



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church & School
1611 E Main St., Watertown, WI 53094

The Baptism of Our Lord

January 12, 2020

“Behold My Chosen One”

(Isaiah 42:1-3)

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“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. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice” (Is. 42:1-3).

*Every day, Everywhere, By Everyone,...sharing
the grace of the Good Shepherd.*

Collect: Father in heaven, at the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River You proclaimed Him Your beloved Son and anointed Him with the Holy Spirit. Make all who are baptized in His name faithful in their calling as Your children and inheritors with Him of everlasting life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Behold. When God says to you, “Behold”, he is saying, “Slow down! Not so fast, buster. Don’t you run past this. In fact, stop everything and focus. Set aside all you scattered thoughts, all the distractions, and listen to what I shall tell you. “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.”

So John stood in the water, and people came out from everywhere to be baptized by him, and then also the Son, the Servant walked in to be baptized by John. But what is he doing there, because John’s baptism is not like ours. John’s baptism is a baptism of repentance. It’s for sinners to repent of sin and confess they are worthy of God’s punishment. And yet here comes Jesus, stepping into the dirty waters of the Jordan. Why is he there? He hasn’t done anything wrong. 1 Peter 2, “He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth” (v. 22). Hebrews 4: He “was tempted in every way as we are, and yet was without sin” (v. 15). Yet here Jesus is identifying himself with sinners, being baptized as one of them. Why? Because the Father sent Jesus to bear the sins of the world. Jesus steps down into the dark waters to soak up the sins of the world. 2 Cor. 5, “God made him who had not sin to be sin for us.”

That’s why Isaiah says, “Behold.” Slow down. This is more important than it looks. At the baptism of Jesus, the Father says, “This is my Son, the Beloved, in whom I am delighted. I am overjoyed with him. He is the joy of my heart, the apple of my eye. Look at him! I have put my Spirit on him. He will bring forth justice to the nations.”

When we hear the word “justice,” without realizing it, we tend to think about justice as defined by Aristotle. It’s about giving each what he or she deserves. It’s about equality. It’s about punishing some and rewarding others, based on what they’ve done.

But the Old Testament has something else in mind when it speaks of justice. It uses the word “*mishpat*.” The promise of

justice or *mishpat* in Isaiah isn't about giving people what they deserve; it's about making things right that have gone terribly wrong. And what's gone wrong is that sin has wrecked everything. It has introduced illness, suffering and death. It has turned the joy of work into toilsome labor. What's gone wrong is that sin has wrecked our relationship with God and with everyone else. We do not live in love as God desired. What's gone wrong for us is that we live in fear and judgment and shame because of sin.

But Behold my Servant. He's going to bring justice to the nations. He's going to make it right. He says so himself. "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (Jn. 3:17). I haven't come to condemn you, or damn you to hell. I have come to save you. That's the Father's justice, his *mishpat* for you.

And his justice to the *nations* isn't about giving the nations their due, their punishment. His justice is not like man's—assassinating a general in retaliation for his stirring up of violence followed by the bombing of a couple of air bases in retaliation for the assignation, followed by who knows what. God's justice is not about vengeance. It's about setting right what has gone wrong. "God so loved the world [and all the nations of the world] that he gave his Son." His Son is for them too. He hasn't come to condemn them or us, but to save.

Behold my Servant. Don't run by it. Slow down and listen, because he's not like other leaders. He's not brash and boisterous. He doesn't play fast and loose with the truth. He will not bring justice to the nations by threatening them, forcing his will on them. "He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street." He will organize neither riots nor military parades. He will not grab after power or even campaign for it. Philippians 2, "though in the form of God he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (v. 5). Far from brash and boisterous, there is about him a certain quietness. Do you see and hear his silence before Pilate and Herod, before the crowd demanding his crucifixion, even with the soldiers who mock him, lay the whip to him, and crucify him. "Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter. . . so he opened not his mouth" (Is. 53:7).

There's a certain gentleness about him, meekness even.

“Take my yoke upon you” he says, “and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Mt. 11:29). Isaiah 40, “He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.” So can you see the Son of God taking up the children in his arms, putting his hands on them and blessing them?

There’s a certain compassion about him too. Isaiah 63, “In all their affliction he was afflicted.” That is, so closely he identifies with us, that our pain becomes his pain; he feels it himself!

“A bruised reed he will not break.” That’s not the kind of God we have. We do that to each other, for sure. We break the bruised reed already as young bullies on the playground, or as older bullies on social media. We break the bruised reed when as compassion fatigued caregivers we hope that this one would just go ahead and die already, or as physicians who have deserted their callings, actually assist that one to finish himself off. We break bruised reeds all the time, even without knowing, by ignoring them, not recognizing their many bruises.

“A smoldering wick he does not snuff out.” Oh, but we are quick to do that ourselves, so quick to be done with one who doesn’t get the job done. Maybe because they’re slow. Maybe because they have ADHD and make mistakes. For whatever reason, we are quick to snuff out the smoldering wick, to dismiss, fire, or write off this one or that.

But again, that’s not the kind of God we have. This is the justice he brings: a tender, healing hand that works not to condemn or dismiss, but to save, and equip for service. Can you see that gang of self-righteous men who caught that woman in adultery? Can you see them picking up stones with which to kill her? And can you hear him say to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her”? (Jn. 8:7). And when they all walked away, can you see him say to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.”

He works not to destroy you but to heal you. Can you see him telling the ten lepers, “Go, show yourselves to the priest”? Can you see him saying to the demon possessed man, “Come out of him.” Can you hear him forgiving the soldiers,

though they taunted him and crucified him? Can you hear him reinstating Peter, though Peter had denied him three times? Can you see him turn Saul the persecutor into Paul the apostle?

That's the justice he's interested in. Making right that which has gone so terribly wrong, for the individual, for the nations. On the cross, it was all against one. But that One was for us all. Verse 4 of our text, "He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth."

The Father speaks to His Son, the Father who created the heavens and the earth and who "gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it" (v. 5). He says, "I am Yahweh. I have called you in righteousness. I will take you by the hand and keep you. I will give you as a covenant, a promise, a gift for the people, a light for the nations, to open eyes, to bring prisoners out from the dungeon and then out from the darkness" (v. 6).

This is his mission. He will open eyes that are physically blind, but eyes that are also blind to the Father's love. He will bring prisoners out of the gloom and darkness, not by busting through bricks and bars, but by freeing them from their captivity to sin and death and hell. Perhaps the deepest darkness known to man is when you imagine that the One who created you hates you for what you've done, is sick and tired of you. And if we only had Aristotle's justice to look forward to, then there would be nothing to look forward to, for God would surely send us all straight to hell for our sin. But behold, his is a different justice, one that brings out from the prison those who sit in darkness. Old Simeon recognized it as soon as he took up the infant in his arms. He thanked God and said, "Lord, now let your servant go in peace . . . for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for the glory of your people Israel" (Lk. 2:32).

Into that darkness that covers the whole earth, a light shines. It's a light that has lit up the dark recesses of your Gentile heart too. 2 Corinthians 4:6, "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in *our* hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

With the gift of this light, you see what really is. You know what really *is* important. You hear it in his kind words to you: "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden. I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28). That rest is his justice, the *mishpat* he came to bring to the nations, and to you and me . . . making things

right again, fixing, cleansing, healing, raising from the dead and giving eternal life.

That's why God says "Behold." Don't run past this. Slow down. Stop. Focus. "Behold, My Servant, My Son." Behold, he loves you, he doesn't hate you. Behold, my Servant, Jesus. Amen.

