

Matthew 1:21

Introduction: “Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou, Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name. Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, and I’ll no longer be a Capulet. What’s in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet.” Juliet asked an important question, “What’s in a name?” Had Romeo and Juliet never learned each other’s family name, the story wouldn’t have been nearly as intriguing. However, after falling in love they learn that their families are bitter rivals. Names are important. When we hear certain names images are instantly conjured up in our mind. Names were very important back in biblical times, because many times a name revealed the sort of character you had. One instance is in the name Jacob. Jacob means supplanter. This was Jacob’s character and it was revealed when he stole the birthright from his older brother Esau. Sometimes a name describes events in our life. An example of this is the name Naomi which means “delightful one.” However, after her husband, two sons, and a daughter-in-law died she changed her name to Mara which means “bitter.” The most important name ever given and ever spoken is the name of Jesus. For in that name His character and His mission are given.

Background:

At this point in the Christmas narrative only Mary knows that she is pregnant with the Son of God. Joseph finds out that the woman he is engaged to is pregnant. We do get a glimpse into Joseph’s character by the fact that he was going to break the engagement with Mary off privately, as in those days if you were unfaithful, the Law called for you to be stoned to death. Now we know that Mary wasn’t unfaithful to Joseph, but imagine if you were Joseph. What would have gone through your mind? As Joseph lays his head down to sleep that night, he has a dream in which an angel, most likely the same one that announced to Mary that she was going to bear the Messiah, tells Joseph what is going on. Notice who named Jesus, it was not Mary or Joseph but rather it was the angel who told them what they would name Him. Within two verses here in Matthew we get two different names for the Messiah. The angel tells Mary and Joseph they are to name Him Jesus, but in verse 23 we see an Old Testament quote from Isaiah 7:14 that says His name will be “Emmanuel.” We will deal with Emmanuel tomorrow night for our Christmas Eve service, but for now it will suffice to know that during His earthly life, Jesus was never called Emmanuel. The name Jesus is the New Testament equivalent of the Hebrew names Joshua or Oshea (Joshua’s original name until it was changed by

Moses in the Old Testament). Jesus, Joshua, or Oshea all mean the same thing and that is Yahweh (the personal name for God) saves. Therefore, in the very name given to Jesus, we see God the Father's reason for sending Jesus. His reason was to save. Too many churches and Christians are getting wrapped up in believing that Jesus and the church's mission is social change. But that couldn't be further from the truth. The Pharisees were prime examples that the outside can appear clean, while the inside is disgustingly dirty. Jesus is not interested in conforming you into a picture of a "religious" person as much as He is interested in transforming you into His image. And for that to happen, we must get past the external facades that we put up for people, and get to what Jesus came to die for, and that is our heart and soul. Let's look at why the name of Jesus is above every name and why it is so special. There are two important truths about Jesus contained in verse 21.

He was sent because we needed to be saved. Notice in verse 21 it says, "for He shall save His people." The only people who need to be saved are those who are in trouble. Romans 5:12 says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Because Adam disobeyed God sin entered into the world, and when it entered into the world it brought death. Now that is bad enough by itself, but notice that it didn't end with Adam, but rather it was passed down and now we all suffer the consequences of Adam's decision. Now many people are quick to say "that's not fair, I didn't do anything wrong and yet God would still punish me." But notice what it says in the end of Romans 5:12, "for all have sinned", that is something Paul had said previously in Romans 3:23. God is not punishing you because of what Adam did, He will punish you based on what you and I did. There were two types of people in Jesus' day. One group was known as the Pharisees. They were the legalists, it was all about following the Law with them. They would say "if you want to get to heaven you better keep the Ten Commandments and the other over 600 rules." They were all about the "Thou shalt not's." Today they would say "you better go to church, you better read your Bible, you better pray, you better not wear the wrong thing to church or in public, don't sing too loud, don't do this type of music, and on and on." They would try to make you live a certain way regardless of what was in your heart. For them it was all about dressing and acting the part. There was no grace with the Pharisees, it was strictly about the rules. The second group was the Sadducees. They were all about license. They looked for loop holes and as long as it wasn't mentioned in the Law (the Bible of their day) then they would say it was ok to do it. They were all about license. Today's Sadducee lives by the motto "if it feels good

and God didn't say 'thou shalt not' then do it.'" They said "it's ok, maybe we shouldn't do it, but God will forgive me." This group abused God's grace. I would submit to you this morning, that everyone of us in this sanctuary fall into one of those two groups. You may change between the two from time to time, but you and I still fit the bill of one of those groups. This is a good news/bad news situation. Which do you want first (don't you love when someone asks you that? Do you ever really want bad news)? Well I'm going to give you the bad news first, because that is what comes first in the notes. The bad news is salvation is not found in either being a Pharisee or a Sadducee. Paul would say to the Pharisee that "the Law condemns you showing your sinfulness, in fact he had not known sin except by the Law" in Romans 7. The purpose of God giving the rules was to establish boundaries, but also to show His standard. God's standard is perfection and when we look at the Law we see that we are anything but perfect, and so we are in need of Jesus. To the Sadducee we find it saying that whatever we do should be done to the glory of God in 1 Corinthians 10. How can me doing what makes me happy all the time bring God glory? Obviously it can't, so the Sadducee needs Jesus as well. The good news is Jesus (Yahweh saves).

He is the only One who can save us. Again notice the phrase "for He shall save His people from their sins." The only one who can save is "He" and who is "He," His name is Jesus. We have already talked about the fact that we are either a Pharisee or a Sadducee and regardless of which one you may be, you are lost you see. If it was all about following the rules, Jesus would have loved the Pharisees yet in Matthew 23 we see Him call them hypocrites, blind guides, and other names. If it was all about do whatever you want and you will still get to heaven then why did God need to send Jesus? If you and I could be good enough or do enough good things to get into heaven, then it would be pointless for Jesus to have come to earth, suffer, and die. But the very fact that God sent His Son and named Him "Jesus" proves that not only does God save, but that only God can save. **Walk down the Romans Road: Rom. 3:23, 6:23, 5:8, 10:9-10.**