

Baptism of Our Lord

January 12, 2025 (Year C)



PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

You do not baptize children because, as you say, they do not believe. Why, then, do you preach the Word to old folks who do not believe but who may, in the course of time, probably come to believe? You certainly do this because God commanded it.

For if you baptize me because I am able to say the words "I believe," then you baptize me on the basis of me myself and in my own name and on no other basis.

– Martin Luther –

Isaiah 43:1-7

The prophet reminded the people in exile that God, who is everlasting, is the same God who brought their ancestors out of Egypt and the bondage of slavery. If God did it before, he can certainly do it again. There will be a new Exodus, this time God will restore his people from Babylon and bring them back to Jerusalem to reside once more.

- *Why do you suppose it's so easy for us to forget what God has done in the past when our lives get turned upside down?*
- *Do the stories of the Old Testament serve to remind you of what God is capable of? Does that shed light on what God can and will do in your life?*

The words of this lesson express a clear promise from God that is not dependent upon human fulfillment of conditions. The actor in these verses is God himself, as he brings comfort and salvation through the very Word he speaks.

- *Circle all the times the word "you" appears in this text. How is this an indicator of God's promise in action? When do you hear God's promise "for you" in worship?*
- *Originally addressed to the people of Israel, how has God's promise here come to be applied to us as well? In whom are we brought into God's ancient covenant promise?*

Psalms 29

The psalmist speaks about the voice of the Lord in this hymn. Perhaps he wanted to describe it for those who had never heard: it thunders, is powerful, full of majesty, and breaks the cedars — whatever that might sound like! Perhaps it is less of a description than words of worship and praise, as he calls the congregation to attention saying: Our God is the one and only God and he alone is in charge over life and nature!

- *In what ways does this psalm speak to our current culture of ascribing wonders and majesty to a source that is not divine? (i.e. scientific data or human invention)*
- *When it comes to recognizing voices, who does Jesus say will know his voice (John 10:27)?*

Romans 6:1-11

Paul asked the Romans a very pointed question in this passage: Are we to continue in sin just because God is graceful to us and forgives us? The question implies a negative answer, "Heavens no!" The Greek phrase he used

is μη γενοιτο (may-gen-oy-toh = "let it not be"). Paul is aghast at the idea — that people would seek to sin more and more because they know of God's willingness to forgive!

- *Why do people often make the leap of logic to assume that forgiveness allows us to sin even more? How is that a sign that sin still clings to us, even as believers?*
- *In sharing the promise of Christ with others, why must we be patient with the inevitable misunderstandings and questions that will be raised? How is this a part of the task itself?*

In this text, Paul emphasized the promise that baptism unites us with Christ, and he spoke of the implications of that reality in our lives. Through baptism into Christ we are baptized into his death, buried, and one day will be raised just as Jesus was raised from the dead. Our "old selves" have been crucified – murdered! But now we are free from original sin, free to live a new life in Christ, free from slavery to sin and death.

- *In what specific ways does being united in Christ's death and resurrection inform the way we live our present lives?*
- *What does it mean to you to "consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ"? In what ways have you found that to be freeing?*

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

People were questioning John the Baptist to find out if he was the Messiah. He answered in no uncertain terms saying, "I am not the one!" The proof of that would come in a different sort of baptism. John's baptism was with water, but one mightier than he would come and baptize with the Holy Spirit. John deferred to Jesus saying that one will come after him whose shoes he is unfit to tie. He pointed to the purifying fire of the Messiah's power that will separate the "wheat" and the "chaff."

- *How was John a participant in the larger mission of Jesus? In what way do we also get to be a part of what Jesus is doing in the world? Why does this require humility on our part?*
- *In what ways have some Christian traditions mistaken the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" as something other than the Sacrament we celebrate in worship? What happens in worship as a person is baptized in regard to the giving of the Holy Spirit? (See the liturgy of Holy Baptism if you are unsure.)*
- *In what ways is Jesus' baptism of fire related to the fiery tongues of flame at Pentecost? How can the Holy Spirit come only from Jesus, and not from John?*