

1 Epiphany Year C

1/9/2022

Isaiah 43:1-7; Psalm 29; Acts 8:14-17; Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

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Today is the first Sunday after the Epiphany...

It is the Feast Day of the Baptism of our Lord Jesus...

This time of year, things move rather quickly through the life of Christ.

Advent celebrates the anticipation of the coming of the Savior.

Christmas celebrates the birth of our Savior.

Last Sunday, our Gospel narrative was about the only child story we have of Jesus.

Epiphany was on Thursday, although we normally recognize this day as the celebration of the wisemen worshipping the young Jesus...

It actually concerns three events

Three moments of epiphany in the life of our Lord:

The wisemen story...

The baptism of Jesus...

And next weeks lesson on the first miracle of Jesus.

Two weeks ago, we celebrated Jesus' birth...

Now we have him at about thirty years old being baptized by his cousin John.

And it was here at his baptism that Jesus begins his ministry.

He was anointed for ministry at his baptism.

Anointed by the Holy Spirit.

It was this baptism by water...

This anointing of the Holy Spirit...

That pleased the Father...

Who voiced his approval:

You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.

This is one of many places in scripture that teach us about who God is...

The Triune God...

The Holy Trinity.

For here, all are present, all three...

Jesus... God the Son is present in the obedience of his mission...

The Father is present voicing his approval...

The Holy Spirit is present... in a bodily form like a dove.

For this is the God that we worship.

Three in one...

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus was affirmed in his calling...

And it was here that Jesus embarked on his earthly ministry...

Teaching about the Kingdom of God.

Healing many people...

And training his disciples on what it means to be a follower of our Lord.

And then the ultimate time came...

The moment he was born on this earth for...

To sacrifice himself for the world.

Jesus gave his life up on the cross so that we who believe in him will live...

So that we can live on this earth full of His joy...

Full of his forgiveness...

Knowing that we have eternal life in him...

To be made full because of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

And this is our calling...

To be baptized in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

It was the words of Jesus after his resurrection before he ascended to be with the Father...

He commanded his disciples:

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy
Spirit,
and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.*
(Matthew 28:19-20)

Just as Christ our Lord was baptized...

So are we to be baptized.

Just as Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit...

So are we to be anointed by the Holy Spirit.

For it is in our baptism that we are filled with the grace of God...

We are anointed by the Holy Spirit...

To walk in the way of our Lord Jesus.

It is in our baptism where we become a fellow member of God's people.

Our baptism is a sign of following Christ in his death.

Our baptism is a confession of Jesus...

Confessing that he is our Lord...

Confessing that he is our Savior.

It is a sacred act...

A sacrament...

Where God's grace fills our life.

Just as Christ Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit...

So, we are anointed by the Holy Spirit.

And when we walk in that anointing, we are able to do what Jesus calls us to do.

We find this calling in our collect today...

Our prayer...

Again, in our tradition our theology is taught in the way that we pray...

And in our collect we prayed:

Grant that all who are baptized into his Name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess him as Lord and Savior...

Our baptism gives us the empowering Spirit of God to walk in his commands and to confess him as our Lord and Savior.

That is our calling to go forth...

A calling that we have received if we have been baptized.

And yet, it seems, perhaps too often...
That we don't live up to this high calling of God...

Sure, we try...

Sure, we don't deny God's blessing in our lives...

But this world so often can beat us down...

The trials of life...

People let us down...

And not only let us down...

We are too often hurt by people...

Even the ones that are closest to us.

The violence, disease, and rejection in this world is often unbearable.

How does our baptism speak to the troubles of our world...?

To the troubles in our life...

To the moments of our abuse...

To the moments of our deepest pain.

We speak of baptism...

We speak of the anointing of the Holy Spirit...

We may even know our Baptism Covenant forward and backward...

And yet we are often faced with fear, anxiety, and the troubles of this world.

And to these questions I will say...

Our baptism is not just a call to live up to...

We are not just anointed by the Spirit to be empowered to live rightly.

But our baptism is also the way Jesus bring us to his own...

It is in the words of our catechism (BCP, 858):

Holy Baptism is the sacrament by which God adopts us as his children and makes us members of Christ's Body, the Church, and inheritors of the kingdom of God.

Baptism is the sacrament of which we become children of God.

Just as the people of God (that is Israel) in the Old Testament were the children of God...

So, we become grafted in...

We become adopted into the family of God.

We become members in the people of God...

The ever-expanding people of God...

This is why the wisemen story is so important...

All the other players in the birth of Jesus were Jewish...

The wisemen were gentiles...

People from far away...

And yet God called them to worship the infant Jesus Christ.

We will have troubles on this earth...

The curse of sin is still present until Christ comes again...

But as baptized believers in Jesus Christ...

We are the people of God.

Children of God.

As St. Paul writes in the book of Romans:

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:16-17)

And if we understand who we are...

Even just a smidge...

Even just the smallest morsel...

Understand who we are in Christ...

It changes the entire way we view our pains and struggles in this world.

God loves us not because of what we achieve...

But he loves us because he made us who we really are.

There is nothing you can do to make God love you less...

There is nothing you can do to make God love you more...

Then he already does...

God loves you.

And once we *really* hear that...

When we get a glimpse of that...

Understanding that we are children of God...

We can take a look at the words of Isaiah 43 once more...

Where the prophet talks about the God who created us, formed us, and redeemed us.

Listen once more to our first reading...

This time from The Message paraphrase.

The words of God through the prophet Isaiah:

But now, God's Message,

the God who made you in the first place, Jacob,

the One who got you started, Israel:

"Don't be afraid, I've redeemed you.

I've called your name. You're mine.

When you're in over your head, I'll be there with you.

When you're in rough waters, you will not go down.

When you're between a rock and a hard place,

it won't be a dead end—

Because I am God, your personal God,

The Holy of Israel, your Savior.

I paid a huge price for you:

all of Egypt, with rich Cush and Seba thrown in!

That's how much you mean to me!

That's how much I love you!

I'd sell off the whole world to get you back,

trade the creation just for you.

“So don't be afraid: I'm with you.

I'll round up all your scattered children,

pull them in from east and west.

I'll send orders north and south:

'Send them back.

Return my sons from distant lands,

my daughters from faraway places.

I want them back, every last one who bears my name,

every man, woman, and child

Whom I created for my glory,

yes, personally formed and made each one.”

Your baptism in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...

Is a sacramental signpost...

A message of God's grace...

That you are deeply, deeply loved.

On this the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord...

May you truly know and believe...

That you are loved...

by our Father in heaven.

Amen.