Servant, Savior, Sovereign
Names of Jesus

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Throughout the Season of Advent, and now into the Christmastide, we have been savoring the glorious names of Jesus. There is Jesus as the Son of David, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Aslan in the Chronicles of Narnia!). There is Jesus as the Son of Man, the Human One, Immanuel, our Day Spring and Bright Morning Star. I love these names! There is Jesus as the Son of Mary, and Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (from Isaiah’s prophecy); and Jesus, the Son of God, Lamb of God, the Alpha and Omega. This morning we come to 3 more magnificent names of Jesus! Servant, Savior, Sovereign One.

One of the earliest statements of our Christian faith is our Scripture for today. Paul writes these words from a Roman jail not even 30 years after Jesus’s death. This creedal statement was probably first sung by the first worshipping Christians only 10-15 years after Jesus’ death! Imagine this, Jesus-followers have been singing and proclaiming this statement for almost 2,000 years!

Hear God’s Word from Philippians 2:5-11, the New Century Version:

5 In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus. 6 Christ himself was like God in everything. But he did not think that being equal with God was something to be used for his own benefit. 7 But Christ Jesus gave up his place with God and made himself nothing. He was born as a man and became like a servant. [THERE’S JESUS THE SERVANT] 8 And when he was living as a man, he humbled himself and was fully obedient to God, even when that caused his death—death on a cross. [THERE’S JESUS THE SAVIOR] 9 So God raised him to the highest place. God made his name greater than every other name 10 so that every knee will bow to the name of Jesus—everyone in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. [THERE’S JESUS AS SOVEREIGN] 11 And everyone will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and bring glory to God the Father.
The three names of Jesus. Jesus the Servant is our first name. When I was preparing for this Sunday-after-Christmas sermon, for fun I did a word search on the name “Jesus.” Among lots of other things, I was taken to a website for the “Kabalarian Philosophy.” It was a website which purportedly answers the all-important question, “What’s in a name?” Their by-line is “Since 1930 proving that your name shapes your life.” So you just have to type in your name and this “philosophy” analyzes your name and then provides you with supposedly keen insights about your personality, your temperament, and it tells you about your flaws and your strengths—ALL from looking at what’s in your name!

Here is the analysis I got back after I typed in the name of “Jesus”: “Your name of Jesus has given you the ability to handle people. You are pleasant and diplomatic, and seem to sense how others feel. For this reason, [JESUS] you could do well in public relations work. You appreciate the finer things of life, and like to have a good standard of living. You feel that it is important to convey the impression that you are financially secure, and you place importance on your mode of dress, and on appearances generally. While you [JESUS] could do well in certain positions of authority, you have a certain lack of initiative and a tendency to procrastinate. Difficulty in coming to important decisions and a degree of passivity do not allow you the concentration and application required to attain positions of responsibility. [JESUS] You prefer to choose the easiest way to accomplish your goals, and would probably readily admit that you dislike hard work.”

That last line caught me. Jesus, not a hard worker? Really? Jesus, God Himself, chose the hardest, most humble work of all. God, the Creator of the Universe, emptied Himself completely and came down here to earth! God chose to take on skin, and blood, and bones. Jesus the Servant of All? He reached out to us humans; He hung around with us—laughter, tears, high-fives, hugs. He took care of us, and our messed-up, messy lives. Jesus not a hard worker? The Servant Jesus, He wraps a cloth around
His waist; Jesus takes a bowl of water and He washes the stinking, smelly feet of His friends—what a servant boy would do. The Servant Jesus, He allows Himself to be ridiculed and beaten-up, and then He carries a Cross up and up and up a hill, to a place where He ends up dying on the Cross that He’s carried. Jesus, not a hard worker? For us? Come on!

There are people so inspired by this Jesus that they do these really beautiful, ordinary Jesus-Servant kinds of things! Servant Francis blessing a disfigured man, 60-year-old Italian mechanic, Oreste Tomani; shot in the face when he was 30. And in Ohio, for the Division III state title, in the 3200 meter run, with 20 meters to go, Arden McMath, a sophomore from Arlington High School, collapsed in front of Meghan Vogel, a junior from West Liberty High. Instead of running right past her, Meghan helped Arden to her feet and carried her across the finish line. Meghan allowed herself to be beat by Arden by carrying her ahead of herself. "Any girl on the track would have done the same for me on any given day," Meghan Vogel said later. A Jesus-servant, big time! And lots more Jesus-servants out there!

They/we are servants on Jesus’ behalf, because Jesus was so fully and completely a Servant on our behalf. It’s why He came …Christ is Come.

The three names of Jesus: Jesus the Servant, and now, second, Jesus the Savior. 7 But he gave up his place with God and made himself nothing. He was born as a man and became like a servant. [THERE’S JESUS THE SERVANT] 8 And when he was living as a man, he humbled himself and was fully obedient to God, even when that caused his death—death on a cross. [THERE’S JESUS THE SAVIOR]

In her book entitled Kneeling in Bethlehem, Ann Weems writes a poem entitled The Cross in The Manger. The opening line is, “If there is no cross in the manger, there is no Christmas. If the Babe doesn’t become the Adult, there is no Bethlehem Star.” And the closing line of the poem, “If we cannot go now
even unto Golgotha (up and up and up that hill), there is no Christmas in us. If Christmas is not now, if Christ is not born into the everyday present, then what is all the NOISE about?”
You see, the Baby Jesus is a wonderful, precious, “Holy Night, Silent Night” kind of Jesus. But if Jesus doesn’t grow up—if we don’t let Jesus grow up—then His birth into a Mighty Savior is for naught. Thank you Good and Great God, Jesus the Babe-born-in-a-manger becomes Jesus the Savior-who-dies-on-a-cross, for the world, and for us.

The Hebrew name for Jesus is Yeshua, short for “Joshua” in English, which means “Yahweh is Salvation.” Salvation literally means a Savior who comes to “make us whole.” We aren’t whole. Because of our sin we are fragmented and fractured and fallen apart. Wholeness is what we need, what we long for! We need a Rescuer, a Deliverer; we need a Savior. The disciple Peter, the Rock, sent out his first letter to all the Roman world with this proclamation: God in Jesus the Savior “rescued us from darkness and brought us into God’s marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). Jesus the Savior takes our place on the Cross; Jesus steps in to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. God goes to great lengths and heights and depths to rescue and save us, so that we might have full, new, whole life—in and through Jesus Christ.

The saving that Jesus does for us is because of love. God loves us. Pure and simple, it’s why God gives us God’s Son. David Benner says it best in his Surrender to Love, “God just can’t help loving you. And God loves you deeply, recklessly and extravagantly—just as you are. God knows you are a sinner, and your sins do not surprise God. Nor do they reduce in the slightest God’s immense love for you” (p.18). God loves us. Jesus’ identity as Savior makes it possible for our identity to be, at its core, deeply loved by God!

And we need to share this love with others. We can’t hoard this gift for ourselves. We need to pass it on, give it away! Paul puts it like this, just before the creedal
statement, Philippians 2:1-4:  

**Does your life in Christ give you strength? Does his love comfort you? Do we share together in the spirit? Do you have mercy and kindness?**  

If so, make me very happy by having the same thoughts, sharing the same love, and having one mind and purpose. When you do things, do not let selfishness or pride be your guide. Instead, be humble and give more honor to others than to yourselves.  

Do not be interested only in your own life, but be interested in the lives of others.

Share the Savior’s love; pass it on. Shine your light and let the whole world see, that Jesus is MIGHTY TO SAVE!

The three names of Jesus: Jesus the Servant, Jesus the Savior, and third, The Sovereign Jesus.  

So God raised him to the highest place. God made his name greater than every other name so that every knee will bow to the name of Jesus— everyone in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.  

And everyone will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and bring glory to God the Father.

As God, Jesus has all authority and power. Jesus Christ is sovereign. When life is smooth sailing, easy-street, hunky-dory we certainly trust in God’s sovereignty, don’t we? That God’s got it going on good for us! But what happens to us and to trusting God when the legs are kicked out from under us, when we find ourselves in the trenches or ditches of life? This is when you and I begin to wonder whether our Sovereign God is who God says He is. We start to doubt and question God’s Sovereignty, don’t we, when we’re thrown a curve ball, or when we’re hanging onto that proverbial limb for dear life?

Trusting God, or not, can become a slippery slope. When we lose trust in someone we’re not likely to go back to them anymore for help. Right? I mean, we wouldn’t buy stock in a company if we knew that the CEO stole money from the investors, would we? We wouldn’t seek medical advice if we knew that that doctor had falsified his medical training?  

We
wouldn’t trust our child to a babysitter if we knew s/he had been convicted of a crime? (Paul Tripp’s *Wednesday Word*, 12/11/13). When we lose trust in God (and that’s our doing, our choice!) we might be less likely to go back to God for help.

The danger here is that when we allow our hearts to begin to question God’s expert goodness and God’s sovereign ways, then we gradually stop seeking after God. When we begin to think that God isn’t strong enough to intervene in our crisis, then we will miss out on just how much God is with us. When we begin to doubt whether God loves us enough to rescue us from the mess or pain, then we will miss out on just how much God is for us! Difficulties in our lives are not signs that God could care less about us. Troubles in our lives are not signs that God is abandoning us. Rather, when difficulties and troubles come, and they do and will come, these are opportunities/invitations for us to live in greater dependency, greater reliance, greater trust in God’s goodness and love! Trust this: God will wrap His arms around you and bring you through difficult circumstances and troubled times, because of God’s love for you, in Jesus.

(look at Rembrandt’s Painting of “Jesus Calming the Storm”) The name of Jesus is Servant, Savior, and sovereign. In the calm and in the storm, God is with you. In your greatest joy and in your deepest cry, God is holding you within His everlasting arms. God’s love for you never fails. God works in everything for good. Whatever comes our way—the dark night or bright day—God is Sovereign. We can trust God and God’s true love of us.