

Baptism of Our Lord 1/12/20  
Isaiah 42:1-9 A

BEHOLD MY SERVANT, WHOM I UPHOLD, MY CHOSEN, IN WHOM MY SOUL DELIGHTS; I HAVE PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM; HE WILL BRING FORTH JUSTICE TO THE NATIONS.

Jesus comes to the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist and John tries to prevent Him, but Jesus says, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."

Jesus is baptized and as He comes up out of the waters, something incredible happens. The Spirit of God descends in the form of a dove and the voice speaks from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

But, this is nothing that we didn't see coming. Years before it happened, Isaiah talked about it. He predicted it would happen, Behold My servant, whom I uphold, in whom My soul delights, I have put My spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations (v. 1)." God the Father delights in His only-begotten Son because He is God's own servant that the Father upholds by His Word and Spirit to bring forth justice to the nations. That is what Jesus has come to do.

Understand what that justice is. We turn on the evening news and hear people shouting, "No justice. No peace." Jesus has not come to bring social justice, however that is defined. This is not the justice that is meted out at the Morton/Mercer County Courthouse. This is not equity in the sense that you want justice because your neighbor makes a gazillion dollars an hour and you make minimum wage and you don't think that's right. This is God's justice and God's justice is this: He will forgive your iniquity and remember your sin no more (cf. Jer. 31:34).

And you need God's justice because God tells you to love Him with all your heart, with all soul and with all you mind and love your neighbor as yourself. But, that is not what happens. That is not what you do. Instead of loving God, you love your money, your career, your hobbies, your interests, your stuff more than God. When it comes to loving your neighbor, "love" is not the thing that describes how you relate to your neighbor. Murder, lies, lust, cheating, coveting, condemning -- these describe how you treat your neighbor. You do what you want to do.

And, all of that is sin. Sin that shows how broken we are. Sin that shows that we are unclean and deserve only God's temporal and eternal punishment.

But, God in His justice says this, "Behold My servant, whom I uphold, My chosen, in whom My soul delights; I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations (v. 1).

When Jesus wades into that water, He absorbs all the sin of the world, yours included, so that He becomes the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29)." He takes on the sin of the world so that He could be punished for you, so that He could suffer what you deserve. That's what happens as He is rejected, tried, and convicted, marched out to the place of the skull, and nailed to the cross. He bleeds and dies upon that cross for you. When Jesus bleeds and dies, He brings forth justice for the nations and God's justice is that your iniquity is forgiven and He remembers your sin no more (cf. Je 31:34).

God delivers that justice to you and makes it your very own when you are brought to the font of Baptism. As that water is poured over you and the Word is spoken over you, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus

Christ are given to you, to be your very own. The Apostle Paul says it this way in our Epistle,

“We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His (Ro 6).”

In your baptism, Christ’s death, His resurrection, His victory over the devil, His eternal life, all became yours. In your baptism, God raises you from the grave of your sin to live in Christ. God does His work in you so that He can do His work through you. By virtue of the new birth of our baptism, we live in Christ and we are Christ to the world. “Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus,” Paul writes in our Epistle (Ro 6:11).

Allow me to say this again, because it needs to be repeated:

**Substitution** is the heart of the Gospel. In His Baptism, Jesus is taking our place, by taking our sin and its wages of death upon Himself. Now, in the new birth of our Baptism, our Lord's call is to trade places with Him, to be His voice, His hands, His feet in this world. His call is to live as a holy priesthood, to live as those set apart for His own purpose. God gave the light of the guiding star to the wise men from the east to lead them to Christ. Now, God gives you to your neighbor -- God shines His Epiphany light through you -- so that He may lead your neighbor to Christ through you.

Living and moving and having your being in your Lord Christ, love is what motivates you and characterizes your relationship with your neighbor. Your love for your neighbor is shown in your joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (cf. Ga 5:22).

And, Dear Child of God, the Father delights in you because you are in Christ and, in Christ, you are His own servant. So, God upholds by His Word and Spirit in feeding you Jesus' life-giving Body and Blood and speaking His words into your ears as you hear and learn His word so that you can do His work of bring His justice to the nations. And remember, His justice is forgiving iniquity and remembering sin no more.

Which is why we pray on this Baptism of our Lord: "Father in heaven, at the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River You once proclaimed Him Your beloved Son and anointed Him with the Holy Spirit. Make all who are baptized in His Name **faithful in their calling to be Your children** and the inheritors with Him of everlasting life."