

Luke 2:15-21
St Mark's – January 1, 2023
The Holy Name
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At the name of Jesus

When Luke tells the story of Jesus's birth he starts by explaining how it was that John the Baptist was born. Reading the first two chapters of Luke's gospel establishes the connection between John and Jesus.

Luke tells of an angel of the Lord appearing before Zechariah who was to become John's father. He tells of the angel appearing to Zechariah when he was alone serving in the temple.

He tells of Zechariah's surprise in learning that his wife, Elizabeth was to bear a son.

And then Luke's focus quickly turns to Mary. Gabriel's visit to Mary. Mary's surprise, fear, confusion, and acceptance of God's will. Gabriel tells Mary that she will name her son Jesus.

When Luke tells the story of the birth of our Lord it isn't all about Mary, but her acceptance of God's will is made clear.

Matthew puts Joseph at the forefront as he tells the story of Jesus' birth. When an angel of the Lord visited Joseph in a dream he learned of the impending birth of the Messiah and he learned that he was to name him Jesus.

These stories are wonderful. The connections between Mary and Elizabeth and Jesus and John are heart-warming.

The love that sustains Joseph as he begins his life with Mary in the most unusual and unexpected way is inspiring.

These examples of obedience to God are most certainly instructive, but today it is the name of Jesus that is our focus on this, the day our church refers to as The Feast of The Holy Name.

When Paul and Timothy wrote to the Christians in Philippi they told them,

“At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.”

We pray to God in his name. There is power in the name of Jesus.

There is a prayer practice I’ve borrowed from the Buddhists. It’s a simple prayer practice sometimes called a mantra prayer. My mantra or sacred utterance, is simply the name of Jesus. Jesus.

I close my eyes and silently, slowly repeat his name. “Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus.” When pray this prayer I feel the Holy Spirit in me gains strength and I’m filled with a sense of joyful peace that is difficult to describe.

It is the peace of God that passes all understanding.

May we all call on the name of Jesus. Be filled with his Glory, his saving grace. May we all be filled with his love.