**Matthew 1:18-25**

Introduction

I. The significance of a name

A. In the Bible, names often reflect the identity of a person and they role they are called to play

B. In the Bible, people’s names are sometimes changed to mark a new direction in their lives

II. Matthew gives us two names for the Messiah: Jesus and Immanuel. These names tell us a lot about who this child is and what he came to do

The Passage

I. The meaning of “Jesus”

 A. Jesus is the Greek version of the Old Testament name Joshua

 B. The name means “Yahweh saves” “or Yahweh is salvation”

II. Israel was familiar with this idea of Yahweh coming down to save them from their enemies

A. Exodus 3: 1-10

1. The Exodus was the defining event in Israel’s relationship with God

2. Notice the pattern

 a. God’s people are enslaved and powerless to save themselves

b. God hears their cry for mercy (v. 7)

c. God comes down from heaven (v. 8)

d. God rescues his people from slavery to their enemies (v. 8)

5. God brings his people to a good and spacious land (v. 8)

3. God’s saving action was the basis for their relationship

It was the basis for obedience to his law (Exodus 20:2)

B. Psalm 18

2. King David experienced God’s salvation personally in similar way to how Israel experienced salvation as a nation

 a. He was enslaved by enemies and powerless to save themselves

 b. God heard his cry for help (v. 6)

 c. God came down from heaven (v. 9)

 d. God rescued him from his enemies (v. 16-18)

 e. God brought him to a spacious place (v. 19)

III. Jesus is the ultimate fulfilment of Yahweh coming down to save us from our enemies

A. The twist is this: he came to save us “from our sins”

1. First century Jews were looking to the Messiah to save them from the Romans. They couldn’t have anticipated that the Messiah would come and not save them from Rome.

 2. This requires a radical re-understanding of the human dilemma

 a. Our greatest enemy is not an enemy outside of us

 b. Our greatest enemy is the enemy inside us: our sin

B. The gospel

1. The problem: our sin makes us an enemy of God. Our sin puts us in a prison of judgment and condemnation that God’s law keeps us locked inside, and we are powerless to save ourselves from that slavery (see Galatians 3: 22-23)

2. The solution: Jesus rescues us from this situation. He rescues us not by destroying our sin but by becoming our sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). He serves the sentence of judgment and condemnation, so that we can be freed, and so that we can be brought into the good and spacious land of forgiveness, grace, and freedom (Romans 5:1)

IV. Paul’s experience of being saved by Jesus

 A. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners

1. “I am the worst”: Paul had lived a life that took him 180 degrees in the wrong direction to the extent that he was actually persecuting followers of Jesus

2. “Jesus used me as an example”: Jesus wanted to show the world that he really came to save sinners, so he took the worst of sinners and had mercy on him and turned him into one of the greatest evangelists ever know.

 3. Paul erupts into praise in view of God’s mercy to him (v. 17)

His name was changed from “Saul” to “Paul” (which means “little”—he was humbled by the mercy of God in his life and could only see himself as a servant of Jesus Christ)

Conclusion

I. This Christmas, let’s return to the simple gospel of the forgiveness of sins; of the simple experience of being set free from the prison guilt/shame/condemnation and brought into the freedom of God’s grace

A. During a season when people are working hard to clean their acts up, keep their lives together, have things in nice packages, let’s come to the Lord each day as our actual broken, messy, imperfect selves, knowing we are accepted and loved because Jesus saved us

B. During this season when it’s so easy to focus on our external enemies (financial, relational, occupational, etc.) let’s focus on our internal enemies (our sin) and remember that we have already been saved from that enemy in the most important way

**Discussion Questions**

1. On Sunday we talked about the significance of names. As we talked about Jesus’ name and other Biblical names, was there anything new for you or anything that gave you a fresh perspective on things?

2. How did Sunday’s message add to your understanding of or increase your appreciation for who Jesus is and what he came to do?

3. What are some of the external enemies (trials) you are facing this holiday season? How can focusing on the basic gospel message of freedom from our sin help you walk through those trials more faithfully?

4. Read 1 Timothy 1:12-17. Explain what is meant by this: because Paul was the worst, he was the best example.