

Luke 2:21

I doubt very much that any of us guys celebrate the day of our circumcision. “Johnny, I’ve invited all your friends over. We’re going to throw a party.” That’s not something we do. We don’t celebrate it. We don’t mark it on our calendars. We don’t even think about it. And yet here we are on this first Sunday in the New Year and the theme of this day is The Circumcision of Our Lord. We read about it. We sing about it. We talk about it. We celebrate it. But perhaps it’s one of those events in the life of our Lord that we’d rather not draw attention to. Okay, it happened. But why does the Church spend a whole day highlighting it?

Here’s why—because the day Jesus was circumcised is the day He first shed His blood for you. When He was only eight-days old His little body was being cut with the knife to suffer the pain of your sin. Eight days after His birth the cries which came from His little mouth were heard by His Father in heaven on your behalf. Jesus, with His circumcision, was placed under the Law, meaning that whatever He did, whatever pain He suffered, every Law He kept—it was all done for your sake.

Our Lord’s circumcision was a preview of what was to come. The few drops of blood that He shed as a baby pointed to the cross where His blood was poured out for the life of the world. He was your Savior there on the cross, and He was your Savior when He was eight-days old. How appropriate that He was legally given the name, Jesus, on the eighth day. Jesus, the name which is above every name; the name which means, “The Lord saves,” was given to Him when His blood was first shed for you.

Circumcision, the forerunner of baptism, was necessary in the Old Testament. On the eighth day every male Israelite child was circumcised to bring the child into God’s family of believers. Male children were circumcised on behalf of females so that all the Children of Israel had a part in God’s Kingdom of Grace. Any male who was not circumcised was cut off from God. He had no part of God’s covenant; no part of His Kingdom; no grace; no forgiveness; no hope. Like with baptism today—to reject baptism is to reject God. But to be baptized is to be given every blessing God has to give.

And when he was eight-days old each male child was not consulted before his circumcision. He was not asked to make a decision for God. Circumcision was not done with his blessing and approval. It was simply, like baptism, done to him. God gave him faith and forgiveness, grace and eternal life, and the eight-day old child had nothing to do with it.

At birth you were cut off from God. You and I, along with every other male and female, were born without promise, without faith, without forgiveness and eternal life. And we have no decision on this. Satan did not ask us if we wanted to belong to his kingdom of darkness. We were born with uncircumcised hearts. We were born in sin. We were born under the curse of the Law.

But Jesus was named for you. At His circumcision when His blood was shed, He was named as your Savior. God had determined that, not you, but His Son would suffer the agony of being cut off from His loving presence. The cries of your eight-day old Savior tell us that He would scream in agony as a man on the cross, suffering hell in our place.

His name, “The Lord saves,” was placed upon you in your baptism, and so you can say with confidence, “The Lord saves me!” “He forgives me!” “I belong, not to Satan, but to God!” “He gives me faith, and hope, and eternal life!”

Today is the first day in the New Year, but actually it’s the eighth day. You know what happened on the first day...God began creating. And He kept creating on the second day, and the third day, and the fourth, and the fifth...and on the sixth day God created man. He place Adam and Eve in the Garden. And on the seventh day He rested. But Adam and Eve were busy. They were busy falling into sin; busy rejecting God’s Word and believing Satan’s lies. Six days of perfection, and in one day it all comes into ruin.

And so what does God do? On the eighth day our Lord is circumcised. On the eighth day God sheds His blood for His fallen creation. On the eighth day a new creation begins in Jesus Christ. The old sinful world is cut off from God, but there is new life and new hope in the flesh of the Son of God.

Today is the eighth day. Yesterday was the seventh day of the old week. That makes today the eighth day. You and I have sinned greatly during the past week. This past year we have rejected God, and like our first parents, believed Satan’s lies. But this day, here in Christ’s Word and Sacraments, all things are new. He who shed His blood for you on the eighth day is here for you to forgive your sins of the past year. Here in His flesh and blood He gives you new life. Here He gives you hope. No matter how often you have rejected God’s will, He forgives you. No matter how often you have despised His House of worship, He pardons your sin. Because today is the eighth day. Every Sunday in God’s House is the eighth day, where Jesus is here for you with His blood that “cleanses us from all sin.” He who was named as your Savior, and who shed His blood for you, calls you here to His House every eighth day because you are His new creation. Begun with His name in your baptism, and nourished at His altar with His flesh and blood.

How will this New Year be for you? It will be just like last year. A year of up’s and down’s. A year of joys and disappointments. A year where you and I daily fall headlong into sin and reject our loving God. But there is hope for us because every eighth day Jesus is here in His Word and Sacraments for you. He who first shed His blood for you on the eighth day and is named as your Savior, is here every eighth day to do precisely what He was named to do—save you from sin, death, and hell, giving you forgiveness, life, and salvation. Amen.