

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

While the world is looking ahead to a supposedly blank slate of a new year of possibilities and hopes, the Church is still dwelling on the past, our celebration of Christmas... & we still have 4 more days!

And today, the 8th day, is a special celebration, not because it is January 1,

but because, in fulfillment of God's law, Jesus spilt His first atoning blood as He was circumcised on the 8th day after birth and was given His very descriptive name, Jesus.

Our text from St. John will speak to Jesus' fullness, His righteousness according to God's Law, and what His perfection means for us, who, this past year have been less than perfect.

As follows in Jesus' name:

For from [Jesus'] fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known. ^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

It is a rather uncomfortable thing to think about Jesus' circumcision as an 8 day-old boy.

Leave it to the physician, St. Luke, to be the one to record this fact.

Generally speaking, circumcision was looked down upon by the Greeks and Romans

as a mutilation of one's flesh. St. Luke's original readers might have been taken aback.

So he must have had a good reason to include it.

But for the Jews, the people of Israel, this was part of the Law given through Moses.

It was even part of God's covenant with Abraham and his offspring 100s of years before Moses.

Through circumcision, God promised them that He would be their God, and they His people.

Does this sound familiar to you?

And so it is recorded of Jesus that He, through the faithful care of Mary and Joseph, was brought under the full force of the Lord's covenant with His people, Israel.

St. Paul later clarifies the force of this in his letter to the Galatian Christians.

There were people among them who were saying that one must be circumcised to be saved.

To this St. Paul said, **I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision**

that he is obligated to keep the whole law. ^{Galatians 5:3}

That is exactly what happened to Jesus at His circumcision;

He became obligated to keep the whole Law, not just the moral law that all people are bound to, like, **"You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal."** ^{Exodus 20}

but also **the law given through Moses**, especially the ceremonial law.

Here we see what St. Paul had written earlier, that **when the fullness of time had come,**

God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law... ^{Galatians 4:4}

After His circumcision, He had no other option but to fulfill **the whole law given through Moses**

or be subject to the same punishment of spiritual, physical, and eternal death that we are.

Imagine that: eternal God the Son, now obligated to obey His own law under threat of punishment.

But He was up to the task, not because He is God and didn't feel the real pull of temptations,

He certainly did feel our pains and temptations.

Remember that He is also true man, having the same human frailty that we have.

He hungered, thirsted, got tired, mourned, felt alone and abandoned, and suffered.

Hebrews even tells us that **He... suffered when tempted.**

In fact, His suffering began in earnest on the eighth day at His circumcision.

There He lay, fully exposed as the knife cut into His flesh, a portent of His future sacrificial death.

You can bet that there was certainly some crying He made then.

But even this crying was on account of pain, not anger or hatred of those who inflicted it.

And doesn't this little Babe so few days old put us to shame.

He was cut into and had nothing but trust in God's goodness.

We get a paper cut or accidentally cut ourselves with a knife and an expletive or even a curse crosses our lips, directly from our heart.

Perhaps you have even intentionally hurt yourself, in despair or seeking sympathy from others or just wanting to feel something, even if it is only pain.

But this is a breaking of the Lord's command not to kill or do bodily harm to your neighbor or self.

Now these are just examples of hurting ourselves, but what happens when we are injured by others?

When a sibling or a parent/child, co-worker hurts you, whether accidentally or intentionally, or whether physically or verbally? Revenge sounds sweet; an eye for an eye, a tooth for tooth.

You want them to suffer the same, or even more than you have suffered on account of them.

You hold on to grudges and become embittered against them as they offend over and over again.

All the while, failing to love as you have been loved, failing to forgive as you have been forgiven, and failing to trust that the Lord will ultimately see justice done in His good and gracious time.

I suppose that considering these things, it would be immediately convenient to look to the new year.

It seems a blank slate, opportunity to forget the past and look to the hope of doing better.

Except that you have lived in it now for 10 1/2 hours and how have you done?

Have you already been angered and bitten back?

Already desired hurt or harm, whether physically or emotionally?

Already neglected to forgive and take it to the Lord?

Is this year, much different from last year?

The same sinful you came into the new year.

...

But while we must examine our past and consider it in light of God's perfect law,

You are not here to dwell on your own past, but on the past work of Jesus to save you, beginning with His circumcision AND naming.

As the 1st Petition of the Lord's Prayer and the 2nd Commandment make clear,

God's name is to be hallowed and not taken or used in vain.

This includes the precious name of Jesus, the name given to the Word-made-flesh before His conception.

The angel, Gabriel, made it clear to both Mary and Joseph that Jesus was to be this child's name,

"for He will save His people from their sins." Matthew 1:21

Like with all the others that the Lord gave names to, His name tells us who He is,

as Jesus means, "Yahweh saves," that is exactly who Jesus is, Yahweh come to save His people.

And, as St. Peter confessed, "there is salvation in no one else,

for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

So we begin this new year dwelling on this name and the salvation that Yahweh came/comes to give.

It was certainly no easy task.

At every turn, every minute, every day, every month, and year,

being under the law Jesus had to maintain a perfect heart, a perfect mouth, and perfect actions.

Not only could there be no false or unkind words or deeds expressed,

but neither could there be any idle, evil, lustful or vain thoughts.

And this we hear of Jesus: **When He was reviled, He did not revile in return;**

when He suffered, He did not threaten,

but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly. ^{1 Peter 2:23}

And all this was not done for Himself, in order to build up His own ego or fame,

but as St. Paul says, He was **born under the law to redeem those who were under the law,**

so that we might receive adoption as sons. ^{Galatians 4:4-5}

He lovingly endured His circumcision, His suffering under Pontius Pilate and death

to redeem and save you; to spend His precious blood and life as the price for your disobedience.

But what is more, He endured all this in order to fulfill the Law in your place.

He had given Himself fully to His heavenly Father so that you may obtain His fullness,

His perfection, His righteousness and have a clean conscience before God.

While the Lord in His grace gave the Law through Moses so that you might know your sins

and recognize your need for Jesus, for Yahweh to save you,

upon this grace, He added another grace, the grace and truth that came through Jesus Christ,

the full and free forgiveness of your sins and the imputation, the imparting, of His perfection.

Because Jesus endured circumcision under the Mosaic Law for us,

we are no longer obligated to perform this rite and ritual, this OT Sacrament.

Instead, the Lord has chosen, in His grace, to come to us by a different means today.

Today, He brings us in through Holy Baptism.

St. Paul again shows us the connection between the OT circumcision and NT Holy Baptism:

In Him [that is Jesus] 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}

In your Baptism then, you were received into Christ.

You became united to Him, washed clean of your sins and clothed in His righteousness.

Through Baptism, you were made part of God's family, a child & heir, and given His hallowed name.

And with such a name, and in and by His grace, we look forward to the new year,

not as a blank slate, but as a year already full of His grace and mercy...

full of Jesus and full of your salvation.

Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. ^{Luke 2:14}

Soli Deo Gloria