

Jesus our LORD still saves

At a time when all the lights are up, Christmas Carols are sung all over the land, small and big people are eagerly waiting to open their many presents, some mums are stressed just at the idea of cooking Christmas dinner for 15 people, I think it's good to stop for a moment and ask ourselves if we haven't forgotten or even put aside the most important element of it all!

Although they don't know the exact time of his birth, Christians all over the world will take this opportunity to celebrate and rejoice over the birth of Jesus. This morning, I am not interested in the baby lying in the manger but rather in his name.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet at one point said "What's in a name? That which we call a rose By any other name would smell as sweet." Parents sometimes give their children names which turn out to be a burden to carry for the poor child because they don't actually know the meaning of that particular name. In the Bible, names are of great importance because they have a history and tell you considerably about that name. Two weeks ago, we heard about a prophecy in Isaiah 9 and the fact that the child to be born would be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. All these names tell us a lot about Him but today I want to go back to his birth certificate where it says Jesus and the meaning of such a name. The angel told Joseph in **Matthew 1:21** "She [Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Jehovah is the Saviour is the name Joseph was to give the son to be born. Right there, even before his birth, Jesus' mission on earth is outlined before men. His birth is important of course, but we soon realise that it is what he did personally with his life that matters to mankind.

"His people" are the lost sheep of Israel in the first place for they were the only people he had at the time. But on breaking down the wall of partition between God and men like you and me, the Gentiles were added unto the flock, and that's what John talks about in **Revelation 7:9-10** "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." He came to take us out of the mess we were in and that mess is sin and its many consequences.

He came to save from the guilt of sin by shedding his blood on the cross of Calvary so that we could be washed clean. He saves from the power of sin by giving the gift of the Holy Spirit, who regenerates, comforts, and strengthens, and ultimately he saves from the punishment of sin by giving us resurrection from the dead, and access into the home of glory because as he said in **John 14:2-3** « In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am".

During the Christmas season I can't help but think that we have drifted from worshipping the One who was humbly born to die that sinners like you and me might live! We are so deeply involved into the culture around us that we forget the words of **Titus 2:14** which remind us that "[He] gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good".

Here is the challenge for us who have tasted and seen that the Lord is good. This Christmas, are you so absorbed in your preparations that you have forgotten about God's grace and mercy towards you, once a lost sinner walking in darkness. Are you so absorbed in your last minute shopping that you haven't taken the time to make yourself available so that the Lord will use you effectively where He places you. Am I so absorbed in the tinsels and wrapping paper that I haven't been able to proclaim like Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit did in **Acts 4:12** that "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Jesus our Lord still saves today, and he wants His people to be living testimonies of that truth not just this Christmas but throughout the years until he comes to take us home. At a time when millions are crumbling under the burden of debt, depression, loneliness and lack of direction and meaning in life, are we aware of the fact that just as our Master had a clear purpose even before he was born, His body, the Church has a clear purpose and mandate today? We are not equipped to save, only Jesus can but we ought nonetheless to point and direct people to Him, the Lamb that was slain and can free people from the slavery of sin. As we partake more and more of Christ, he will enable us to push the darkness so that His kingdom dwells in people's lives and His will is done on earth as it is in Heaven. Amen