t come to reveal philosophical truth or to lead a political revolution. Jesus came to save you.

As the angel said in our reading, He came to save us from our sin. Most people don’t think about sin much anymore. We are fine talking about mistakes and we like to judge the way that other people live, but we are afraid of saying something is sinful. We are afraid to tell our friend or family member that what they are doing is sinful and against God’s Law; we are even afraid to acknowledge to ourselves that what we are doing is sinful.

Jesus didn’t come to fix our mistakes; He came to save us from our sins. The Bible teaches us that the wages of sin is death. Sin is a big deal; it’s the reason that the world is the way it is. It’s the reason bad things happen, people get sick, and why people die. The worst effect that sin has on us is that it separates us from God.

Sin is simply the breaking of God’s Law; it is doing anything that is against the way that He designed creation and mankind to function. We have brought disorder into His perfect and orderly creation. Because of our sin, we have become enemies of God.

We needed someone to save us; we couldn’t do it ourselves. We stop one sin only to start another. We are better for a little while only to fall back into our old ways again. Our sin clings to us tightly and drags us down, both the sins we commit and the sin that convinces us to sin more. There is no escape; we needed a Savior.

Jesus came to fulfill His name; Jesus came to give His name meaning. Jesus, or Joshua, was a relatively common name at the time of Christ and for much of Israel’s history. The name was meant to remind people of Yahweh’s love and faithfulness. Jesus Christ came to this earth to SHOW people the love and faithfulness of Yahweh.

Jesus Christ saved you and all people from the very real danger of sin. He took our punishment on Himself when He died on the cross. Jesus bore the wrath of God that we all deserved. That baby born in Bethlehem so long ago was on a rescue mission; He came to do what no one else could. He would live a perfect life and take the place of every man, woman, and child on the cross.

Because of His sacrifice, you and I are free from condemnation. Because of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, we have received the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus’ name has become our gateway to everlasting life. Jesus’ name has more meaning to us than any other name, even our own name. In the name of Jesus, we find eternal life and salvation because we have a God who saves.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.