

LD 11 His Name is Jesus

My Only Comfort

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Bible Text: Matthew 1:18-25

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Turn with me in the Holy Scriptures this morning to the first chapter in the gospel according to Matthew. Matthew 1. We begin our reading at verse 18. The word of God at Matthew 1:18,

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. 20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. 22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. 24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: 25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

There ends our reading of the word of God this morning.

We've read this passage as the foundation for the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 11. Lord's Day 11, Questions and Answers 29 and 30.

Q. 29. Why is the Son of God called Jesus, that is, Savior?

A. Because He saveth us, and delivereth us from our sins; and likewise, because we ought not to seek, neither can find salvation in any other.

Q. 30. Do such then believe in Jesus the only Savior, who seek their salvation and welfare of saints, of themselves, or anywhere else?

A. They do not; for though they boast of Him in words, yet in deeds they deny Jesus the only deliverer and Savior; for one of these two things must be true, either that Jesus is not a complete Savior, or that they who by a true faith receive this Savior must find all things in Him necessary to their salvation.

Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, bless thy word as it is about to go forth. Give unto thy servant humility to bow before thy word and its authority, and may he with clarity proclaim it unto thy people for their instruction and edification, and through it all, may thy name be glorified. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

There are many great names throughout the history of God's church in the world. There are many great names in the Old Testament scripture: Adam and Noah, David and Jonathan, Isaiah and Jeremiah. There are many great names in the New Testament scripture: Peter and Paul, James and John, Matthew and Luke. And there are many great names in the history of the New Testament church in the world, names such as Augustine and Athanasius, names like Calvin and Luther, like Hoeksema and Uphoff, but in the church of Jesus Christ there is one name that is above all other names and that is the name of our Savior Jesus. In the church, that name is lifted up. In the church, that name is glorified and praised. In the church, to that name do we pray and in that name alone do we put our trust.

Jesus. Savior. The one great name that the scriptures proclaim as does the apostle in Philippians 2:9 through 11, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." The name of Jesus is exalted because the meaning of that name is Savior.

Lord's Day 11 begins the second part, the explanation of the second part of the Apostles' Creed, the part that treats the truth concerning God the Son. You'll find that title above Lord's Day 11 in the Heidelberg Catechism, "Of God the Son." You will remember that the articles of the Apostles' Creed are divided in a trinitarian fashion. "God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." Then the Apostles' Creed moves on to put in the mouth of every Christian, "I believe in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord." With this Lord's Day, therefore, the Heidelberg Catechism begins consideration of the important names of our Savior. There are other names by which he is called in scripture. He is called the Lamb of God. He is called the Lion of Judah's tribe. He is referred to as the son of David. But these names, the four names that are included in the Apostles' Creed are the most important names of the Savior. He is Jesus. He is the Christ. He is Lord. And he is the only begotten Son of God. All of these names have meaning, important meaning. They're not just labels but they are names by which God teaches us who Jesus is and what he does. Who he is and what he does. Like a beautiful diamond in

the eye of a professional, lifted up to the light so that he can examine all of the facets of that diamond, that's what the Heidelberg Catechism in the Apostles' Creed are doing when they lift up for our examination the great names of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This morning, I call your attention to the first of those names: his name Jesus. Let's notice, first of all, that this is a name indicating that he is Savior; secondly, that this is a name indicating that he is the only Savior; and then finally, let's notice that this is a name indicating that he is the Savior of his people.

God gave Jesus the name Jesus. Joseph and Mary did not go to their local Walmart and pick up and buy a book of baby names and page through it and decide what name or names they would use to refer to Jesus, but God himself revealed this name to them. He did that by an angel. We read about that this morning in Matthew 1. In a dream before Mary's son was born, the angel of God appeared to Joseph while Joseph was pondering divorcing Mary because he knew that she was with child and he knew that he was not the father of that child. But the angel of God appeared to him and told him that he must not fear to take Mary to be his wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And then he adds in verse 21, "thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

In Bible times, that name was not uncommon. We know from scripture itself as well as from the annals of history that this was, in fact, a common name. One of the books of the apocrypha, interestingly enough, the only apocryphal book referred to in our Reformed Forms, our liturgy, you are perhaps unfamiliar with the Form for the Consolation of the Sick, a very lengthy Form, and that probably is why it is little used, way too long if someone is seriously ill, by the time you get to the end of the Form they will have died, nevertheless, there are beautiful sections in that Form, in two places in that Form references are made to verses out of Ecclesiasticus or the book of Jesus Sirach, the book of Jesus Sirach. You can look at that Form and discover where those two places are, perhaps, on your own. If you lived in Palestine during the time that Jesus lived, you would undoubtedly come into contact with others who had this name.

It is reported that this was the third most common name among the Jews in Jesus' day. Third place behind Simon or Simeon and Judas or Jude or Judah. We're told that there were others who had this name in scripture itself. The genealogy of our Lord Jesus Christ that's recorded in Luke 3 makes reference to an individual by the name of Jesus, "Jesus, the son of Eliezer," Luke 3:29. It was on his first missionary journey at Paphos on the island of Cyprus that the Apostle Paul withstood a certain sorcerer, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, that is, the son of Jesus. His father, then, was Jesus.

This name was given by God to the Lord Jesus because of the significance of the name. It was Jesus' personal name. It was the name that his family used to refer to him. When his mother Mary called him from outside to come in to supper, that's the name that she used. His friends and family, neighbors and acquaintances, all referred to him as Jesus, Jesus son of Joseph the carpenter.

The meaning of the name Jesus is Savior, or more fully, Jehovah Savior. The Je part of his name, Jesus, the first part of his name means Jehovah, and the second part of his name is the Hebrew word for salvation or savior. Jesus, Savior. With Jesus, that name takes on a much greater significance than any others who before him or during his lifetime had that name. In an entirely unique way, this name applies to the Lord Jesus because he alone is Jehovah salvation.

That Jesus is the Savior identifies him as the Savior from sin. From sin. We mustn't overlook the obvious in the meaning of that name. Of course, Savior is Savior from sin. With Jesus, the name identifies him as the one and the only Savior who delivers from sin. No one else can, no one else does deliver from sin. If Jesus is to be Savior, that's what he must save us from. This is our great enemy. This is the heaviest of all the burdens that we bear. This is what makes us liable to the judgment of God, to eternal hell and damnation: we are sinners. That's our great need. As the Heidelberg Catechism has pointed out already in Lord's Day 1, this is the great reason on account of which we need the comfort of the gospel. We are damn-worthy, guilty sinners. Our need is salvation from our sin.

Man's great need is that he is exposed to the wrath of God temporally and eternally. His great need is not hunger. There are millions who are starving to death in our world today. The ravages of famine, the result of war, but hunger is not the great need of mankind. There are multitudes who are suffering all of the agonies that are associated with poverty, grinding poverty, not knowing where their next meal will come from, but man's great need is not his need for food. There are many who experience great bodily pain. There are millions of people who have been affected by the corona virus, even our own acquaintances and our own church members, and there are all kinds of other physical sufferings, cancer, AIDS, birth defects of one kind or another, aging parents who are suffering from Alzheimer's or dementia. None of these things is the great need of mankind. There are many who are illiterate, uneducated, but illiteracy is not the great misery from which mankind is suffering. There are many who groan under the tyranny of oppressive governments, tyrants who rape the people in order to make themselves rich at the expense of the people, but the tyranny of government is not the great misery under which mankind suffers. Man's great misery, his greatest misery in the final analysis, his only misery is the misery of his sin.

From our sins Jesus saves us. That's Question and Answer 29. "Why is the Son of God called Jesus, that is, Savior? Because He saveth us, and delivereth us from our sins." That's the important thing. That's Matthew 1:22. All that Lord's Day 11 is doing is quoting Matthew 1:21. Notice that, sins in the plural. From every aspect of sin. Original sin. Our sin in father Adam. Our own actual sins by which we despise God's law, refuse to seek the glory of God in all that we do, seek ourselves instead even when by our sins we hurt those who are closest to us, our family members, our neighbors, our brothers and sisters in the church.

From our sins. Also, ultimately the consequences of our sin. The Lord Jesus Christ saves us. Jesus' salvation of us is not only negative. It is, he saves us from something, from our sins, but Jesus' salvation of us is positive. That comes out too in the 30th Question and

Answer. "Do such then believe in Jesus the only Savior, who seek their salvation and welfare," and welfare, that means even now their blessedness, their happiness, their peace, already now in the midst of this world, "of saints, of themselves, or anywhere else?" And the Answer is, "No, they do not." And the very end of the Answer, we must find in Jesus all things, all things necessary to our salvation. He not only saves us from our sin, our debt and our guilt, but he saves us unto God, unto the joy, unto the bliss, unto the peace that alone can be found in him. He does not only take us out of the bondage, the misery and death of Egypt, but he brings us into the Promised Land, the land overflowing with milk and with honey.

He does not only deliver us from the greatest evil but he bestows on us the highest possible good. We were dead, he makes us alive. We were despairing, he gives us joy. We were afraid, he gives us peace. We deserve hell, he gives us heaven. What a Savior Jesus is.

What qualifies him to be the Savior, why he alone is Savior, is that he is the Son of God. As is often the case, the Questions in the Heidelberg Catechism are as important as the Answers. Notice the 29th Question, "Why is the Son of God called Jesus?" The first Question and Answer in Lord's Day 11 is not is Jesus the Son of God, and then move on from there to why the Son of God is called Jesus. That Question and Answer is not found in Lord's Day 11. It is assumed the great truth, the fundamental truth, the bedrock to all of the names of Jesus is that the one who bears those names, including the name Jesus, is the Son of God.

"Why is the Son of God called Jesus?" That was the revelation of the angel too. That belongs to the meaning of the name Jesus, Jehovah salvation. He is Jehovah, Jehovah God himself. The one who bears this name does not only give testimony to Jehovah, proclaim the truth concerning Jehovah, he is himself the Son of God. He is Jehovah. And that there be absolutely no mistake about that, to the revelation of his name Jesus the angel adds in verse 23, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." God with us. That's the meaning of Emmanuel and that is applied, that Old Testament prophecy and name is applied to Jesus. In Jesus, God is with us.

He is the Savior alone. That certainly is the significance of his name Jesus. There is no one else who is Savior, no one else who is qualified to deliver us from the guilt and from the power of our sins. Only Jesus. He is the only Savior. He is the inclusive Savior. There are no other saviors alongside of him. He is not a partial savior, a 90% savior, he is Savior, the only and the complete Savior, and apart from him, outside of him there is no possibility of salvation and that is the burden of Lord's Day 11.

Question and Answer 29, the Question underscores this, "Why is the Son of God called Jesus, that is," and now you must strike the indefinite article, the "a." It's not there in the original German of the Catechism so that the 29th Question is this, "Why is the Son of God called Jesus, that is, Savior?" Not "a Savior," which might leave the impression that there are other saviors alongside of him. Now the content of Question and Answers 29

and 30 eliminate that, but I'm saying that the indefinite article must not leave that impression and it's not there and it's not there deliberately.

"Why is the Son of God called Jesus, that is, Savior?" The only Savior. That's the last part, too, of the 29th Answer. Why call him Jesus, that is, Savior? "Because we ought not to seek, neither can find salvation in any other." That's the 30th Question, "Do such then believe in Jesus the only Savior, who seek their salvation and welfare of saints, of themselves, or anywhere else?" And then emphatically the 30th Answer begins, "They do not." They do not.

This is what makes Jesus a controversial Savior. The Catechism is not teaching here that Jesus accomplishes himself personally every aspect of the work of our salvation. He does not. There are other works alongside the work of Jesus and those other works on behalf of our salvation are the works of the Holy Spirit, the work of sanctification. John Calvin, it is a slander therefore to allege that because someone teaches that beside the saving work of Jesus the work of the Holy Spirit, not the work of man but the work of the Holy Spirit is necessary unto his salvation, that's the Reformed faith. That has always been the Reformed faith. John Calvin with these words introduces that part of his "Institutes of the Christian Religion" that begins the work of the Holy Spirit with these words, "We must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us and we are separated from Him, all that He has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us." That's found in Calvin's "Institutes," book III, chapter 1, paragraph 1. Calvin is emphasizing the fundamental truth that our salvation consists of the work of Christ on his cross, justification, and also the work of the Holy Spirit in us, for us and in us, that work that we call and that the scriptures call sanctification. But in this Lord's Day, the Heidelberg Catechism is not contrasting the work of Jesus Christ on behalf of our salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit on behalf of our salvation. What he is contrasting is the work of Jesus Christ on behalf of our salvation and the works of man, the works of man apart from the grace of Jesus Christ as the fruit of our salvation in him. What it's denying is that our works in any way, shape or form contribute to our salvation. That is the teaching of Lord's Day 11.

This is what makes the gospel in every age offensive. If only we will give to Jesus a place as a savior alongside of all the other would-be saviors of mankind, fine and dandy, but as soon as we Christians proclaim Jesus as the only Savior, his name the only name given under heaven whereby men must be saved, that is offensive. It has been offensive in every age and it is offensive today. When Jesus says, "I am Savior," not a Savior, "I am Savior, the only Savior. I am Savior alone," then men are offended at him and walk no more with him. When in the preaching of the gospel today by the church in the established congregation or on the mission field, Jesus is proclaimed as the only Savior, and when men are called to faith alone in Jesus, this is what makes the Christian gospel offensive and the day is coming when this testimony of the church is going to lead to persecution, to severe persecution.

I am a good friend of a Reformed man, a member of our church, who specializes in buying and selling used religious books. He recently informed me that he may not sell off

his website any books to the state of Colorado, California, Colorado is not far behind, I'm sure, but California that condemns homosexuality and all the other gross immorality connected to homosexuality, that expressly condemns that as sin. He may not sell any books to anyone in the state of California that proclaims that Christianity is the only true religion and that condemns the other religions. Now to be honest, full disclosure, the state of California will permit on religious property, the property of a church, exceptions to this but you can bank on it that it won't be long when that exception will be revoked. That's how close we are in our day to persecution because we proclaim the truth of Lord's Day 11.

In close connection with the truth that Jesus is the only Savior is the truth that he is the complete Savior. It stands to reason that if Jesus is the only Savior, well, then he's the complete Savior because if he's not the complete Savior, we need to find another Savior to make up for what he doesn't save us from, well, then his salvation of us is not a complete salvation, and if it's not a complete salvation, we're going to need other saviors alongside Jesus. No. Jesus is a complete Savior. He saves us in every respect and therefore he is the only but also the complete Savior.

Denials that Jesus is the only Savior and the complete Savior, first of all, are the unbelievers who reject out of hand the preaching of the gospel that calls men to repent of their sins and calls them to faith in Jesus. The Orthodox Jews who reject Jesus as the Son of God in our flesh, deny the truth of Lord's Day 11. This is a characteristic denial of the false religions, the idolatrous pagan religions, but also the religions of the heathen that are Buddhism and Hinduism and the religion of Islam, the religion of the Muslims. But this is also true of the civilized heathen that live in the United States of America and scoff at the need for blood atonement to redeem us from our sins, who scoff at the very idea that salvation is through faith in a crucified Lord Jesus Christ.

They reject Jesus as the Savior but the subtle denial of Jesus that the Lord's Day refers to is the denial of Jesus that goes on all the while men are speaking of Jesus. "Jesus. Jesus. Jesus," but in spite of their use of the name, are denying the truth concerning Jesus, that he alone is the Savior of lost sinners. That's Rome. That was Rome at the time of the Reformation, that is Rome today. "Yes, there is salvation to be found in Jesus. Why, of course. But not in Jesus alone, also in our good works, that our meritorious works, also the meritorious works of the saints." Rome is a fundamental denier of Lord's Day 11. Rome calls men and women to look to the saints and to the virgin Mary as well as to the finished work of Jesus Christ. Rome calls its members to look to the intercession of the saints and of the virgin with God and with Jesus, altogether apart from the great high priest and intercessor, our Lord Jesus Christ so that the sinner according to Rome cooperates with the Savior in his salvation. Just think of how ludicrous and contradictory that is, the sinner cooperates with the Savior in his salvation. What folly. What unbelief.

It's a serious matter. We mustn't minimize the seriousness of it. The Catechism points out the seriousness of it in Lord's Day 11, the error of supposing that we can look for salvation to Jesus and to ourselves, and to the works of man. That's a denial, the Catechism teaches us. It's a denial that Jesus is Savior, and the seriousness of it comes out

when the Catechism says do they then believe in Jesus who add these other saviors, the works of man, to the saving work of Jesus Christ? And the emphatic answer is, "They do not."

But that's far from us. We don't have to worry about this, denying that Jesus is the only and the complete Savior, isn't that right? That's not me. That's not you. We're enemies of Rome. We're enemies of the theology, the corrupt theology of Rome. We're enemies of free will. We're enemies of works righteousness. We're Calvinists. We're Reformed men and women. We don't have to worry about this, do we, the confession and living out of the confession that Jesus is the only Savior? Wrong. Wrong. I ask you right now at this very moment, where are you looking for your salvation? To Jesus and to Jesus alone? Where are you looking for the salvation of your children and your grandchildren? To Jesus and to Jesus alone? Are you troubled, burdened, even despairing? Where are you looking for your help, your deliverance, for the grace to bear up? Mothers, are the demands of your earthly calling a heavy burden and you seem to have no strength any longer to carry on? Where are you looking? Where will you look tomorrow for the grace of Christ to shoulder the burdens, to carry on in the calling that he has given to you? Widow, the widower, alone and lonely. The nights themselves seem to be 24 hours. Where are you looking for the comfort and the strength that you need? Your child is battling cancer or who is afflicted with some serious birth defect, where are you looking on their behalf for the strength to bear up? What about that besetting sin that has you in its grip? Drunkenness. Addiction to pornography. Backbiting. Where are you looking for the strength to crucify your old and sinful nature, fight against these sins in your life that have you in their grip? And what about our looking into the future and all the uncertainties that come up in our minds, fears for ourselves, fears for our children and grandchildren, fear for the church? Where are we looking for the dispelling of those fears and the strength confidently to face the future? To Jesus through faith in him alone? You see, from a practical point of view, you and I, too, are often guilty of denying that Jesus is Savior.

He is a particular Savior, I end with that this morning. That's the question that remains of whom is he the Savior? He is the Savior of his people alone. That's what the angel said in Matthew 1:21, "he shall save his people." He is the Savior not of all men but he is the Savior of his elect people alone. He alone is the one who saves them but he does effectively save them. He isn't the Savior of all men. There is a hell and there are people who go to hell. Do we dare to say that that's because Jesus failed, although he intended to save them he wasn't able to get the job done? That in spite of his desire to save them and a death that was sufficient to save them, intended for them, that they are yet not saved? That's a denial that Jesus is Savior. He is Savior of his people alone. They are the ones for whom he died. Their names were written in his hand when he bled and died on Calvary's cross. They are the "us" and the "our," the particular pronouns that are used throughout Lord's Day 11. He saveth us. He is our Savior and deliverer. Not of all men but of his people alone. Because he is the only and because he is the effectual Savior, we must seek all our salvation in him the grace to cover the guilt of every sin no matter how grievous that sin may be, the grace to resist every temptation, strength for every weakness, the hope to overcome every discouragement, confidence to face the future, joy to overcome

every sorrow, contentment for every earthly circumstance because his name is Jesus and because he is Jehovah our salvation. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven, we thank thee for our Savior Jesus Christ, for all that he has done on our behalf, his suffering the death that we deserved, his enduring the torments of hell that we are subject to apart from him. Grant, heavenly Father, that we may find through faith in him all our salvation for time and for eternity.