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Eve of the Circumcision and Naming of Jesus
31 December 2012
Grace Lutheran Church, Wichita
Luke 2:21

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

The kids have been out of school for over a week now and don't go back for another few days.
And the rest of you have been out so long it's time for a refresher.

As we wrap up the year's end and enter a new month and year in my Google calendar,
we're going to do things a bit differently.

We'll try to cover most areas of education:
from music to history, and math to science, and of course English grammar—
a personal favorite!

If you're lucky we'll learn some foreign languages as well,
Greek and Latin, and maybe even Hebrew.

And in the end, we'll show how Theology, which truly is the queen of the sciences,
permeates each and every one of these subjects.

Why do this?

First of all, because we can—
the Gospel reading is one measly verse!—
so we might as well unpack it for all it's worth!

And secondly, because it's true.
All of it.

All of learning, all education, all arts and sciences and literature and reality,
is run through and through with God for you.

So theology isn't just for the experts, it's for all of creation to sing the praises of God the creator!

So let's start with music.

Do – Re – Me – Fa – So – La – Ti – Do

Add to that some math:

How many notes were just sung?

From Do to Do there are 8 notes.

This is what musicians call an *octave*,
which is from the Latin: *octava*, meaning “eighth”.

In math we learn that an octagon has 8-sides.

And as kids study the animals they learn that an octopus has 8 feet, or legs.

Now, the octave, the 8 notes from *Do* to *Do* includes the same note twice,
but on, you might say, another level—kicked up a notch, up an *octave*.

And that's where the theology gets rich!

You see, God created the heavens and the earth in 6 days:
 Sunday, Monday, Tuesday...and so forth.

Then, on the 7th day, *Saturday*, God rested from all that He had made.

Now, in the spirit of octaves, what number is the next day?
 What is Sunday?

In a sense it's another first day—the counting starts over.
 But then again, you know it's not the same day as last week.

Last week we gathered here in darkness, with candles,
 and horrible blips of the organ and microphone (let's not repeat that again!).
 Last week we sang *Silent Night* and remembered that Holy birth of Christ in Bethlehem,
 with shepherds and angels, and inn keepers and animals.

But this week He's 8 days old.
 No *Silent Night*, no *Joy to the World*.
 No inn keepers, shepherds, or angels.
 Just the baby the circumcision and the name.

It's a different week, a new first day, a new creation, a new beginning—
 it's the 8th day!

Liturgically, that's how the church year runs, from feast to feast,
 Sunday to Sunday,
 8th day to 8th day –
 always in the new creation, the new life, the new first day.

And now to our text—

**“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.”** (Lk 2:21)

Jesus, who's 8 days old, does what all 8-day-old boy children do:
 He gets circumcised.

He enters the sign of the covenant.
 He becomes one with Israel.

This is the first cutting of Jesus' flesh,
 the first blood that flows from His body in fulfillment of the law—
 and it all happens on the 8th day.

But more than that, this 8th day also comes with a gift—a name.

Luke has been very careful in his birth story.
 In that long Christmas reading we hear every year from Luke 2,
 you probably never noticed that Luke never says the name of Jesus.

He waits all the way until now—the 8th day—verse 21.

Why?
 Because the name comes with circumcision.

In Israel, there was none of this naming a child before the 8th day.
 No hospital needed the name for an anklet, or social security cards, or anything like that.

And with the name came the identity.

In the OT, the name of God meant the presence of God.
 Wherever the name was, there was God.

And to call on the name of the Lord was to enter His presence.
 That's why we always begin our service here
In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In Hebrew, God's name was *I AM WHO I AM*—
 or *Yahweh* for short.

Whenever you're reading along in your bibles at home,
 and in the OT you come across "LORD" in all caps,
 that's Yahweh in Hebrew—the personal name of God.

So, on this 8th day, when the Christ child is circumcised, He's also named: *Jesus*.

In Hebrew it's actually *Yeshua*—what we might call, "Joshua."
Yasha' is the Hebrew verb "to save";
 and "*ah*" is short for "*Yaheweh*"—
 so Jesus means, "Yahweh saves."

Matthew tells us this in his Gospel:
**"She will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus,
 for He will save His people from their sins."** (Mt 1:21)
 (There's your Hebrew lesson, by the way).

So now we have the Name of God, the Circumcision, and the 8th Day.

So what's the point?
 The point is that this Jesus,
 who is Yahweh Himself, God in the flesh,
 does everything *for you*.

He had no need to take on flesh, but He did it *for you*.
 He had no need to be circumcised, He's already the Son of God,
 but He entered this covenant of blood *for you*.
 He had no need for an 8th day, a new creation,
 but here He is recreating life itself *for you!*

This Jesus didn't need to shed any blood—
 either here as an infant, or there on the cross—
 but He did; and He did it *for you*.

And because of that cross, because of that blood,
 our Lord Jesus has given you a new 8th day, a new name, a new life.

So your 8th day is found in your baptism.

Paul says,

**“In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands,
 by putting off the body of the flesh,
 by the circumcision of Christ,
 having been buried with Him in baptism,
 in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the powerful
 working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”** (Col 2:11-12)

Your circumcision, the cutting away of your sin-laden heart,
 was performed without a scalpel or the loss of blood—
 but by the word;
 it was done with the water of Holy Baptism.

There you joined Noah and his family (*8 souls in all*),
 in the new creation, the new first day, the octave of feasts and celebrations—
 there you entered Christ, and His resurrection.

And in case you're wondering, the resurrection happened on a Sunday, the 8th day.
 Remember: Good Friday (6), Holy Saturday (7), Easter Sunday (8!).

So as one year on the calendar comes to an end,
 just remember that on the Church's calendar there is no end.

It's eternal life from one feast to the next, always an *octave*,
 from *Do* to *Do*, 8th day to 8th day, Sunday to Sunday, resurrection to resurrection—
 all the way from Earth below to Heaven above.

And all of this comes because this infant child is *Jesus*—
 God who sheds His blood for us, puts His name on us, and clothes us with Himself,
 now saves us from our sin.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit