

To God Be the Glory

Baptism of the Lord

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Isaiah 42:1-9

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Just last week we heard about our Lord as an infant being taken to and fro by His father and mother. They went from Bethlehem to Egypt and from Egypt to Nazareth. Jesus certainly got around in His earlier years. Yet this weekend we heard about Him being baptized, beginning His ministry. No, Jesus did not grow up in a week; but the information we have about His childhood and early years is extremely limited. So this year we skip from His second year in life to about His thirtieth.

Friday was the Epiphany of our Lord, so some of us turned off our Christmas lights and put away our Christmas decorations. Yet while the decorations are stored up for next year, the fact that our Lord is among us hasn't changed. Jesus is still the Immanuel, God with us, in two ways: He is still with us in spirit today and always—and physically in the Sacrament, just not in the same way He is still with us physically at this time in our lectionary readings for this Sunday. In Jesus, God took on human flesh and came to pay the price we owe for our sins. So we give Him honor, laud, and glory.

And God does not share that glory with anyone. That is what He declared through the prophet Isaiah in our Old Testament text. Neither should we give His glory to anyone or anything else. God has procured that glory by taking on human flesh in His Son and by doing all that was necessary to save us, including being baptized by John the Baptist. But while we've heard about His baptism in recent years, we have not studied Isaiah, where God prophesies about Jesus' baptism, where God would put His Spirit upon Him.

Verse 1

In our text from Isaiah, we find that those are the first words we have recorded for us: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him.”

At the same time, and going no further than that, do you notice anything else interesting in this verse as compared with the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in our Gospel text? We've seen how all three persons of the Trinity were present for Jesus' baptism—God the Father as the voice from heaven, God the Son as Jesus in the river Jordan, and God the Spirit as the dove which landed on Jesus. Well look, all three persons are found in this text as well!

Jesus is the servant of God, whom God upholds and has chosen to come at the time of our Gospel text. God the Father is the one speaking through the prophet. And God the Father has said that He has put His Spirit upon His chosen servant—that is, the Holy Spirit. God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, would act and has acted on your behalf. He came into the world and was baptized by John so that you might receive His forgiveness. In our Gospel text, God affirms what He has said here, that He delights—or is “well pleased”—in His Son, His chosen servant.

It doesn't matter if your faith in Jesus is weak or strong, old or new. As God's chosen servant, “(A) bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.” While the Christmas lights brought comfort and the joy of our Savior's birth, now they are put away, and it is so easy to put thoughts of our Lord away from our minds as well. It is a new year, and yet you are back to the daily grind of work, school, or whatever you were working on before Christmas. It can be discouraging to return to the grind of work, the reality of sweat on the brow, without keeping your focus on your Savior.

The good news is that while we may become discouraged from time to time, our Lord Jesus did not and does not become weary of thinking about us or discouraged by us.

Verse 2

Isaiah continued our text: “He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice on the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.” This same God-became-flesh has said for your hearing: “I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you.”

These words were recorded by the prophet Isaiah for your hearing; but don’t fall into despair—these are not words of Law. They aren’t words for you to complete. The Lord your God has called His servant, His Son, Jesus the Christ in righteousness, and He would take Him by the hand and keep Him.

Don’t get me wrong; I’m not saying that these words have no comfort you. They do! God would comfort His Son, His Servant, whom He had called so that He might fulfill what *you and I* are unable to do: complete His righteousness.

Completing God’s righteousness means keeping the Law perfectly—to love God first and others second—as well as fulfilling all of the prophecies of the Old Testament. And Jesus did just that. He fulfilled those three prophecies we heard about last week; God’s Spirit landed on Him at His baptism, just as God prophesied here in Isaiah; and Jesus would go on to complete all of God’s righteousness—and He would do that and indeed has done that for you. That you might be saved.

Jesus came and fulfilled all of those prophecies in order to be “a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, (and) to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.” And for that reason, we give God glory.

Verse 3

“I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to the carved idols. Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.”

We began our text with the name of God in physical form and voice; and here we end with God declaring that He is the Lord. He is not a carved idol. He is not willing to give His glory to anyone else. He is the one who has sent His Son to die for you; and He is the one who has called you by name before you were born. He is the one into whose name you were baptized. And He is the one who will keep you to life everlasting.

You don’t have to do anything to deserve God’s glory, either. He has given it freely in His chosen one, His Son, Jesus the Christ. You will never have to worry about earning God’s glory or His favor. He has worked in a new way in His Son so that all the world might be saved through Him.

And He has declared that to you as well—He has made it known to you before He has done it through the words of Isaiah recorded before Christ came and read to you this day. God kept His Word to do those new things. He has also promised that no one can snatch you from His hand. And as God kept His word about the new things, the new way with which He would save us, you can rest assured that He will keep that promise, and

all of His promises. He will not give up His glory or give it to another; He will do as He has made known to us in both the Old Testament and the New.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.