

IN JESUS, GOD ESTABLISHED JUSTICE ON EARTH

Hear again the Word of the Lord to His Church on this Feast of the Baptism of our Lord:

Behold My servant Whom I uphold, My chosen One in whom My soul delights. I have gifted My Spirit upon Him. Justice for (the) Gentiles He will cause to bring forth.¹

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Our nation's calendar is approaching another secular holiday. That one was established to commemorate a victim in a struggle for civil rights in our land. Such national civil "holy" days mark one of the ways people seek to find some sense of judgment for those who have been wronged, whether that were in truth or in perception. There appears to be a basic human need to feel and believe we have created for ourselves some form of justice in our world.

For Christians who believe in and are attentive to the Word of God, that is a need fulfilled. The truth is, in Jesus, the Christ, God has established justice on earth. In Him alone God's eternal justice has been fully and completely weighed out. This divine judgment occurred in time through the Christ, because God had declared that it would. True justice is displayed to us through the revealed knowledge of the reality that when God gives His promises, He keeps them -- in His time; according to His ways; for His and for His Church's glory.

In His time, as many of you heard last week, God placed His Son, Jesus, under the full burden of the Old Covenant. According to His ways, God placed the

¹ *Isaiah 42:1.*

weight of sin, all sin of all people for all time, upon His Son, Who would bear that sin. For His glory, God raised Him upon a cross in those sins, your sins, to be a spectacle and a triumph before the world and the devil as He died in those sins. For His Church's glory, the Son of God carried our sins into the grave, having born the full unbridled wrath of the Father at all sin for all time. Jesus, with His sin-covering sacrifice, His atonement, paid the price demanded for your sins. He opened the Way in Himself for your entrance into the Presence of the only Holy God. Through His glory on the cross, God raised His Son from the dead as the first-born of the dead, and your guarantee that you have been, as you remain in Jesus the Christ, declared eternally right with our heavenly Father. It is this Son of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke some 2,700 years ago, as the Old Testament Word for today began:

Behold My servant Whom I uphold, My chosen One in whom My soul delights. I have gifted My Spirit upon Him. Justice for (the) Gentiles He will cause to bring forth.²

With the clarity that comes through the Faith, you are free to behold Jesus as the fulfillment of that promise. God firmly held Him perfectly in the Faith from life, through death, and into life. You see Him depicted here, the Chosen One of God, in Whom His soul – His eternal life – delights. You have heard again this January, as you have heard most Januarys in this place, for years, of the gift of the Spirit of the Living God Who descended upon the Son in our flesh.

² Isaiah 42:1.

You have, just last week, recalled with the Church universal the arrival of the Magi, those wise men who represent the beginning of the fulfillment of the Promise that He would bring forth justice for the Gentiles – all of us, for all time, who were not born of Jewish mothers. Now today, you have heard, as Jesus answers the Baptizer's objection to washing Him into the Word of repentance, you have again heard Jesus declare that He would fulfill all righteousness. In Jesus alone, all God's justice for sinners will come to all who would call upon Him in the Faith.

All that had been long foretold. Over seven centuries before the Son of God, fully united to humanity in the Person of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah spoke of the Chosen One. He declared that this Man in Whom there was nothing that displeases God would accomplish God's will to establish divine justice on earth. In the Spirit alone, God's Beloved One would receive all He needs to completely and fully settle God's justice on earth.

To do that, in time, as you heard today, He Who had no sin in Himself placed Himself under the water of John's baptism. God through him declared that was into repentance for the forgiveness of sins. He Who had no need to repent of anything, ever, was washed in waters used to lead sinners into repentance for God's forgiveness. It was as if the tears of all sinners for all time flowed through the Jordan that day. Jesus was plunged into sin's flood. The Chosen One of God rose from the waters of repentance to receive the Spirit Who would bear Him in the Faith all the way to the grave for sinners, for you, for me.

Thus He began to fulfill the Father's will to bring justice to all the children of Abraham by Faith. Isaiah describes how He is to bring forth this divine judgment into a world full sin. He does so by describing how His Servant, Whom you know is His Son, will execute His justice. The prophet declares:

He will not cry out, and He will not lift up (His voice), and He will not cause to make His voice heard in (the) street. (The) bruised reed He will not break, and (the) dimly burning wick He will not quench; faithfully He will cause to bring forth justice.³

God, through the prophet, declares that His Chosen Servant, the Christ, the Man in Whom God delights is He Whom bold Old and New Covenant faithful discover in this text.⁴ He speaks of the Christ bringing justice to the world in a most unworldly manner. Think of the phrases God inspired, all which state the things He will *not* do! You have repeatedly heard the description of an humble Servant, the Justice-bringer Who is without harshness.

His way is not the way of the world, but the way of God. Think of the contrast the Christ has when compared to human rulers. Imagine an American president who does not cry out against that which he feels unjust; who will not lift up his voice to right those things which he in himself determines to be injustices; who would refrain from taking to the court of public opinion his desires to make the wrongs he perceives into the rights he thinks they should be. What President in our lifetimes has held back

³ *Isaiah 42:2-3.*

⁴ Targum, and *Matthew 12*, etc.

from using all the means of communication available to him to rally people to his causes?

There has not been such a ruler in the modern era. Who would follow such a man?

People want our leaders to lead. They want them to fulfill our desires, to grant us justice – those things and ideas which they believe they have as our rights. They desire rulers to rally them, to triumph over those whom they have defeated – in the polls, in the court of public opinion, in Washington, on the battlefields.

Yet, it is a humble Man whom the Lord calls His Chosen One, His Servant, in Whom He delights, Whom He chooses to execute justice for all people, Jew and Gentile alike. Think of how this Man led. For three years – counting the Passovers recorded in the Gospels – Jesus, upon Whom the Spirit rested before His temptation in the wilderness and the beginning of His public ministry – Jesus did not cry out to rally people to His cause of justice.

Yes, He called people to repentance, and He corrected, chastised, unrepentant sinners. Yes, He cried out that the Father would forgive those who sinned against Him, even begging for forgiveness for those who put Him to death. Yes, His words were heard in the street – to not weep for Him but to cry for themselves and for their children.

Jesus brought justice, not by enacting more laws to right real or perceived wrongs. Jesus came with judgment, not with the force of police or might of armies, but by bearing the sins of sinners into death. He did not enact executive orders to right wrongs in His kingdom. Rather, He was executed on the orders of those whom God had called to bring justice in this world. He brought forth, He brings forth, justice for all

sinners. Of His rule, of His humble bringing of justice for all people, God, through the prophet Isaiah declares:

He will not fail, and He will not be discouraged until His establishment in (the) Lord's justice in earth; and the coastlands wait for His Torah.⁵

Jesus is the only person in all history, of Whom those words can be rightly and perfectly spoken. He, even though He appeared to have failed, conquered. He established His victory and brought justice, God's true and pure judgment to those who cannot in themselves attain it. He established the Torah, the Word of Law and Gospel as God's means to bring sinners to repentance, the unjust to the Just, the faithless to the Faithful One. For centuries, the world waited, looking for true justice.

For centuries, the world has lived under that justice. It is that which comes to all people through simple means, an abundance of grace which many reject. It comes by the Word of God, even as the prophet Isaiah declares:

Thus, says God, YHWH, Who created the heavens and stretched out the heavens, and Who spread forth the land, and Who causes that which comes from it and Who gives breath to people upon it and spirit to those walking in it.⁶

There you have the Creator preparing to declare how He will bring His justice to the world. He speaks through the prophet, and prepares those who will hear to receive His judgment in the coming of the Christ. The One who has created all things, who gives life to all people, establishes the call and calling of God's Chosen Servant, the

⁵ *Isaiah 42:4.*

⁶ *Isaiah 42:5.*

One in Whom He delights. He then declares the work that His Servant will continue to do, as he says of the Christ:

"I YHWH called You, I called You in righteousness, and I have taken Your hand and kept You, and I have given You for covenant to people, for light to Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to cause to bring out from dungeon prisoners, from house of prison those who sit in darkness."⁷

You heard the Lord call His Servant in the record of scripture read there today. Of all who have heard the call of the Lord into His service, only One has ever been called Who is, in Himself, perfectly right with the Father. From before the foundation of the world, the Son was held in the Father's love. He held Him, the Word, and kept Him.

Then, in time, He sent the Son into the world, into our flesh. He became one with us in Jesus. He established Him as the New Covenant, this One which is for all people, not just for the Israelites. He came into the world to bring the Light of God, the Light of life to those, to we who were conceived and born in sin. He came to bear our sins, to establish the means for us to leave the prison-house of sin. He is Jesus, and He is here in the means of grace of His New Covenant, for you, and for me.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

The Baptism of our Lord (*Lutheran Service Book* one-year series)

Isaiah 42:1-7; I Corinthians 1:26-31; Matthew 3:13-17

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Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

Soli Deo Gloria

⁷ *Isaiah 42:6-7.*

TRANSLATION, SECOND DRAFT

Behold My servant whom I uphold, My chosen One in whom My soul delights. I gave My Spirit upon Him; justice He will cause to bring forth to (the) Gentiles.

He will not cry out, and He will not lift up (His voice), and He will not make His voice heard in (the) street.

(The) bruised reed He will not break, and (the) dimly burning wick He will not quench; faithfully He will cause to bring out justice.

He will not fail, and He will not be discouraged until His establishment in (the) Lord's justice in earth; and the coastlands wait for His Torah.

For, says the God, YHWH, Who created the heavens and stretched out the heavens, and Who spread forth the land, and Who causes that which comes from it and Who gives breath to people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it:

"I YHWH called You, I called You in righteousness, and I have taken Your hand and kept You, and I have given You for covenant to people, for light to Gentiles.

To open blind eyes, to cause to bring out from dungeon prisoners, from house of prison those who sit in darkness."

Then, having been baptized, Jesus immediately came up from the water. And behold, were opened to Him the heavens and He saw the Spirit of God descending like (a) Dove, also coming upon Him. Then behold, (a) Voice from the heavens saying, "This One remains My Son, the Beloved One in Whom I am well pleased."⁸

⁸ Matthew 3:16- 17.