

CHRISTMAS DAY 2019  
SCRIPTURES – Isaiah 62:10-12; Titus 3:4-8a; Luke 2:8-20

*“Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.” And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken. Is. 62*

Well, Christmas is a little more exciting for my family this year, as Claire is now old enough to enjoy many of the exciting things that go with its celebration. And next year she'll have a brother to join in the celebration! Lately, we – Brad and I in particular – have been considering some names for him: Balthazar... Hieronymous... or maybe a simpler one like Clem. This morning Isaiah gives us a few suggestions: Am-haqodesh (the holy people)... Gyūlay-Yahweh (the redeemed of the Lord)... Derusha (Sought Out)... or, Ir-lo-ne-etzavah (a City Not Forsaken). Little master Scoville would surely turn heads with one of these names!

It's normal to be thinking about names before a child is born. Choosing their child's name is a big responsibility for parents. With the birth of Jesus, the opposite happens: you are given a new name! God gives you and me several new names, in fact; and, just as we do, He has put a lot of thought into them and filled them with great meaning and significance.

First, you who receive and believe in this Savior who was born for you are called Am-haqodesh; the holy people. Really? You are holy? I am holy? It not only seems arrogant to say this. It seems wrong! Do we not confess – and rightly so – that we are sinful and unclean? But, maybe we make too much of our sins.

- Recently I've seen several Christmas movies on the Hallmark channel. Every year there's one in which a prince is in some small, average American town and ends up falling in love with a common girl. When she finds out he's a prince she runs away, for she knows that she is unworthy of him. But, he eventually realizes, and helps her to see, that she is not at all less than the titled and cultured women he knows and unworthy of him. In fact, she is better, and she makes him better!

We are not “Hallmark sinners;” you know, really not all that bad. Jesus knew what He was getting into when He came into this world, and into our flesh, for us. We truly are unworthy of Him; for, as the hymn, *“It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”* says, our sins bring a heavy load of guilt and cares and painful steps. We bear them and at times suffer for them, and we lay them upon others. Worst of all, they brought great pain and suffering, and finally death, to Jesus! He was born to die for them and pay the price for them. But, He knew this. He came for this. **“The goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared”** in Him (Titus 3). In His sufferings and death for you – accomplished for you on the cross 2,000 years ago and given to you in your baptism, the **“washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, poured out on [you] richly through Jesus Christ our Savior”** – all of your sins are forgiven, and you truly are holy. God says so! Am-haqodesh, the holy people: this is not a make-believe, Hallmark name. It is who we truly are in Jesus! It is the name God has given us!

You are also **Derusha** (Sought Out). God sought you out in Bethlehem... and in the message proclaimed by the angels, and to you to this day. You are **Gyūlay-Yahweh** (the redeemed of the Lord). With His holy birth and life, and especially by His innocent suffering and death, Jesus purchased you for God. You are not your own but belong to Him! But, you do not belong as a servant. No, He has taken you to be His beloved child. In your baptism into His Son God put His name on you and took you into His family, so that you can truly call Him your Father. And, because God is your Father, you are **Ir-lo-ne-etzavah** (a City Not Forsaken). As you rejoice in Jesus' birth for you and trust in His death for your forgiveness, you can be sure that you will never be forsaken. Life will bring changes, and you will at times feel alone. The loneliness of death will also finally come. Jesus' birth hasn't changed this. But, not even death will separate you from your heavenly Father. In Christ you are **Ir-lo-ne-etzavah**. You and I will not be forsaken in eternity, for we have **"become heirs according to the hope of eternal life,"** Holy Scripture says in Titus 3. God's Son was born among us and made our home His home, to give to us His eternal home with His Father!

Jesus' birth changes everything, and I hope that you see it that way. I heard on the radio recently a beautiful Christmas song that made me think of this. Composed by Alfred Burt (1920 – 1954), an American jazz musician who every year wrote a Christmas carol with his friend, Wilha Hutson, *"Some Children See Him"* was beautifully sung by James Taylor.

Some children see Him lily white  
The baby Jesus born this night  
Some children see Him lily white  
With tresses soft and fair.

Some children see Him bronzed and brown  
The Lord of heav'n to earth come down  
Some children see Him bronzed and brown  
With dark and heavy hair.

Some children see Him almond-eyed  
This Saviour whom we kneel beside  
Some children see Him almond-eyed  
With skin of golden hue.

Some children see Him dark as they  
Sweet Mary's Son to whom we pray  
Some children see him dark as they  
And, oh they love Him too.

The children in each different place  
Will see the baby Jesus' face  
Like theirs, but bright, with heavenly grace  
And filled with holy light.

Love sees Jesus to be like you; and should, for He made Himself to be like you... even in your sins, which He came to bear and take from you! See yourself now, then, as new in Him; a new person with a new name, a name given by your heavenly Father! Then,

Oh lay aside each earthly thing  
And with thy heart as offering  
Come worship now the infant King  
'Tis love that's born tonight.

Love from God the Father... our God and Father, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, our brother. Amen!