Our text for meditation this evening is the Epistle lesson as read earlier and recorded by Paul to the church in Galatia.

**Put On Christ!**

**Galatians 3:23-29**

Circumcision & Name of Jesus

12.31.2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Some people think it strange that we celebrate the Circumcision and Name of Jesus. It is probably strange because we are not steeped in the Old Testament and the commands God gave in regard to holiness. One of those, was that all male children were to be circumcised the 8th day after they were born. This became a daily visible sign to them of God’s promise to send a Savior.

As you know from the angel’s visit to Joseph, Jesus, means Savior. If we were to be more precise about the name Jesus, it more accurately means “one who makes holy.” His circumcision is the first time He sheds His blood in fulfilment of this covenantal promise to “save His people from their sins,” or to make people holy.

So, we are gathered in God's house on another New Year's Eve. Many people like to make New Year’s resolutions, why is that? Most often because they think there is something in their life that they need to fix.

The resolutions I've heard are things like: I resolve to lose thirty pounds! I resolve to quit smoking. I'm going to start jogging! I'm going to read my Bible more. I am going to be a better spouse. I am to… whatever behavior they want to change.

If we need to fix something in our life, then it means “that something” in our life is wrong? To think a behavior is wrong is close to thinking something is sinful.

Why are we here tonight? We want one last opportunity to close out this year in God's house. We want to jump start the new year receiving God's gifts, hearing sins forgiven, and stepping into the new year with God lifting us up.

Some people like to examine this past year closely. When I do that, I find numerous things in my life – as I'm sure that you can find in your life – that were sinful. Where have I failed as a pastor; a husband; a father; a neighbor?

And as we get older, and as the years take their toll, we wonder what the future may hold. We know what finally is coming for our bodies, the aches and pains sometimes terrify us as they are reminders of the consequences of our sinfulness.

I love this service every year, it has incredibly beautiful scripture lessons. First, the Lord gives the Aaronic benediction, and what it means for us. God’s servants are commanded to put God’s name on us, and in doing so God blesses us.

Our gospel lesson is short, sweet, and to the point. Jesus is circumcised and given the name, Jesus. He is going to save His people. He will make them holy.

Our epistle lesson kind of ties the two together. God's name is put on you how? In the waters of baptism. You are baptized into Christ! It means you put on Christ! You become a new you – if I can say it that way. You are clothed with Christ. To put on Christ is to be robed with His holiness and righteousness.

You want an incredible New Year's resolution? Take time each day to realize that you are made new, having put on Christ you live a new life – the life Christ lives in you.

In 1845, the first president of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, C. F. W. Walther, preached a sermon on New Year's Day where he said the following:

*Should the Christian stand all day long at the grave of all joys which he enjoyed in past years? Through holy baptism a great stream of joy has been conducted in his heart, which does not drain away, but streams forward with his life until it's waves carry him into the sea of blessed eternity. Should the Christian be reminded all day long that the flowers of his youth fall more and more? He stands planted by God in the water of baptism as a palm tree which becomes greener and greener and whose leaves never wither. Yes, his baptism makes death for him like a short winter's nap out of which an eternal spring – and eternal youth – follows.*

*For baptism is a bath that washed me not only once when I received it – washed me pure with Christ's blood – but it continually washes me clean even daily for as long as I hold it in faith. For just as that same water of the flood drowned the sinners, but Noah with his relatives were brought to salvation and carried to Mount Ararat, so also did the water of my baptism drown my sins, but my soul was brought to the eternal mountain of divine grace. And just as once those same waves of the Red Sea, which swallowed up Pharaoh and his army, were a protective wall for Israel, so also my baptismal water swallowed up all my damnation and is for me a sure wall before God's wrath and punishment. . . .*

*Now then, all of you who believe in God's word, let your watchword for entering the new year be this: “I am baptized!” Although the world may laugh at this comfort, the enthusiasts vex its confidence... nevertheless, abandon any other dearly held pledges and speak only throughout the entire year to come, in all terrors of conscience and necessity through sin and death: “I am baptized! I am baptized! Hallelujah!” And you shall prevail! In every time of need, you will find comfort in your Baptism; on account of it Satan will flee from your faith and confession; and in death you will see heaven opened and will finally come into the joy of your Lord to celebrate a great year of jubilee, a year of praise, with all the angels forever and ever. Amen!*

Dearly beloved God this is what it means to put on Christ!

How do you silence Satan? That great hymn, A Mighty Fortress, has that line stating one little word can fell him – that one word is Christ! In baptism you have put on Christ.

Your baptism is not a one time thing in your past, it is your daily life.

I***AM*** baptized!

Every time we gather, our service begins with the words: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. You are again remembering your baptism, you put on Christ.

Our service closes with the words of our Old Testament text: The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

God puts his name upon you! ***HE*** puts Christ upon you! God clothes you with Jesus. You are made holy! I can think of no better way to end 2021 and enter 2022 then in God's perfect holiness and peace. Again you have put on Christ! Amen.