Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

In 1985, a group of 150 Bible scholars and other experts got together and formed what they called the Jesus Seminar. They went through every event and episode in the Gospels, and they voted with coloured beads on what, in their expert opinion, was truly historical. Red beads indicated something that Jesus did say or do (3 points), pink beads indicated something Jesus probably said or did (2 points), grey beads indicated something Jesus probably did not say or do but it was true to His ideals (1 point), and black beads indicated something He did not say or do but was invented by others(0 points). And after the vote, they said that just 18% of the sayings attributed to Jesus in the Gospels were actually said by Him. They said that He was just an ordinary mortal man born of two human parents, who did not perform nature miracles nor die as a substitute for sinners nor rise bodily from the dead. And sightings of a risen Jesus just represented the visionary experiences of some of his disciples rather than actual physical encounters.

Well, what the work of these ‘experts’ actually revealed is two things: First, that they did not believe that the Bible is the inspired and inerrant word of God, and second, that they were not Christians. And that is because to be a Christian is to believe, from the Bible, “in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, our Lord, who was really conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, who truly suffered under Pontius Pilate, was actually crucified, dead, and buried, He descended into hell; the third day He physically rose again from the dead; He literally ascended into heaven, and certainly sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty; and from there He shall definitely come again to judge the living and the dead.”

And this part of the Apostles’ Creed is the focus of Lord’s Days 11-19. So, that means that almost 20% of the whole catechism focuses on the person and work of Jesus. Our consideration of some of the topics in the Catechism is like a quick shower, if you like. We are in and out. But when it comes to the person and work of Jesus Christ, it is like a long and luxurious bath. And that is as it should be! And our task today is to see that **the name of Jesus means salvation**.

And we will do this in the light of our text in Acts 4. And out three points will be the **Provision** of Jesus’ name, the **power** of Jesus’ name, and then the **perfection** of Jesus’ name.

1. So, first of all, the **provision** of Jesus’ name. And our comments here will be quite general and wide-ranging.
   1. As we heard and read a few moments ago, Peter, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, had healed a crippled beggar. And the beggar jumped up and began walking and leaping and praising God. And lots of people saw this and they knew who this man was and that he had been crippled, and they “*were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him*.” So, Peter preached the gospel of salvation in Jesus to the crowd. And as chapter 4 opens, we learn that Peter and John were arrested by the Jewish authorities who were greatly annoyed that they were “*proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead*.” And the next day, having learned about this healing miracle, they interrogated them.
      1. Now, it was only a few weeks earlier that these same Jewish leaders had gone to extraordinary lengths to be rid of Jesus. They had held an utterly illegal trial and relied on false witnesses. They then badgered Pilate into crucifying Jesus, even though Pilate found Him not guilty of any crime. But surely, worst of all, we know from Matthew 28 that they knew that Jesus had risen from the dead, because of the eye-witness accounts of the guards. But they told the guards to lie and to tell people that the disciples of Jesus had stolen His body. But now, despite all their efforts, these pesky disciples were publicly saying that He had risen from the dead and that He was the power behind this healing.
      2. Well, this simply would not do. So, they saw this as an opportunity to put an end to this Jesus nonsense. And you need to understand that there was some politics at play here. The two main parties in our parliament are Labour and National. And there were also two main parties in the Jewish parliament of that time – the Pharisees and the Sadducees. And although the Pharisees did not like the idea of Jesus’ resurrection, they did believe in the general resurrection of the dead. But the Sadducees did not. So, to have asked Peter about his resurrection claim would have been controversial, to say the least. Thus, what they did instead was to turn this into a criminal matter. And that is what **verses 5-7** describe – a criminal court. And the question they asked in verse 7 was a criminal allegation; they were accusing Peter and John, with the beggar as their accomplice, of committing a crime. In their minds, if they could prove that this was some sort of trick, then the name of Jesus could be discredited, once and for all. So, they asked, “*By what power or by what name did you do this?*”
      3. And you need to imagine the Jewish leaders inwardly congratulating themselves on how clever they were to have put Peter in this position. They had him, dead to rights! But **Proverbs 19:21** says, “*Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand*.” And in their attempted cleverness, the Jewish leaders provided Peter with the perfect opportunity to preach Jesus! By drawing attention to the *name*, they basically gave Peter the script for his sermon. And so, instead of defending himself against a crime, Peter talked about a work of mercy. It was a brilliant strategy! What a way to win the room! And Peter then pointed to “*the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.*” And he said, “*Whom you crucified*.” Talk about in your face boldness! And then he spoke of the resurrection of Jesus, which would have caused the two parties to squirm with discomfit, before saying, “*And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*.”
   2. And these are the words that we want to focus on with our remaining time. Why is so much emphasis given to the *name* of Jesus here? Well, to begin with, congregation, the significance of the name of Jesus is **not in the name** **itself**. And what I mean by that is that in some fantasy stories, there is often a hero or ‘saviour type’ figure who has this unique name. Someone prophesies that one day Gandolabit or Josemella or whoever it is will come to deliver the people. And when the person *with that name* arrives in the story, well, then you know that they are the chosen one… But Jesus was a **very common name** in those times. Lots of Jewish boys were called Joshua or Jeshua in Hebrew or Jesus, which is the Greek version. In fact, scholars estimate that Jesus was the fourth most common name among Jewish men. And this name was a testament to their belief that Yahweh would save His people, which is what Jesus means. And parents probably hoped that their Jesus might be the one that God used to save His people. But the key point here is that the name, Jesus, was not a special or unique name that in and of itself possessed power. What made His name special was the fact that it was **given to Him by God**. And we will see this in a moment from Matthew 1:21. But before we see that, the reason why this is important is because when God names something He reveals something of Himself.
      1. And we see this all the way back in the Garden of Eden. For it was God who gave **Adam** his name. Adam means man. And Adam was created in the image of God and commanded to exercise dominion over creation. And his name expressed all of this. He was a small god, if you like. He was God’s representative on earth. And we see this in that having been named by God, Adam was then given the task of naming the animals. And this was not just, you know, giving them a label or a scientific classification, it was about recognizing God’s unique creative glory in each animal species. And having named the animals, we are told that Adam did not find a helper suitable for himself. It’s fascinating! Somehow, this naming process revealed to Adam that something from God was missing in creation. And so, after God formed the woman from Adam’s side and brought her to Adam, Adam named her ‘woman,’ because she was taken out of man by God. And she too, like him, was made in the image of God. So, she was similar to him but also different. Physically and emotionally and relationally, she complimented him, perfectly. And this particular woman was to be His co-worker, companion, and lover. So, in naming her, Adam recognized and God’s person and work in her, and he declared something about the glory of God in a woman, and especially in this woman who was to be his wife.
         1. It is something of an aside, but a very controversial question today s ‘What is a woman?’ The world is tied up in knots about this because it wants to affirm the rights of women and to give them equality and protection, etc, but now, because of trans rights, it can’t even define a woman as an adult female. But even more significantly that the biology of all this, woman is about very special aspects of the glory of God. Man is too. But all that has been lost in this silliness and confusion. Girls and women, I have made a recommendation in the bulletin about a Christian documentary called ‘*Eve in Exile*.’ It would be well worth your time to watch it. Womanness or femaleness has to do with who God is! And it is wonderful!
      2. But the key point here is that when God names something or someone it is has a deep meaning and significance.
      3. And that brings us to **Matthew 1:21**. Mary was pregnant, and she had told Joseph and he was considering divorcing her. But an angel came to him and said, “*Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus because He will save His people from their sins*.”
         1. So, unlike all of the previous Joshuas and Jesus’s of Jewish history, whose name pointed to God as the Saviour, in relation to Jesus, it pointed to Himself. Because He was given this name by God, it meant ‘I am He who save’s or ‘I am Yahweh who saves’ or ‘I am He whom God has sent to save His people from their sins.’
2. So, that is the significance of the provision of Jesus’ name. Now we need to narrow in our focus to the **power** of Jesus’ name. And this is our second point.
   1. The crippled beggar of Acts 3 had asked Peter and John for money. But Peter said to Him, “*I have no silver or gold, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk*. *And* *he* *took* *him by the right hand, and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God*.” And the account purposefully paints a picture of something happening to this beggar without him really knowing what was happening. Peter did not ask him if he knew Jesus or believed in Him, or even if he wanted to be healed. But nek minit, he’s up and jumping! But look at what Peter said in **3:16** in relation to this healing and the name of Jesus; he said, “*And His name- by faith in His name- has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all*.” So, by the power of the name of Jesus, this man was healed. Muscles and tendons and bones that had been unused or were broken or torn for many years were made like new in a moment! It is astonishing!
   2. But when we read about healing miracles in the Bible we ought to think about sin. You see, illness and injury and disability and disease and dysfunction, and ultimately death, are all consequences of the presence of sin in creation. Before the Fall, there was no illness, injury, disability, disease, dysfunction, or death. **Roman 8:20-22** talks about the whole of creation having been “*subjected to futility*” and being in “*bondage to decay*.” These are all consequences of sin having come into the world. And just to be clear, this is not in the sense of disease or disability being a punishment for a specific sin, but just that all disease and disability is because sin exists.
      1. And this is why, in the Old Testament ceremonial law, the priests and the sacrifices had to be free of disease or blemish, because they were pictures if sin. And to be ceremonially pure, you had to avoid dead bodies and lepers and pus-filled sores and blood flow, because they were all pictures of sin.
      2. And the reality of sin and its consequences in creation is why when Jesus began His public ministry, we read in **Matthew 4:23**, that He “*went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people*.” By healing disease and sickness, Jesus was visually demonstrating what He had come to do, which is to save people from sin and all its consequences.
      3. You see, while these healings were wonderful, all those He healed, including the lame beggar of our text, still died, eventually. And Jesus could not heal everyone. But each healing pointed forward to the new heavens and new earth where there would be no more illness, injury, disability, disease, dysfunction, or death.
      4. And so, each physical healing was a sermon if you like about a greater healing that we all need, which is to be saved from our personal sin and guilt and to be able to enjoy eternal life in a sin free new creation.
      5. And this comes by faith in the name of Jesus! So, we don’t know exactly when it was, but at some point in his healing, the beggar put his faith in the name of Jesus. He believed that Jesus could heal him. That is the power of Jesus’ name.
   3. Now, we don’t have time today to go into the why of this but the era of some being given the gift of healing illness and injury finished with the Apostles and those they laid their hands on. We have discussed this before and we will surely do so another time. But we do still have illness, injury, disability, disease, dysfunction, and death, and our personal sin and guilt. And healing or salvation comes to us in the same way – by faith in the name of Jesus. Right now, by His word and Spirit, Jesus is calling out to you to ‘rise up and walk.’ He is saying, ‘If you believe that I am the Son of God who lived a perfectly obedient life and who suffered the price that your sins deserve, on the cross, and then rose again, your guilt will be taken away, you will receive my righteousness in your spiritual ‘bank account,’ and you will live with me forever in the without sin new heavens and new earth. Have you ‘leaped up and walked and praised God’? Have you put your faith in the name of Jesus? Will you do so today?
3. And that brings us, very briefly, to our third and last point, which is the **perfection** of Jesus’ name.
   1. And our focus here is two phrases from verse 12: “*in no one else*” and “*in no other name*.” And it is because of phrases like this that our Lord’s Day says, “Salvation cannot be found in anyone else; it is futile to look for any salvation elsewhere,” and that “those who look for their salvation and security in saints, in themselves, or elsewhere [do not] believe in the only saviour Jesus.”
      1. If you know anything about the history of the Reformation, you will have heard mention of the ‘five solas.’ Do you know what they are? Let’s have them in order and in Latin. Sola Scriptura (The Bible alone) Sola fide (Faith alone) Sola gratia (Grace alone) Solus Christus (Christ alone) and Soli Deo Gloria (To the glory of God alone). Well, the original concern of Solus Christus was the teaching of the Roman Catholic church that we needed Jesus for salvation *and* Mary and the saints. So, you had to pray to Mary and the saints, and keep their feast days, so that their extra merit would supplement your efforts and the work of Jesus.
      2. And I fully hope and expect that this is not true of any of you; that you do not pray to Mary of any of the so-called saints. But our Lord’s Day also includes reference to those who trust in themselves alongside Jesus. And this is where we too, by our deeds, can fall into the error of denying Jesus as our *only* saviour and deliverer.
         1. For we can think ourselves saved because our parents and grandparents are saved, or because we go to church each week, twice, or because we prayed a certain prayer, or because we do so many good works, and we do not take drugs or sleep around or blaspheme.
         2. Do you boys and girls remember the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector? Both of them prayed. The Pharisee said, “*God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get*.” In other words, he was full of pride and self-righteousness. Could this be you, perhaps? Or are you like the tax-collector, who wouldn’t even enter the temple but stood “*far off, [and] would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'*”

People of God, the name of Jesus is the *only* name by which we must be saved. As the hymn-writer put it: “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.” There is no Jesus + He is either your *only* Saviour or He is not your Saviour. May His name be precious and sweet to us all. Amen.