
Come Adore Him

A sermon by Canon Carolynne Williams
The Feast of the Holy Name – Year A

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:11

Welcome to the feast day of Jesus, the Christ.

Names are life giving. Think about your names: first name, middle name. Some of us have two or more given names. Think about those names given to you at birth and the names spoken when you were baptized into the church and marked as Christ own forever. Your story in which your name givers have told you about was to ensure that the “*naming of you*” ensured an identity you would carry for the rest of your life. These names you were given carries so much. Your name carries promise, your name carries anticipation, your name carries joy, much love and depth, your name carries honor, scholastic possibilities, your name carries assumptions, by some, about you. And about me.

Some names are given to reduce greatly the possibility of you being discriminated against or eliminate the possibility of a person being identified definitely as a male or female, even before you arrive. Some names carry heavy responsibility and expectations simply because of the name you have been given.

There are celebrity names, there are aliases and names that are no longer used once we become of a certain age. Many have legally changed their given name for varied and sundry reasons. There are a plethora of reasons and an overabundance of information about names.

Regardless of our given names, the name carries our story in one form or another.

My name implies and carries *delight* by those who know and love me: there is a world of possibilities to consider and explore when it comes to your name and mine. A name can also offer mystery and intrigue.

When it comes to your name and mine, how are we identified?

How are you labeled? Is your name a good label to wear? Does your name carry family ancestry in its meaning and if so, how do you feel about that as a descendent?

My dear mother’s given name was beautiful, however her middle name raised eyebrows. It was Parupa... Can you imagine having to go through life explaining such a name.

Her four siblings called her *Pearl*. As I recall her story says, by the time she reached adulthood, one could not find Parupa on any document that was legal.

Names stir feelings. Think about that for a second or two. Names stir feelings within us. If not feelings, an action or reaction is experienced when we hear certain names.

For example the name of “Jesus, the Christ” stirs people. The name calls for action in some manner. The Christmas stories as retold today usually involve there being no room – no room in the inn.

The preparation for God's coming into the world in Christ may not call the powers of today "imperial," but the powers of government and other forces are still very much a part of living and life on this day.

Even those same forces are stimulating and sharp, life draining in other cases, the reality of the name of the savior, whose presence is also called "the light of the world," "the worthy one," "the Prince of Peace," "the shepherd," "the Word," "The risen one," "God is with us," "Emmanuel," to list a few of the given names... cause as much action today as was erupting over two thousand years ago.

There is something about the name which stirs us to either seek what the name represents or recoil if we discover or find that name on our own lips.

We are told that with the coming of the Christ child, one cannot be separated from the other. That is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So on this day we celebrate the name of the Prince of Peace. Jesus the Christ who was born in a cave or in a manger and came to bring the good news of Peace on Earth and good will toward all people who can and will hear.

The shepherds were watching over their flocks by night. They had witnessed Jesus' birth, just as women first witnessed his resurrection; in both cases, God had chosen those marginalized from the centers of power.

Our gospel story from Luke retells the story of Jesus being "genuinely and rightly holy to the Lord." From birth "Jesus is one of the poor." We have from time to time seen his identification with Mary's song as being poor and this all plays out eventually leading to the Temple. The place where he is worshipped and glorified this man called Jesus, wonderful counselor, Prince of Peace or will we yet again, wonder as we wander through this new year.

We say to others and we wish for others a happy new year. Will this year be the same as last? Will we seek the face of God in others? Will we come to a place of respite and peace where something or someone in our community be allowed by us to court a new possibility in learning to grow and forgive or will we continue in the direction in which we have been going?

The place to meet the essence of God is within and through others.

If our way has not been working so well for us, perhaps we can listen to a younger voice who is new in learning about the love of God in a new way and consider what is being offered to you and to me.

The presence of the Holy one is all around us and the newness of God's light is shining for all to see. "Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus the Christ is Lord."

Happy new year. Be blessed. The incarnate one loves you and me and calls us by our name. Hopefully, we will still continue to trust in God's calling and will hear the drawing of us to Godself. Does God, the son know us and does God call us by name? God has called us one by one

And when we hear our sweetest name, we will respond with an action which is unmistakable.

On this feast day of "The Holy Name," Jesus the Christ, how can we look for God's power in the midst of our daily lives? The important message of Christmas is that is that even when things do not go as planned, God arrives.

If the Son of God can arrive in such circumstances as can truth. So can joy. Be at peace, the *Holy name of Christ* is among us and with us, always. Happy New Year as we begin yet again.