

Christ, Name above All Names New Year's Eve December 31, 2005 Text: Phil. 2:9-11

Our text for this evening is Philip. 2:9-11 (ESV) “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” This is our text.

This year our theme for Advent and Christmas has been *Christ as God/man, Prophet, Priest and King*. This evening I want to pull together all the parts of this theme and summarize what we have been hearing.

Perhaps you have heard the question asked, “What’s in a name?” In our world today, too often there may not be much in a name. I do believe that parents take the time to think about names, especially when it comes to naming their own children. I do not know about you, but there are certain names which, at least in my own mind, bring about certain thoughts, feelings and attitudes. When we were naming our children I do know there were certain names, usually associated with certain people from our past or even present, that we did not want to use for our own children. “What’s in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” I believe that is how the cliché goes.

What’s in a name? One’s name can be descriptive, that is one’s name can describe what one is like as a person. One’s name can be descriptive as in the name of Jesus, when God says His name will be Immanuel which means “God with us.” Thus, when the prophet said that the one to be born would be named Immanuel, or “God with us,” we know that His name is describing what or who Jesus is. Jesus is God who is dwelling among us human beings here on this earth.

Not only can one’s name be descriptive, but One’s name can also be prescriptive, that is, not only can one’s name describe who he will or will not be, it can also prescribe, that is it can tell what One will do. Of course, the “One” of which we are speaking in particular, here is Jesus. The name “Jesus” means, the Lord saves. Here again, this name is prescriptive in that in the giving of this name it prescribed what Jesus would do, that is that Jesus, true God and true man, would, as He did, save His people.

Thus, even in the giving of the name Jesus we see that this One was, is and always will be a special One. Jesus is truly God as we have proven, especially as we proved last week, Saturday evening, on Christmas Eve. Jesus is true God. He was there at the creation of the world with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He has divine names, divine characteristics, He does divine works and He shows Himself to be truly God.

Jesus is also truly human. Again, last week, last Sunday on Christmas morning we proved that He was, and is, indeed truly a human man. Jesus shows He is truly human in that He has a human name, He lives according to human characteristics, and He does human works. As we confess in the Apostles’ creed, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and He was born of the human woman, the virgin Mary. Thus, we rightly recognize, believe, teach and confess that Jesus is a unique individual, One who is truly God and truly human.

Jesus is truly God and truly human and He is prophet, priest and king. Even the Magi, the Wise men from the east recognized Jesus as such. The gifts presented to the baby Jesus, when He was almost two years old, in the house where they were, were gifts of gold, appropriate for a king, incense, appropriate for a priest, and myrrh, an anointing oil, appropriate for a prophet. Jesus is a prophet. He came proclaiming the good news, even foretelling of His death and resurrection. He continues to come proclaiming the good news as His Word is read and heard and as His sacraments are rightly administered and offered.

Jesus is our king. Certainly we know and believe that He is in heaven from where He came

and in heaven, as King He is watching over us and ruling over us. Today He rules us, not directly as in a theocracy, but indirectly, especially through the fourth commandment, which is the giving of authority with its bases in the authority of the parents over their children.

Jesus is our priest. Certainly He is our priest in that He passively allowed Himself to be sacrificed, for us, once and for all. As our great High Priest He paid the great price for our sins. As our great High Priest in heaven He is no longer subject to sacrifices, however we do know that as our Priest and intercessor He continues to pray for us before His and our Father in heaven.

What does this mean? Simply stated, this means we can believe, confess and respond and we do believe, confess and respond. We can believe and we do believe that Jesus is true God and true man, that He is our prophet, priest and king. We believe because the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts. Namely, through the means of grace, the Word, that is the Bible, as we read and hear it, and through the Sacraments, Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper as well as through confession and absolution. Through these means the Holy Spirit gives, strengthens and keeps us in faith. Apart from these means and apart from the Holy Spirit is no faith.

We can and we do confess that Jesus is true God and true man, that He is prophet, priest and king. We confess this because the Holy Spirit works in us to confess. Again, in and of ourselves we can make no confession. "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him." It is the Holy Spirit who calls us to faith through the means of grace, as well as who enlightens or works to strengthen us in our faith through these same means of grace. Apart from these means and apart from the Holy Spirit there is no strengthening of faith.

We can and we do respond to all that our Lord does for us and gives to us, not because we are able to respond in and of ourselves, not in order to pay our Lord back for services rendered, not in order to earn any of the necessities of life as well as the wants of life for which He has so graciously poured out on us. We respond because the Holy Spirit works in us to respond. Here again, through the means of grace the Holy Spirit works in us to do the good works which God has prepared in advance for us to do.

Paul's words to the Christians at Philippi remind us of the importance, not only of faith, but in the object of faith and the correct object of faith. In other words, not only does it matter that we believe, but it also matters in whom we believe and that we are correct in knowing who it is in whom we believe. In other words, faith in a tree is not saving faith. Faith in a Jesus who is less than truly God and/or less than truly man is not saving faith either. Notice again Paul's words, "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philip. 2:9-11). Notice, in the end, when Jesus comes to judge the world, every knee, not just some, not just those who now believe, but every knee, believer and unbeliever alike will bow the knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Unfortunately, as we learn in John's revelation, those who had not believed while on this earth will then attempt to turn and blame Jesus for their own unbelief. And, again, unfortunately, this will then be too late for their eternal fate will have already been secured.

Thanks be to God that He has given us faith; that He has given us Himself as the object of our faith; that He strengthens and keeps us in faith. Thanks be to God that Jesus is truly God and truly man; that He is prophet priest and king; that He has done everything for us that needs to be done and gives everything to us, even when we have a tendency, because of our sinful human nature, to refuse and reject all that He has to give. Thanks be to God that He continues to pour out His blessings upon us. As we conclude this year we conclude being reminded of all He has done and for

which we give thanks and we pray and look forward to the coming year and the many, many, many good gifts and blessings with which He will bestow on us. To Him be the glory. For Jesus' sake. Amen.