

Circumcision and Name of Jesus – Vicar Anderson sermon

St. Luke 2:21 “The Lawgiver Fulfilled the Law.”

December 31, 2022/January 1, 2023 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Heavenly Father, we see the law that has been laid out before us and we cannot follow it. Your law is holy and just and we stand under it. We thank you that in your great mercy your Son the lawgiver, came into the world to live out the law for us. You didn't leave us, you wanted to save us. We ask that you continue to look on us with mercy when we repent of our sins. We pray in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, whose blood cleanses us from our sins. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is taken from the 2nd chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. We read as follows in Jesus' name:

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.

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, who when the fulness of time had come, He came down from heaven, was born of flesh and under the law for you, dear fellow redeemed:

When I was studying to go into law enforcement, I went on some ride-along's with my local police department. On those ride-along's, I was able to hear the question asked from an officer's point of view, "do you know the reason why I pulled you over?" This is the question that no one wants to hear because when you hear this question, it means that you have probably done something wrong. And, usually you know you did something wrong. Depending how serious the crime is, someone could find themselves in court. They might get their time reduced, or they might hear that judge bring the gavel down and say guilty. Laws keep us safe from danger. We know that these laws keep us safe yet we usually don't like to follow them. We also see God's laws and find ourselves relaxed in following those too. In fact, we have broken every one of them. What will He do to us? Will the perfect judge condemn us? God shows how much he cares about us with the text for today. He knows that we can't fulfill the Law, so the lawgiver himself has come to fulfill it!

Mary and Joseph waste no time in following the commands of God. The law states that “*on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised*” (Leviticus 12:3). We see the care that Mary and Joseph had for the Word of God. They were devout believers in His promises. They followed what the law said concerning their new born son. However, this law is more than a Law handed down by Moses. Circumcision started long before this in the command that God gave Abraham in Genesis 17. [God] said to Abraham, “*this is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised...Any uncircumcised male who is not*

circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant (10-12, 14.)"

What is so special about this covenant? This is God giving Abraham a promise and setting Abraham and his descendants apart from the nations around them. This promise is that God would be with him. Abraham would be the father of many nations. His name would be great! There was also the promise of the Savior that would come through him. God told him when he called him that, *"in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Gen 12: 3). Now the Savior had come from the line of Abraham. To keep the promise given to Abraham, Jesus is circumcised, made a member of the people of the covenant, placed under the law. Jesus has no need to obey the law for himself as He is God. The law was given to the people. God told them that they are to keep these laws. When they keep the law they are showing that they trust God. It also shows how they are separate from the heathen nations. The heathen nations did despicable things. If the people of the covenant, God's chosen people sinned, then they had to repent.

Looking in the Old Testament, it is apparent that many of the Israelites did not follow God's law. They simply defied them. They were God's chosen people. Yet they were often at war with God and his laws that He had given them. They were punished for their sins and when they repented, God would come to them as a loving Father to his children. As the Jews attempted and failed often to obey God's law, they had to bring sacrifices to God. They needed many, many animals to shed their blood. This was done to look ahead to the coming one. But often the Israelites would only go through the motions with these sacrifices and were not actually sorry for their sins. Or they thought that the sacrifice was what did the job. The Israelites deserved the punishment that was given them because of the law that they had broken.

Like the Israelites of old, we see God's law and we fail to follow them. We work very hard at it, but it never comes to fruition even if we are trying our best. We also can find ourselves going through the motions. We might not think about the prayers that we are saying. Some of the prayers that we say we might not even mean them. If we fail to repent of our sins, then our confession is meaningless. It can be easy to do that if we believe that "God will just forgive me anyway, he knows that I'm trying. He knows that I'm not as bad as other people." If we don't repent of sins and are sorry for them, we can go to communion and take it to our harm. This is the danger of getting set in the motions because then why should we be at church at all. This is the danger of being stuck in our sins.

This time of year is a great example of this taking place. Now is the time that people are going to start their new year's resolutions. We will start them with great anticipation and the hope that they will stay with it. Unfortunately, we are very quick to lose interest in something that could help us. We make the promise and then we break it. We treat our sins the same. We will promise God that we will try our best to keep his law. We make a promise and then we don't keep it. We lose interest and we keep doing them. We need someone to fulfill the law for us.

Jesus follows the commands of God not for himself, but for sinners. This event is the first time in Jesus early life that he sheds his blood. At eight days old Jesus had already shed blood for you. We know this shedding of blood would have to be more. This is the start. Jesus following the law at eight days old makes him obligated to keep the law. From His infancy to adulthood, He fulfilled the law completely for you. He then shed his blood and gave his life for you on the

cross. He didn't have to do it. He was perfect in every way. But He wanted to do it for you. Only the lawgiver, God in the flesh, could come down and keep the law for you and take away your sins. We see that in our text today. Jesus as a baby, being put under the law.

The name He was given also described His purpose. He is given a name of utmost importance. A name whose definition is the sole reason that he came down from heaven, for our salvation. Mary and Joseph were both told that they would name this child Jesus because *"He will save his people from their sins"* (Matthew 1:21). Jesus fulfilled the law to redeem all people. He took on the pain, woe, and suffering for all people of all time. He did not live this life for himself, he lived it for us.

Paul's letter to the Galatians shows us how important it is that Jesus went under the law for us. Paul writes, *"But when the fullness of time had come God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoptions as sons"* (Galatians 4:4-5). Because of what Jesus has done, we can go to God as children go to their dear Father. God sees that the law has been completed by His son Jesus Christ. He lived out His life as an act of obedience. This act of circumcision obeyed the Old Testament law for baby boys. This was only the beginning. Jesus continued to obey the Old Testament law up to his death on the cross.

Jesus' circumcision fulfilled the promise that was given to Abraham and his descendants. With Jesus being circumcised, being brought into the Abrahamic covenant, all families of the earth have been blessed. Now that Jesus has fulfilled the law for us, what about circumcision? Is it needed? We see the battles that Paul fought in the New Testament that this is not the case. Circumcision does not bind us to the promise, but Jesus instituted something else that does. Paul explains that we have been circumcised in another way.

"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" (Colossians 2:11-12). Your baptism connects you to what Christ has done. In your baptism you are buried with Christ and you now walk in newness of life. Your Savior, God in the flesh, has obeyed the law for you. He began his journey as a baby, going to the cross, completing it.

No one can imagine a lawgiver being the one who has to fulfill his own law. Now we see Jesus our Savior. He was given a name that was known from eternity. He was put under the law for us. We don't have to despair when we fall short of God's law. He sent his only Son to obey his law willingly for us and Jesus shed his blood willingly. He is our Savior. His name tells us so. His obedience shows us so. Our sins have been washed away. At eight days old we see how much Jesus loved us. He did this for us in our place. We can begin the new year with no worries since the law has been fulfilled! Amen.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

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