

The Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus

by Michael Flowers

Michael Flowers' sermon reflects on the significance of the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, emphasizing His divine mission and our participation in salvation through faith.

Duration: 23:03

Scripture: Luke 2:21, Ephesians 1:20-23, Philippians 2:8-12

Topics: "Jesus"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the awe-inspiring nature of God's work in our lives. He highlights that our salvation is not just a concept, but a person - Jesus Emmanuel, who is fully God and fully human. The preacher emphasizes that Jesus, the Word made flesh, came to earth as a vulnerable infant, starting his journey in a poor family. Through his obedience and sacrifice, Jesus reconciles us to God and delivers us from the reign of sin and death. The preacher also mentions Mary's contemplative nature and the importance of participating in Christ to work out our own healing and salvation.

Transcript

Today is a special feast day, especially in the Western Church, and it's called the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus. The Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus. And I can't think of a better way to begin the first day of the new year than by celebrating the Eucharist together, which is a corporate... what we're doing right now is a corporate ascension into the Kingdom of God, into the Heavenly Kingdom, with saints and angels.

We're worshiping before the throne of God together today. That's what the Eucharist brings us into. And so, as I said, the liturgical calendar brings us to the eighth day after the birth of Jesus, a day in which Christ was both named and circumcised, and it is the first shedding of His blood.

The Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus is a time to contemplate the revelation of Jesus' name given to Joseph in a dream by an angel, and likewise the revelation of the same to Mary by the Archangel Gabriel at the Annunciation. You shall call His name Jesus. It was divinely ordained.

The angel appeared to Joseph, and we saw this last week, in a dream and said, You shall give Him the name Jesus. You shall give Him the name Jesus because He will save His people from their sins. Matthew 1.21 Jesus is a name that's transliterated from the Hebrew name Yeshua, which is the English name Joshua.

Right. Very common name now. The Hebrew meaning of Yeshua is Yahweh is salvation.

Jesus is the new Joshua, the final Joshua, who leads His people into the Promised Land, the final wedding feast of God and His people. That's what the Promised Land is going to be for us. It's going to be the final wedding feast of God and His people.

God wants to marry us. And those of you who are Christians this morning are betrothed to one Lord, Jesus Christ. And we're awaiting that final consummation of the ages.

The age to come, as the Creed says. Where God, as Paul says, will be all in all. Just think about that for a moment.

What it might be like for God to be all in all. Wow. All creation's groaning for that, right? So let's take a look at just some of the lines in this passage that Father Les read out of Luke 2 beginning at verse 15.

I just kind of want to walk through this for just a brief moment. It said, When the angels went away from them, talking about the shepherds, into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us. And they went with haste.

And that's echoes of the annunciation when Mary went with haste after the annunciation by the angel Gabriel. The angel Gabriel, she went with haste to see Elizabeth. There was a sense of urgency in her step from this revelation of Christ.

So they went with haste and they found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying which has been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it, they wondered what the shepherds told them.

But Mary kept all of these things, pondering them in her heart. Shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them. And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus.

The name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. I think it's just worth noting that it's shepherds and not royalty nor the religious elite or elites that received this heavenly revelation. Shepherds were about the lowest of the lowest on the economic scale.

And the shepherds experienced the worship of heaven out in the field. The sky, as it were, opens up and their eyes open up to see what's beyond the clouds. Millions, it's just countless angels were worshipping God.

And you know what they were singing? They were singing the Gloria. Glory to God in the highest and peace to His people on earth. That's where we get it in our liturgy.

Glory to God in the highest and peace to His people on earth. Heaven is singing about earth. It's a beautiful thing.

And this Deliverer, this Savior, Christ the Lord, is not to be found in a palace, but a manger. And a manger is a feeding trough for animals. This is the cosmic Redeemer of the universe beginning out His human existence in a poor family with no room to house Him for a birth worthy of His name that we're celebrating today.

And so they find a manger, a feeding trough. And there He is. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us to experience our human condition beginning as a vulnerable infant.

This is the Word that was in the beginning. The Word who was with God and the Word that was God. He's beginning that downward journey now into a poor subsistence and becoming an infant that's so vulnerable and dependent on His parents.

God became a poor baby and was named on the eighth day Yeshua. Yeshua. Yahweh is salvation.

To live and die is one of us. To reconcile us to God, the Father of all. His obedience led Him to taste death for all, as Hebrews says, so that we might be delivered from this reign of sin and death, as Paul says, that we are being saved from the reign of sin and death from this present evil age.

That is His outworking in His physical body going to the cross. Delivered from death as the final word to His creation. And so, that's kind of the backdrop.

That's not what Luke is telling us right now. But Mary is pondering all of this in her heart. Mary is a contemplative, you see.

And so, can you imagine just being Mary for a moment and all of a sudden being visited by the angel Gabriel, the archangel. It's not a cherub that's overweight. It's not a cherub fashioned after Cupid.

Some of the great Renaissance depictions of angels tend to be overweight cherubs. They're not cute in that sense. They're awesome.

They're awesome. And she's, in a sense, confronted by this being of glorious light and announces the gospel to her. She hears the gospel from the angel.

And Joseph hears the gospel from the angel. You will call His name Jesus for He will save His people from their sin. And so, she's pondering all of this.

What the shepherds told her. What Gabriel has told her. And on that eighth day, Jesus is named out of obedience to divine revelation and sheds His first drops of redeeming blood.

A child of the covenant shall become the new covenant. In today's passage out of Philippians, it jumps right into the middle of the great descent. And it says, therefore.

Right? Our reading today begins with a therefore. We should have read the whole passage actually. Based upon this great and glorious divine descent where the Word becomes flesh and He descends and becomes a servant and becomes obedient.

Even obedient unto death. Death on a cross. That's the reason why this one is born.

He's born to die. And by death, to trample down death by death. Because of His extreme humility, which is really an attribute of God.

God is humble, right? If you've seen me, Jesus said, you've seen the Father. So this humble one is portraying a part of the nature of God in that great descent of becoming the redemption of the cosmos. Our Redeemer.

And that is the backstory for verse 9. Therefore, God has highly exalted Him. We sing about that in all of the lyrics today. God is highly... The Father has highly exalted the Son.

And bestowed on Him the name. There it is again. The name which is above every name which was not of human origin, even though it is a human name.

Yeshua. Joshua. Right? And at the name of Jesus, Yahweh is salvation.

That's the character of Jesus. Yahweh is salvation. Our salvation is a person.

Our salvation is a person. Our salvation is a human being. Fully divine and fully human.

He is our salvation. And at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow. Paul is saying.

And I love this. Where we're at right now. In heaven.

Every knee is bowing in heaven. And that's why sometimes we bow. We kneel.

We don't have kneelers in the gym here. But you know, you who are hearty of knees can do that. But every knee will bow.

Prostrate themselves before this one. In heaven, first of all. And then on earth, it says.

In heaven and on earth, every knee will bow. And under the earth, right? The realm of the dead, where Christ preached the gospel and led captivity captive. That's the way I see that passage there.

Under the earth. It's a figure of Christ descending even lower than the earth into the depths as it were the bowels of the earth. That word bowels, you know, of the earth.

And he takes that captive audience, the realm of the dead, and tramples down death by death. He's the only one that could do that, you see. And every tongue confess.

Every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. It was Caesar, the Roman army, and that whole system of the empire that actually thought they did away with Jesus. But now, Jesus Christ is being proclaimed Lord over all earthly powers to the glory of God the Father.

Here's another therefore. Therefore, because of that, right? Because of what we have just heard, Paul is saying, my beloved, as you have always obeyed. So now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence.

As you have always obeyed, right? Now in my absence, because as an apostle, he's moved on. And then here's a word that some Protestants don't like. So, think about this.

Work out your own salvation. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For connector. For God. Why? How can we do it? And why can we do it? Because we don't do it alone.

We do it in participation and union with Jesus Christ. For God is at work where? Yeah, within us. God would never ask us to work out our own salvation without the Incarnation happening in us.

There's an Incarnation that happens in us. God, very God, the power and presence of the Holy Spirit is incarnate in all of us now because of the Incarnate One. The indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

Oh, how we need it. Oh, how I need it. Is at work in you.

So, he's not saying, work out your own salvation by yourself and I hope you do well. Right? This is Immanuel. God with us.

In us. God for us. If God be for us, who can be against us? So we are in this, I'm going to say the word again, ontological union.

It's a real union that we've been placed in, in the Spirit. As the Father is in me and I am in the Father, so you shall be in me. That's very mystical language, but we are in that place just like we're before the throne of grace right now as we're hearing these words.

If you've been risen with Christ, Paul says, you are, seek the things that are above where Christ dwells. Right? And so the Divine Liturgy, the Eucharist, whatever you want to call this thing that we're doing this morning, it has many different names. If you're in the Eastern Church or the Western Church, the Eastern Church calls this the Divine Liturgy because there is that sense of ascending.

When you say, blessed be God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, blessed be His kingdom now and forever. Blessed be His kingdom. That one church, right? There's only one church in heaven and in earth.

And we're connected through the communion of the saints, through Jesus our mediator who pours forth the Holy Spirit inside of us so that we are one body. Not two bodies. One body in heaven and in earth.

That's how divinely connected we are. Because God became a baby. God became a baby! Not just any baby.

Baby. God became a baby, fully God and fully human to do this work for us. And so now as a result of that, Emmanuel, God with us and in us, God is at work in you and me both what? Both the will and to do.

Both the will and to do. There's a great power here, you see, where it's not our work, but it's a participation, right? There is a participation where God says, come along with Me. Be yoked with Me.

Right? Take My yoke upon you. Let's do this together. I'm going to give you the power to do it.

You're never doing it alone because then if you are, that's not the Gospel. Right? You're doing it in the obedience of faith Paul talks about. And all of that is through grace.

From grace. From grace to grace. Right? And that makes us beautiful people when we respond to the amazing grace that He pours out upon us.

And then it's not grinding it out and trying to please God because Christ has pleased God for us. Right? And so as long as we're in union and we're yoked with this one, we're in that place for His good pleasure, it says. God is at work in you, both the will and to work or to do.

Alright? You can substitute the word do there. Both to will and to do for His good pleasure. The Father has pleasures that we have yet to experience.

Right? And He wants all of us to experience His good pleasure. And if you leave here today and you're still struggling with the good pleasure of God over you, may the love of the Father and the grace of Jesus Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit just get all over you. I need more of that, Lord, because that's truth.

That's truth. And sometimes my experience or feelings or what I'm going through and my anxieties and fears, right? Light is breaking in. Light is breaking in a stable for a throne, we're saying this morning.

Light is breaking in in the most unimaginable places. This is the good news, Emmanuel, God with us, in us, and for us, both through will. Boy, I really want to meditate on that because I think that's where my problem lies.

My will, right, is not too weak, as C.S. Lewis says. It's too strong, in a sense, from a human perspective. But then he turns that around and he says, We're really not strong people.

We're very weak people choosing and making decisions when actually we're kings and priests, as it were, and we're settling for, what, sand castles at the beach or something like that? Mud pies. Yeah, mud pies where? In slums. Mud pies in the slums, yeah.

Oh, I love my congregation. They know C.S. Lewis. Better than I. Yeah, it just kind of came dimly into my little brain, but that's a beautiful image.

Yeah, we're not alone. We're not alone, but have been united through Jesus to the heart of God. You believe that? You're united right now to the heart of God through Jesus Christ.

We're right there. And it's beating for us because He became man. He became a human being.

That's what the word is. And the heart of God is the Holy Trinity, you know? God is one, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And it's through Jesus that He brings us into that fellowship of the Holy Trinity.

We can now participate in Christ, working out our own healing. So now we can participate in Christ working out our own healing, working out our own salvation. That's what salvation is, healing what has been disordered through the reign of sin and death.

Working out our own healing with a sense of holy awe, fear and trembling, right? Holy awe. For God is at work in us, both the will and to do according to His good pleasure, not just my good pleasure, but His good pleasure, which I get to experience and you get to experience. Jesus Emmanuel is the word become flesh.

Our salvation, as I said, is a person, fully God and fully human, who trampled down death by death, bestowing life. Bestowing life. Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again.

Amen.

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