

The Baptism of Our Lord - Epiphany I

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Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Isaiah 42:1-7

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope." This is what God the LORD says-- he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. (NIV)

If there is news, big news, about someone or something that news comes to our attention much different than in the past. Today, we not only have a choice between *CNN* and *Fox News* but we have the internet, text messaging, facebook, twitter, ipods, and phones that give us instant updates and breaking news. But years ago, for breaking news, when the newspaper was still the principal means of delivering our news, they would not only publish the regular daily addition but would also put out an "Extra." A newspaper boy, in fact, would often stand on street corners and sell these extra editions to any passerby. You've most likely heard the saying as in a loud cry they would shout: "Extra! Extra! Read all about it!" Then the paperboy would give an explanation of the big news: *Pearl Harbor Bombed!* "Man walks on Moon!" "Extra! Extra! Read all about it!"

In a very real way God is doing the same for us this morning. God has some important news for you and me that He doesn't want any of us to miss. He points us to Someone. He wants us to read all about it. He wants our full attention. God has some huge news for us today. So it is my prayer that we listen. It is my prayer that we: **Pay Attention to God's Chosen Servant!**

Instead of getting our attention by saying "extra, extra" the very first word of our text translated "Here is" is the Hebrew word meaning "Behold or Look." God wants us to see here His chosen servant. God has, of course, chosen many servants such as Abraham, David, Isaiah; God even calls heathen rulers such as Nechuchadnezzar and Cyrus His servants. But here is a servant God wants us to pay special attention to - God wants us to behold this servant. This servant stands in clear contrast to the false gods and idols that Isaiah had just called worthless. This servant has great value for people and will accomplish the Lord's work. This servant pleases God, perfectly. This is a servant God will delight in at all times. Are your ears perking up just a little? I hope so. Who could be such a servant? Not Abraham, not David, not even Isaiah who stood before a holy God and admitted "woe to me I am ruined...I am a sinner." Certainly, not a single one of us is such a servant.

We need to pay attention because God tells us about this chosen servant so we make no mistake trying to identify Him. The Lord says ***“I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.”*** The Lord promises to anoint His chosen servant with His Spirit. And do you hear the great work of this servant? He will bring justice to the nations. This servant will bring peace with God and forgiveness of sins to all people. He will restore the relationship between sinners and a holy God.

How will He do this? ***“He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope.”*** He will not establish justice by His might. He won't make things right by His raw power. Unlike Cyrus He will not stomp His way to victory. He will be meek, modest, and mild. He will come gently, not shouting or raising His voice in the streets. He will not prey upon the weak or snuff out those who waver. Even the smallest faith in this servant is enough to save. Isaiah, in an earlier chapter, describes this servant as a shepherd who carries lambs in His arms and hold them close to His heart. But while this servant is gentle that does not mean He is weak or frail. He will carry out justice by His faithfulness, again, He will obey God perfectly. He will not be stopped or taken off course from His task. He will rule with His law or better here His Word - in His Word people from all places will put their hope. Are you paying attention now? I sure hope so.

Finally, this servant will be the one through whom God would keep His covenant to the Jews and open the eyes of the Gentiles. ***“I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.”*** This servant will come to give sight to the blind and release prisoners and free those who sit in darkness. He comes to save. Do you see why this deserves an *“extra, extra, read all about it”*?

God wants our full attention. God knows that if we do not pay attention to this chosen one we will be lost - forever. So behold this servant, He says. Know what you are looking for and don't miss Him. This is God's chosen, His anointed. And not only does God make His chosen servant's identity clear throughout the Old Testament, but when His chosen servant arrived God did much more than put a newspaper boy on the corner shouting the news. After the angels announce the arrival of this servant proclaiming - ***“a Savior has been born to you He is Christ the Lord,”*** we now fast forward 30 years. Jesus comes to the Jordan river to be baptized by John. Here God removes any doubt about who is His chosen servant. The Spirit descends on Jesus in the form of a dove. The heavens open. As lightning fills the sky, the Father's voice thunders this glorious announcement: ***“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to Him”*** This is the Lord's chosen servant, the Christ, the One comes to bring justice to the nations, the One who comes to save.

Do we fully understand what Jesus, God's own Son, was doing as He went to be baptized? Picture this. Jesus, the one without sin, is waiting in line with sinners for His turn. He got in line with those sinners at the Jordan River, not because He needed baptism but to say to the world: ***“Behold...I am here to become what you are, a liar, a lazy employee, a selfish husband, a whiner, a grudge-holder...I will become all this when I undergo a baptism none of you ever could - one that will take place on a cross. On the***

cross I will be drowned in your sins, meanwhile you will go free and will be declared to be what I am - a faithful son with whom the Father is well pleased.” Do we recognize this is what our baptisms have done for us? In baptism we have been connected to Jesus - to His death and resurrection. In baptism we have been covered with Christ’s righteousness - ***“for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”*** Our baptisms have given us the greatest blessing of all - we are children of God.

Do you see why God wants our attention today? Do you see why Jesus’ baptism is such a big deal that God does not want anyone to miss it? Here is the Christ, the sinner’s substitute and friend. He is gentle and meek. He wants to carry you in His arms and hold you close to His heart. No matter who you are, no matter what have done, Jesus came to be your Savior - to bring you justice and forgiveness through His sacrifice. Pay attention. Cling to Jesus in faith. Read all about it. Stand on the corner of your homes or you workplaces of your streets and tell others the good news, the biggest news, the best news. Jesus is God’s chosen servant. Jesus is the Christ, God’s anointed for you, for me, for all! Amen.