

IN NOMINE JESU

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Hear again the Word of the Lord to His Church on this Eve of the Name of Jesus:

*Thus says Adonai YHWH Holy One of Israel, "in returning and rest all of you shall be saved, in quietness and in trust shall be your strength...."*¹

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Merry Christmas!

Having heard the readings for tonight, you might well ask, "What have they to do with the Name of Jesus?" (I did).

Their theme is watching and waiting, trust and patience, in the sure and certain knowledge that Jesus is our Savior from all things, spiritual yes, but ultimately, physical and mental. So, if the Church looks for a tie to the Name of Jesus in these readings, it is in found in the meaning of His Name, which displays to us the fount and source for repentance and rest, quietness and trust. That leads us back to our theme text:

*Thus says Adonai YHWH Holy One of Israel, "in returning and rest all of you shall be saved, in quietness and in trust shall be your strength...."*²

Those words contain a name and a title. Just four words are used in the ancient Biblical Hebrew. To us, today, there seems to be not much attached to names and titles. It has been asked, "what's in a name?"

To non-American Indians in our day, not much is understood to be meant by a personal name. We have reached an era where personal names are merely handles to attach to identify individual human beings. Little to no meaning in a name is connected

to person's birth circumstances, character, identity, family values, national heritage or genealogy. At best, names are chosen because they have been in the family awhile, or they mark some favorite of father or mother. Any meanings that names once held have fallen away in our familiar, yet emotionally, physically, and spiritually distant culture. We have become a society of first-named individuals who know little to nothing about one another.

Even those who have titles, through earned degrees or life callings, even those are being reduced to titles attached to first names. You know how this goes - Dr. Bob, the surgeon, Judge Judy, and so on. (Do you want your buddy, Dr. Bob, to open you up? Or would you rather have Dr. Robert Smith, professional in title and bearing, perform the art of surgery?) Titles attached to first names become less: they tend toward becoming devoid of respect, honor and dignity of their offices. No wonder that those who serve under such familiar titles and names tend to devalue both their offices and themselves.

Such personalization of office, title and name seems very egalitarian. But does this process somehow reduce the honor, respect, authority and responsibility of both the persons and offices where it is practiced? It seems to cause an increase in the office holders not holding their vocations as worthy of honor, respect, and dignity - thereby leading to selfishness, misuse of office and calling, and a general disregard for responsibility and authority by the persons in such callings.

¹ *Isaiah* 30:15a.

So, what should be in a name?

Biblically speaking, there is plenty in a name if the name has meaning attached to both an office and a person. That is why the four words in today's Old Testament reading, arranged as they are, are significant. They are the, in order, Title, Divine Name, and Description of Office. They transliterate like this: *Adonai YHWH Holy One of Israel*. In our translation, that would be The Lord, I AM, the Holy One of Israel.

This phrasing in this text is significant. The Title, Name and Office of the One God is used to call the people whom God had chosen to repentance. The words to follow would not be from the leader of a nation-state to a client state, they will be from God to His chosen people. They had given Him pause, for they had decided to follow their own course toward hoped for worldly salvation, and rejected their Father. So, the meanings held in the Title, Name, Office were to remind them Who wanted to save them, their lands, and their heritage, and Who alone had power to do so.

Following the introduction of Who is calling out to those who have wandered from them, God says through the prophet, *"in returning and rest all of you shall be saved, in quietness and in trust shall be your strength..."*³ He offers them the Good News, the Gospel, in His Name. The very next word after God's Office over His people is the word that may be, and often is, translated, "in repenting." God, having no doubt about the meaning of His Title, Name and Office, is calling His people to turn from their sins – in particular of trusting in any power or principality other than Him for salvation.

² *Isaiah* 30:15a.

This same call to repentance stands for His people today. The Name of God, the Lord of all Creation, the One Who causes all things to be, the Holy one of His people, rings out to call us, who would trust in worldly rulers – a new government at the end of the month – a strong military - a federal reserve policy – to keep us from sliding into the third great economic depression in just over a century – to repent, to return to our God. It is His love in Jesus Christ the Name above all Names, that has the power to save us from all the effects of sin in this fallen creation! Look to Jesus, whose Name is Salvation, whose eternal role is Savior, whose everlasting Office is the threefold Prophet, Priest and King. Do not be like the people of God of Old, who, upon hearing the words that repeatedly called them to repentance, turned to find their own saviors!

The Lord knows that temptation to look to others for earthly hope, peace and rest runs high and deep. That is why, to help us in our watching and waiting for His return, He continues to have His Word proclaimed, even as God cries out to you this evening, in promise and warning:

Thus says Adonai YHWH Holy One of Israel, "in returning and rest all of you shall be saved, in quietness and in trust shall be your strength...."⁴

"but all of you would not!"⁵

God recognizes the sin that still clings to His people. He calls out to them:

- First, they are called to repent; to turn from their sinful lusts for other saviors;

³ *Isaiah* 30:15a.

⁴ *Isaiah* 30:15a.

⁵ *Isaiah* 30:15b.

- Second, to lead them from repentance into the Lord's rest;
- Third, to grant quietness to them from the cessation of their anxieties, running about after false saviors, and earthly frenzy;
- Fourth, to trust in God alone for salvation from their enemies, which will bring them;
- Fifth, to their strength.

God's call is for faith in He who will deliver them from all their enemies and bring them salvation. These things are found in His Name alone.

Yet, the people, fully human, would not have any of this repentance.

Therefore rest and quietness would not come to them. And, trust would not be their strength. Rather trust in the wrong savior, human deliverers, would bring them war, weariness, and weakness. Hear their answers and God's response:

*But all of you said, "No! On horses we will speed!" Therefore all of you shall speed away. And, "Upon swift ones we will ride." Therefore shall be swift...
[A] thousand at the threat of one, at the threat of five all of you shall flee until you are left like a flagstaff on top of the mountain, like a sign on [a] hill.⁶*

Having turned against trust in the Lord, the people of God long ago placed their hope in swift steeds, which would actually carry them to swift destruction. Their hopes were dashed at the threat of just one of their enemies. A mere five foes would cause the complete desertion of their numbers. Their destruction would be so complete, that the only things remaining would be denuded signs of their former presence symbolized by the empty flagstaff, the signal with no one to respond.

The people who had once enjoyed God's favor, in the Land that He provided for them all their earthly needs, who were once pictured as a forest covering a mountain, God's chosen people would be reduced to a lone, naked pine tree standing over the ruins. Only one signal would remain on the hills for any to know of the greatness that once stood.

And, that lone tree became, one day, hundreds of years after the people's destruction on account of following other gods and other lords, a cross. Hanging naked upon it, stripped of any remnants of earthly means, hung the Savior of God's people. A lone signal, accompanied by death on each side, stands as a memory, and a promise. On that staff, with that signal, God now draws to Himself a Holy People. Here, denuded of earthly glory, is the emblem that you honor, the Name that you adore. For, in viewing this image of Christ on the cross, you find the power of God to turn from sin, to walk in newness of life, to be saved in His stillness, and to trust in God for deliverance this night and in the year to come.

Happy New Year! May God continue to bless you in the remainder of these twelve days of Christmas!

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Eve of the Name of Jesus (Lutheran Service Book one-year series)

Isaiah 30:15-17; Romans 8:31b-39; Luke 12:35-40

December 31, 2008

Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

SOLI DEO GLORIA

⁶ *Isaiah 30:16-17.*

