

## **HE NEEDED TO TAKE SIN UPON HIMSELF**

Hear again the theme texts for this day of Baptismal remembrance in the life of the Church, in your life:

*But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him.<sup>1</sup>*

*Faithfulness from (the) land will spring up;  
and Righteousness from (the) heavens will look down.<sup>2</sup>*

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

This is a day in the Church Year given to us to remember baptisms; that of John's baptizing Jesus and that of God's baptizing you. The two are very different and the second is dependent upon the first. From our theme texts just proclaimed, the two are tied together in our hearing with the words translated "righteousness." As most of you recall, that word, used in the churchly sense, means, "to be right with God the Father." For Jesus, such righteousness came from eternity, as He was, is, and ever shall be the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. For you, me, and all those who are baptized and believe in Christ-crucified for the forgiveness of our, of your, sins, Christ's righteousness was imputed to us: we, you, have been declared right with the Father through the water and the Word. We shall treat the first theme text first:

*But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him.<sup>3</sup>*

*In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. On what day of the year do you remember your baptismal birthday? For some Christians, that day is not recalled. For others, it is remembered through the lighting of a baptismal candle, a note in the church bulletin, an email or perhaps through gifts received from a baptismal sponsor or two.*

*For many believers, rejoicing in the day of their baptisms quickly gives way to celebrating the day on which they were born into this world. People who joyfully remember their "birthdays" each year seem to forget that, before God, each of us was truly born dead in trespasses and sins.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 3:15, NASB

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 85:12.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 3:15, NASB

*On the other hand, it is only through the new birth that God gives to us that we are given the forgiveness of sins and genuine eternal life. On one's baptismal birthday then, a person actually has an eternal reason to rejoice, and to hear a genuine, "Happy Birthday!"*

*In the mind of God, all of that began for you long before you were born. It was His design that He would send the eternal Son to be born of a woman as you were. Yet, He would be without sin. Good for Jesus! But what does the Son of God's sinless conception and birth do for you?*

*Since Jesus was conceived and born without sin, to fulfill God's plan, He needed to take sin upon Himself. That appears to be the reason why John paused before giving in to baptize Jesus. He looked at his Cousin and appeared to say: "You should wash away my sins!"*

*Jesus, in love for all who were, are, or will be conceived in sin, responded, "You must permit it now. For thus it remains fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." The work of declaring you right with the Father began at Jesus' conception, birth, and circumcision. It continues in His baptism. It ended on the cross. Jesus was then raised from the dead to declare you right with the Father.*

*So, when God baptized you, you died and rose to new life with Jesus. His atonement became yours; His justification before the Father was given to you! So, on what day of the year do you remember your baptismal birthday?*

*Every day you are free to recall your baptismal birthday as you speak the Name you have been given: "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, + and of the Holy Spirit..." Amen. <sup>4</sup>*

For some of you, those nine paragraphs may have sounded familiar. That is because, if you avail yourself of the nationally published Higher Things "Reflections;" in your morning devotional time before attending the Lord's Services here, you would have read them, word-for-word.<sup>5</sup> They have been presented here so that you may, in hearing them, exercise your baptismal vocations – callings – to test the spirits. That is, you need to be more than just aware that your pastors are "doing some things" for the larger Church catholic. You are called to be attentive to our work, to test it against the Word of God, and to engage in the use of those things which you share with the Church out of God's treasury.

---

<sup>4</sup> Morehouse, Michael A. *Higher Things Reflections*, internet.

<http://cdn.higherthings.org/imgs/uploads/reflections/reflections-epiphany-prelent-2014.pdf>, accessed January 12, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> <http://higherthings.org/>

Some people are impressed that their pastor(s) are published nationally and internationally. That is too bad. Rather, you should be pleased, and joyful, that God has moved you to share our work beyond these walls, that others may hear and believe the Good News of Jesus' death in our sins and His resurrection to present us right with the Heavenly Father. Give thanks to God that you, for the most part, as a congregation, have become more curved outward with the Gospel into this world, than turned inward on yourselves. So, from that which is declared in here, know that you who reflect on the words proclaimed here are free to reflect on the words declared beyond here, not just on Sundays, but on each day of the week.

If you are not in the practice of regular, daily, reflections in the Word of God, repent! Turn from neglecting God's gifts, from leaving such to the so-called "professionals" in the Church. Know that Christ kept the Word of God for you. He who has been washed in your sins has carried them into death and the grave for you. He has risen to new life, and grants such to you now as a present and eternal possession. You are given the gift of baptism, and are truly free to die with Christ and rise to new life in Him each day through your reflections upon the Word of God. In Him, in Jesus the Christ, are the words of today's second theme text fulfilled:

*Faithfulness from (the) land will spring up;  
and Righteousness from (the) heavens will look down.<sup>6</sup>*

The Psalm today long foreshadowed the events that are significant for your earthly and eternal life which happened at the Jordan River almost two thousand years ago. We who are blessed to look backward in time, to the wonders which God has done for us, are freed to see both prophecy and fulfillment of the Word of God united in the day's texts. In the Word of the Psalm, we hear just a bit more about God's Word of peace to His people; His Word which brings repentance; His salvation; His glory; His loving-kindness joined to His faithfulness; His righteousness and peace greeting each other; His faithfulness on earth being seen by His righteousness in the heavens; His giving good,

---

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 85:12.

which does come to us now in the land; and, His righteousness that goes before Him to prepare the Way for His footsteps. Today, as this sermon has just passed the half-way mark, we are going to zero-in on the last part of the eighty-fifth Psalm.

(If we were to work through the whole Psalm this day, as say, Dr. Luther did, these notes would consist of about 22 pages of typeset. You who are regular in hearing the word of God in this place have become accustomed to hearing proclamations of the Word from about eight pages of double-space, size 14 font notes. We are living in a very different era than those whom God allowed to rediscover His grace and mercy in Christ, without human merit, almost five centuries ago). On to the parings which declare Christ in the Psalm:

*Let me hear what will word, the El,  
YWHW, thus will word, "shalom" to His people,  
and to His saints and not let them turn back to folly.<sup>7</sup>*

In the Psalm, the prophet wills to hear the Word of the God. That is the will that God has given to you, and why He has brought you to this place today – to hear the preached Word. In that word, the psalm writer promises that God's Word will declare *shalom*, peace, to His people, and use that declaration to call them, to call you, back from your folly of leaving His Word, of falling back into sin.

You hear of the Word of *shalom* every time you hear of God's gift of Christ Jesus for you. You know you have peace when you remember that, in the means God chose, you have already died to sin and been raised to new life. In the Word of grace, you hear, know, and believe that you have peace with God, and have been saved from His just wrath. Our Psalm continues, as it, with one Word, begins to declare Jesus:

*Surely at hand for (the) ones fearing Him (is) His Yeshua;  
for (it) may be dwelling, glory, in our land.<sup>8</sup>*

Yeshua, Jesus, is Salvation. The Psalm declares, centuries before He became one with us in the incarnation, that Salvation was at hand. His glory, proclaimed

---

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 85:9.

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 85:10.

throughout the season just past to the Jews first, and is proclaimed now, in the second week of this season which marks God's appearance in the flesh to those who were not born of Jewish mothers. Wherever God's Yeshua, His Jesus, is proclaimed, His glory is in the Land! It is here today, for you, in Word and sacraments. In His glory, the text continues, true good is paired. Here the wonderful couplings that are yours in your Jesus, your Yeshua, your Salvation:

*Hesed and Faithfulness will meet;  
Righteousness and Shalom will kiss.<sup>9</sup>  
Faithfulness from (the) land will spring up;  
and Righteousness from (the) heavens will look down.<sup>10</sup>*

Six pairings may be found in those words. That which we translate, "loving kindness," or "steadfast mercy," is paired with "faithfulness." "Righteousness" is connected to "peace." Then, going out from the center again, "faithfulness" is coupled to "righteousness." All of these are found, discover, proclaimed, and given from the One who came to John at the Jordan River, that all God's righteousness may be fulfilled. From that Presence, from the washing Jesus received, our Psalm declares:

*Also, YHWH will gift the Good;  
and our land will give (its) increase.<sup>11</sup>*

Our text concludes:

*Righteousness before His Face will go;  
and make (the) Way before His footsteps.<sup>12</sup>*

Here, for you today, God's footsteps in the waters are seen. Here, as you come forward to receive His gifts, you pass that which, in His baptism, Jesus has set aside to wash away your sins. There, you are freed to recline in His Real Presence, to feast at His Table, and to confess with one accord: "In Christ, I have been joined in a

---

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 85:11.

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 85:12.

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 85:13.

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 85:14.

united confession of Christ-crucified Who loves me enough to come to me with His Real Presence through simple means." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

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

Baptism of our Lord/Epiphany I (*Lutheran Service Book* one-year series)

Psalm 85; Isaiah 42:1-7; I Corinthians 1:26-31; Matthew 3:13-17

January 12, 2014

*Pastor Michael H. Merhouse*

***Soli Deo Gloria***

## Higher Things Reflections

January 12-January 18 Reflections were written by Rev. Michael Morehouse, pastor of Catalina Lutheran Church in Tucson, Arizona.

### The First Sunday after Epiphany

January 12, 2014

Today's Reading: Matthew 3:13-17

Daily Lectionary: Ezekiel 34:1-24; Romans 3:19-31

*But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him. (Matthew 3:15, NASB)*

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. On what day of the year do you remember your baptismal birthday? For some Christians, that day is not recalled. For others, it is remembered through the lighting of a baptismal candle, a note in the church bulletin, an email or perhaps through gifts received from a baptismal sponsor or two.

For many believers, rejoicing in the day of their baptisms quickly gives way to celebrating the day on which they were born into this world. People who joyfully remember their "birthdays" each year seem to forget that, before God, each of us was truly born dead in trespasses and sins.

On the other hand, it is only through the new birth that God gives to us that we are given the forgiveness of sins and genuine eternal life. On one's baptismal birthday then, a person actually has an eternal reason to rejoice, and to hear a genuine, "Happy Birthday!"

In the mind of God, all of that began for you long before you were born. It was His design that He would send the eternal Son to be born of a woman as you were. Yet, He would be without sin. Good for Jesus! But what does the Son of God's sinless conception and birth do for you?

Since Jesus was conceived and born without sin, to fulfill God's plan, He needed to take sin upon Himself. That appears to be the reason why John

paused before giving in to baptize Jesus. He looked at his Cousin and appeared to say: "You should wash away my sins!"

Jesus, in love for all who were, are, or will be conceived in sin, responded, "You must permit it now. For thus it remains fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." The work of declaring you right with the Father began at Jesus' conception, birth, and circumcision. It continues in His baptism. It ended on the cross. Jesus was then raised from the dead to declare you right with the Father.

So, when God baptized you, you died and rose to new life with Jesus. His atonement became yours; His justification before the Father was given to you! So, on what day of the year do you remember your baptismal birthday? Every day you are free to recall your baptismal birthday as you speak the Name you have been given: "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, + and of the Holy Spirit..." Amen.

*"For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law." (Romans 3:28, NIV)*

©2014 Higher Things, Inc.

Further Notes, Morehouse:

Parallels:

*Mark 1:9-11:* Jesus came from Nazareth, Jesus saw the heavens parting, "You are My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased";

*Luke 3:21f:* Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, Voice from heavens says: "You are My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased," followed by "Jesus began His ministry...;"

*John 1:29-34:* John bore witness saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon

whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

*Then Jesus comes alongside, from Galilee by the Jordan, toward John to be baptized by him.*<sup>13</sup>

*But John tried to prevent Him, repeatedly saying, “I have need to be baptized by You; yet You come to me?”*<sup>14</sup>

*But answering, Jesus said to him, “You must permit it now. For thus it remains fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he permits Him.*<sup>15</sup>

Jesus went down with sinners. He took on the sinner’s baptism, though He was without sin.

Parallel: Matthew 5:17- *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*<sup>16</sup>

*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.*<sup>17</sup>

Heaven opens to reveal God’s purpose.

Parallels:

*Ezekiel 1:1 - Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.*<sup>18</sup>

*Acts 10:9b-11 - Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth.*<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 3:13.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 3:14.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 3:15.

<sup>16</sup>The Holy Bible: King James Version. 1995. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 3:16.

<sup>18</sup>The Holy Bible: King James Version. 1995. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

<sup>19</sup>The Holy Bible: King James Version. 1995. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

*I Peter 4:14 - If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. <sup>20</sup>*

*Isaiah 11:2 - And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;<sup>21</sup>*

*John 12:28 - Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.<sup>22</sup>*

*Matthew 12:17-18 - That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.<sup>23</sup>*

*Matthew 17:5 - While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.<sup>24</sup>*

*Genesis 22:2 - And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.<sup>25</sup>*

*Psalms 2:7 - I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. <sup>26</sup>*

*Isaiah 42:1 - Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.<sup>27</sup>*

*Isaiah 62:4 - Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. <sup>28</sup>*

*Jeremiah 31:20 - Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD. <sup>29</sup>*

---

<sup>20</sup>The Holy Bible: King James Version. 1995. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

<sup>21</sup>The Holy Bible: King James Version. 1995. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

<sup>22</sup>The Holy Bible: King James Version. 1995. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

<sup>23</sup>The Holy Bible: King James Version. 1995. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

<sup>24</sup>The Holy Bible: King James Version. 1995. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

<sup>25</sup>The Holy Bible: King James Version. 1995. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

<sup>26</sup>The Holy Bible: King James Version. 1995. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

<sup>27</sup>The Holy Bible: King James Version. 1995. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

<sup>28</sup>The Holy Bible: King James Version. 1995. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

<sup>29</sup>The Holy Bible: King James Version. 1995. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

Dove is a symbol of Israel in Hosea 7:11; 11:11. Used extensively for the Bride in the Song of Songs.

God Himself has honored Baptism by words and deeds such as these. God has confirmed Baptism in this text by wonders from heaven. *Do you think it was a jest that the heavens opened when Christ allowed Himself to be baptized, that the Holy Spirit descended visibly, and that the divine glory and majesty were manifested everywhere?*<sup>30</sup>

*Then behold, (a) Voice from the heavens saying, "This One remains My Son, the Beloved One in Whom I am well pleased."*<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Tappert, et. al. *The Book of Concord*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959. 439.

<sup>31</sup> *Matthew 3:17.*