

Sermon on Lord's Day 11
By Rev. Stephen t'Hart

Order Of Worship (Liturgy)

Liturgy from 1984 Book of Praise

Psalm 62:1,4

Hymn 5:2

Psalm 25:8,9,10

Psalm 73:8

Psalm 116:1,3,7

Read: John 8

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With the rise of computers and accounting programs, we have all become known by a number. A Medicare number. A driver's license number. A passport number. A bank account number. A TAFE or University student number. It seems as though whenever we contact a government agency or a business the first thing they want to know is, "what is your account number?"

But these same places will be quick to add, "To us you are a name not just a number." They have to add that, because a name is personal, while a number is not. A number suggests you are a "nobody" in a sea of nameless faces. A name suggests you are an individual, a person who is valued.

A name is important and parents will think long and hard about the name they plan to give to their new born child. They may choose a name for its meaning or to name their child after someone. Or a name will be chosen because it is unique or because it sounds nice.

In the Bible times it was often the meaning of a name that was the reason why it was given. Adam called his wife "woman" because she was taken out of man. Later he would change her name to "Eve" because she was the mother of all living. When Eve gave birth to a son, she named him Cain saying, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." Later, when Lamech the son of Methuselah gave birth to a son, he called him Noah, which sounds like "comfort", saying "This one will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD has cursed." Samuel was thus named because he was asked of the LORD. The name Solomon reminds us of the word "Peace" and the LORD said in 1 Chronicles 22:9 that Solomon would be a man of rest, for He would give him peace and quietness.

There are many more examples in the Bible where the significance of a person's name is clearly explained. And the names for God Himself also have great significance. Yahweh Sabaoth means "The LORD of hosts" and El Shaddai means "God almighty".

And so when the Son of God was to be born, the name that He would receive was very important. Not only would this name describe who the Son of God was, but it would also describe what He would do. Now the Old Testament had already given a name for God's Son: Immanuel, which means "God with us." But at His birth, the LORD wished to give Him another name also. And so, as the True Father of the child to be born, He instructed Mary in Luke 1:31,

“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.”

And this command to name God’s Son was repeated to Joseph in Matthew 1:21,

“And she (Mary) shall bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS.”

And then God gives the reason for this name:

“for he will save His people from their sins.”

And so the Heidelberg Catechism does well to take note of this name and ask in Lord’s Day 11,

“Why is the Son of God called Jesus, that is, Saviour?”

For this name was specifically chosen by God the Father Himself as a name that was fitting for His Son who was to be born into the world. It was a name of hope and of blessing for the world. “Call Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

I preach to you the gospel this [morning] under the following theme:

God declares His Son to be our Saviour by calling Him Jesus.

1. He is our complete Saviour.
2. He is our exclusive Saviour.

1. He is our complete Saviour.

In John 8:25 the Pharisees asked Jesus a most famous question. “Who are You?”

Who are You? This was a question not just on the lips of the Pharisees, but a question that others wanted answered also. In Luke 9, for example, king Herod wanted to see Jesus saying, “Who is this of whom I hear such things?” And when Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, with all the people shouting “Hosanna in the highest!” all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?” (Matthew 21:10). That was also the question that the disciples themselves asked in Matthew 8, after He had commanded the wind to stop blowing and the waves to be still. At that time the disciples asked in wonder, “Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?” (Matt. 8:27)

But when the Pharisees asked Jesus “Who are you?” in John 8, they did not ask out of curiosity, nor out of amazement. They asked this question out of scorn and out of unbelief. Literally they ask, “You, who are You?” In other words, “who do You think You are to say such things to us?” And in verse 53 of John 8 they ask again, “Who do you make yourself out to be?”

They knew His name. They knew that He was called Jesus. This was a name that they were very familiar with, for the name Jesus was relatively common in those days. It was the Greek version of the name Joshua, which means “The LORD saves.” Perhaps you remember Joshua the son of Nun, the man who led Israel after Moses, and brought them into the promised land. And there was also Joshua the High

Priest in the days after the Exile, in the time of Zechariah the prophet. And when Jesus was born there were others with the names Joshua and Jesus, and so the name 'Jesus' was qualified, and He was referred to "Jesus of Nazareth" and "Jesus the son of Joseph the carpenter". And even "Jesus, Son of David". And on the Cross there was the sign, "This is Jesus, that is, the King of the Jews."

But now in John 8 the Pharisees are asking, "You call Yourself Jesus, but who are You?"

And although the Pharisees were terribly wrong in asking this question in unbelief, the question itself is very important and it must be asked. Who is this Jesus?

Modern day theologians, those who do not accept the Bible as the true, inspired Word of God, understand Jesus to be "a great man" and "a good example", as one who showed love and compassion just as we should show love and compassion. They see Him as the Champion of the Poor, as One who wished to free the world from misery, just as we too should work hard to free the world from misery.

Others in today's age see Jesus as a man who had good morals, as the Great Example of the Great Commandment to love your neighbour as yourself. He encourages you to be a better person. But no more than that. Many do not see in Jesus the One who came to save us from our sins. With the Pharisees of old many people think, or at least work on the premise, that they don't need a Saviour. That is, they don't need to make use of One who died to take away their sin!

For that was the problem that the Pharisees had. They asked Jesus "Who are You?" because Jesus was challenging each one of them to think and to ask, "Who am I?"

In John 8 the Scribes and the Pharisees came to Jesus, bringing with them a woman who had been caught in adultery, in the very act. As far as they were concerned, this woman was guilty beyond doubt. She deserved to be punished, she deserved to be stoned to death. But they had a bigger fish to catch: they were hoping that Jesus would give a response that would either bring the wrath of the Roman government upon Him (for the Jews were not permitted to stone people), or that would defy the law of Moses. And so in verse 5 of John 8 they asked Jesus,

"Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"

And then when Jesus said nothing, but stooped down and started writing on the ground, they kept asking him: "Well, what do you say? Do you agree with Moses? What do you say? Shall we stone her? Or shall we release this woman who's guilt is beyond doubt? What do you say Jesus?"

But Jesus knew their hearts. And He knew that this was not the time for condemning this woman. The point that Jesus wished to make to the Pharisees was this: Never mind what you think about this woman: What is your sin? What is your bondage? Are you in the position to judge? You see, Jesus knew the hearts of these Pharisees and Scribes. He knew that these same men who pretended to be shocked at the sin of this woman were plotting in their own hearts to commit an even greater sin, to murder the Son of God! What Jesus therefore wanted the Scribes and Pharisees to think about was their own depravity, their own sinfulness, their own need for salvation.

What Jesus wished to do in John 8 was to open the eyes of the Scribes and Pharisees to the desperate state of their own hearts. They were quick to condemn this woman for adultery, but at the same time

they tried to fool themselves into believing that they themselves were righteous. “We are free! We are good! We are children of Abraham! We don’t need a Saviour!”

But Jesus spoke to the Pharisees and He said, “No! You are not free. You are not righteous. You are not without sin. And he who commits sin is a slave to sin. And if you don’t want to die in your sins, then you, O Pharisees, then you have to believe that I am He, that I am the One whom the Father has sent to be your Saviour!”

You see, to be saved by Jesus, we first need to know what we need to be saved from! We need to have our eyes opened to the true state of our hearts. We need to plumb the depths of our depravity, the depths of our sin. We need to confess that in our old sinful state we are so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and are inclined to all evil.

When God gave His Son the name ‘Jesus’, He said to Joseph,

“And you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)

And so by calling His Son “Jesus” God not only reveals what Christ had come to do, but He also reveals the state our own hearts! That we, His people, have sins that only Jesus can save us from.

Jesus said in John 8:35, “Whoever commits sin is a slave to sin.” We do not become sinners because we commit a specific act of sin; we commit those specific sins because we are sinners! Our sin reveals what is going on inside our hearts! Our sin reveals just how desperate the situation is, how desperately we need a Saviour! How desperately we are enslaved by sin!

Just like the Pharisees, we are quick to see the sins in others. Just like the Pharisees, by nature we tend to judge according to the flesh. (John 8:15) Just like the Pharisees, we have own lists of sins that are shocking and other sins that are somehow more respectable. Just like the Pharisees, our natural sinful selves want to scream out that we are OK, that we don’t need a Saviour to save us from our sins, that we are free. But the name “Jesus” confronts us all. For we all like sheep have gone astray. We were all conceived and born in sin. We are all by nature in bondage to sin. The chains that bind one person might look very different to the chains that bind another. But they are just as real. Jesus said, “Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.” And the only way to escape that situation is to turn to the One whom God sent to free us from that sin, to turn to the One named Jesus. For He is the complete Saviour. He is the One who takes away not just our misery, and not even just the occasional sin. He is the One who takes away the bondage, the chains of sin. He is the One who sets us free. And “if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” (John 8:36)

Jesus said, “Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. But the truth will set you free. And because I am the Son of God, and because I have been named Jesus, Saviour, I can set you free. Turn to Me and trust in Me and you will receive complete salvation from all your sins.”

2. He is our exclusive Saviour.

Lord’s Day 11 asks “Why is the Son of God called Jesus, that is, Saviour?” And then the answer gives two reasons, each beginning with the word “because”. The Son of God is called Jesus first because He saves us from all our sins (that is, He is our complete Saviour) and second because salvation is not to be sought or found in anyone else (that is, He is our exclusive Saviour).

Answer 30 of Lord's Day 11 then asks a further question about those who do not see Jesus as their exclusive Saviour, who instead seek salvation not just in Jesus but also in saints, in their own good works, or somewhere else.

There is a historical reason for the catechism asking this question. In the time of the Reformation when the Catechism was written, the Roman Catholic Church taught people to look for salvation not just in Jesus but also in the saints (Mary in particular), and in their own good works and in the church.

But the idea that salvation can be found, at least in part, outside of Jesus Christ alone, is more commonly held. The exclusive claim of Jesus that He is the only way caused offence in the days that He walked on earth and there are still many today who refuse to accept the exclusiveness of the Christian religion.

But the Bible makes it very clear. There is only one way to be saved, and that one way is through faith in the Son of God who died and rose again for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

In John 8:24 Jesus said to the Pharisees,

"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

Jesus made it very clear. Either He is not a complete Saviour, with the result that we will all die in our sins; or, when we by a truth faith accept Jesus as our Saviour, we will find in Him all that is necessary for our salvation. And the reason for that is that God the Father had named His Son Jesus, had appointed Him to be the Saviour so that in Him and through Him we might be set free from our sin and able to live with God forever.

The Pharisees were condemned in their sins because they did not believe Jesus, nor the things that He said. And Jesus pressed the point further by telling them that by rejecting Him, they also rejected the One who sent Him, they also rejected the LORD God.

In the Old Testament the LORD had made it clear to His people that they were to look to Him alone for their help and salvation. He alone is the Great God and Saviour. Isaiah, whose name means "the LORD saves" proclaimed God's Word in Isaiah 43:11,

"I, even I, am the LORD, and besides Me there is no saviour."

But when His Son was to be born, the LORD said, "His name is Jesus, for He is the One who will save His people from their sins." And how could this be? Because, said Jesus, "I and the Father are One." And, "Before Abraham was, I AM." For Jesus, our Saviour, is Himself the Great I AM. Jesus is Himself our God! And Jesus said, "If you do not believe that I am He (whom I claim to be), you will die in your sins." (John 8:24) For there is no other way.

And that is also how we are to read the rest of the "I AM" statements of Jesus in the gospel according to John. In John 8:12 He said,

"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

He also said, "I am the bread of life. . . . If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever." (John 6:41,51) And, "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved." (John 10:9) And, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." (John 11:25) And, "I am the vine . . . He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

Notice what it says in that last verse, John 15:5. "For without Me you can do nothing." That's why it is useless to seek your salvation from any place outside of Jesus. In Him we can do all things, but outside of Him we can do nothing. Outside of Him we most certainly can not find salvation.

And there is also the well known saying of John 14:6,

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)

There is no other way. Jesus is our exclusive Saviour.

"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36)

And if we don't believe that, we declare by our unbelief that Jesus is a liar. That He is not the Saviour He claims to be. And in doing so, we declare that God the Father is a liar, that He did not speak the truth when He named His Son Jesus saying, "because He will save His people from their sins."

It is a hard saying, for there is no room for compromise. Either we trust Jesus for our complete salvation, or we deny the only Saviour Jesus.

The Bible is clear. The Son of God is called Jesus, for He is our complete Saviour. Believe it and follow Him.

But as our understanding grows and we place our trust in Jesus, we see that Jesus is all we need! We see that in Jesus the chains are broken, that we are set free, that we are saved from all our sins. For when we belong to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, then we may be assured that He has fully paid for all our sins with His precious blood and has set us free from all the power of the devil. The sin is removed. The guilt is lifted. The pollution is washed away.

And then Jesus looks at you as if to ask, "Woman, Man, My Son, My Daughter. Where are those accusers? Has no one condemned you?" And then you too may say, "No one, Lord." And Jesus says to you, "Neither do I condemn you: go and sin no more."

For He is your Saviour. Your complete Saviour and your only Saviour. His name is Jesus. For in Him you have the complete forgiveness of all your sins. Amen.