



And they gave him the name „Jesus“

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.
Luke 2,21

Yesterday, or rather this morning, we were able to mark the last calendar day of the year 2024. The year 2024 is now written in history. We can read everything in it, we can pause a few moments and review the past months. But we cannot change what has been. We can only reflect on it. In contrast to 2024, the year 2025 is still unknown and is like a fresh blank slate before us. In contrast to 2024, nothing is certain in 2025. We cannot determine everything for 2025 and plan the year down to the last detail. Much must remain unknown. And this fact can make life us uneasy. We know that the uncertainty of life is even dangerous. The blank pages of 2025 therefore fill us with both hope and fear of the unknown. Joy because of the new possibilities of the year and trepidation of the future go hand in hand. At the borderline between the past and the future, we ask ourselves: How can we find this balance between reflection on the past and confidence in the new? We realise that we are not standing still but are on a journey through time. And like any journey, we cannot leave everything to chance. We may take detours on our path through life; we may pause on our path through life or stay longer than we would like in one place or another; we may even get lost occasionally. But our life still has a goal and is not simply left to chance. When we think about this journey, it is important to always keep the goal in mind. And that is precisely what we humans find difficult and often only concentrate on things that are along the way. For example, people wish each other health or success for the year. Such things are good. But they are only milestones on the way and not the goal. The goal, as with every journey, lies in front of us and not beside us. When I am on a long hike, I can have a bad stretch of road and a good stretch of the road. On both occasions, however, I do not stay stuck in one place, but rather remain focused on the goal. Because I know that I am not at the goal yet, but on the way. The goal lies in the future. On a hike, it may be a city or a place. In our lives, the goal is not where I am going, but is much more personal. And it has to do with the person of God. God, who made us, wants to be the center and goal of our lives. Many people have not yet met this God. Therefore, they have defined the goal of life solely in this world. When they look for the goal of life, they therefore go in themselves and call this spirituality - but they confuse God with a good gut feeling and then say things like: "I have to go within myself!" But that is a kind of spiritual wellness. This "going within" can be good. But it is not the goal of our life, just a milestone.

And that is precisely why God is out to reveal himself to us, so that we recognize him as the beginning, center and goal of our lives. In the Old Testament, God did this through his name. We remember that he revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush and revealed himself as "Yahweh" or „I am who I am“. It was immediately clear that God's name contained all of God's creative power in it. The person of God was connected to his name. And by revealing himself to Moses, God had already shown that he wanted to be actively involved in Moses' life with his whole person. Incidentally, God gave his name to Moses at the very beginning of his important mission. Moses was not to go into the future alone, but with God's name. God shows both

Moses and us that he wants us to know his name. And he does not want us to replace it with anyone or anything. Do you know God? Some say we are arrogant when we claim that we know God. Because no one has ever seen God. God is so great and almighty that we can never really grasp him with our human capabilities. And yet this great, almighty God reveals himself to us so that we can experience him with our capabilities. How does that work? Perhaps we can compare this to our human relationships. When I get to know a good friend, I know to appreciate and love certain characteristics of that person. And then I am interested in nurturing the relationship and doing something good for that person so that the relationship is strengthened. With the living God, we get to know God's characteristics through his name. God shows us through his name who he is and what he does. He shows us that he holds our fate in his hands and that he wants us. God also wants us not only to know him, but to seek him and find him. He loves nothing more than for us to call on him and his name in all our needs, to praise and thank him. This fact that God wants to make himself known to us through his name becomes even clearer in the first days of Jesus' life. Because, where we otherwise hear little about Jesus' childhood, his name giving and circumcision are clearly mentioned. Jesus' name not only makes his name clear, but also who he is and what he will do. In Scripture it is written: „And they called him Jesus Jesus means: "God saves!" In this name it becomes clear that God not only becomes man but comes to save humanity. In Jesus all these characteristics become clear in Jesus so that people could understand, see, feel and taste how God intervenes in their lives. Therefore many people cried out loudly: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us!" The fact that we can call on God in the name of Jesus later became a characteristic of the Christian church. When we call on the name of Jesus, it means more than just knowing certain characteristics of Jesus. No, it means much more. It means that we enter into God's presence and are enveloped and carried by his power. We are baptized in his name; and in his name we can stand before God without sin and pray: "Our Father!" And we know that our prayers will be heard if they are in the name of Jesus. We also do it because Christ stands at the Father's side interceding for us and praying for us. Our prayer flows into Jesus' prayer and is connected with his.

„Jesus my Savior!“ When we call on the name of Jesus, we are calling on the one who can help us. When we are lost to God, he steps in for us and turns everything to the best. We don't know what the year will bring for us. But we do know that we need a Savior and we know who he is. Sometimes I suspect that we expect too little from this Jesus. When we wish ourselves happiness, health and success, we are doing something good. Jesus also wants these things and therefore teaches us to pray: "Give us our daily bread!" But Jesus wants more. He will save his people from their sins. This is what becomes clear in his name giving. And that is exactly what Jesus is still doing today. We would do well to think for a while about what saving from sin actually means. Most people have become quite used to sins and have adapted to sins of this kind. They think that God has therefore become accustomed to our sins and has to deal with them. But that is just like someone who is on a journey and now simply sits down in one place, no longer knowing the destination, or has forgotten where the path leads. Such people do not need a savior. When Jesus is named, it becomes clear that Jesus wants more. He wants to save us from the darkness. He does not want us to remain in sin forever. He has planned a different path and a completely different future for us. All of this becomes clear in Jesus' circumcision. The fact that Jesus was circumcised like every Jewish child shows that he placed himself under the law just like everyone else. Even though he is God's son, he does not receive a special privilege, but takes our fate upon himself. Mary and Joseph have Jesus circumcised exactly as the law prescribes. Thus Jesus places himself under the law of God. The final consequence of this path would be that he would also bear the consequences of sin on the cross. For us and for our sin. Because the cross means nothing other than that Jesus took the final consequence of

the law upon himself. He thus carried away our sin. For us, the main thing is that we do not start the year without this cross. Without the sign of the cross, we remain in sin and thus in enmity with God. With this cross, we are reconciled with God. Jesus, who bore the law for us, created the conditions that make the way clear to God. And that is the only reason why 2025 is a year of salvation. There is no guarantee that there will only be good things in 2025. It does not mean that we will be without problems and difficulties. On the contrary, it could even be that we will have problems because of following Christ. But it does mean that we can leave everything to our Lord Jesus: "God saves" - through Jesus Christ, sin has lost its power. He saves us, he frees us from sin and gives us the opportunity to make a new start - not just once, but every time we fail to follow our own good intentions.

We cannot say what we will face in 2025. But we can certainly say who is walking with us. It is Jesus. Immanuel. The God with us. The God who not only stands by our side but saves us. Amen.