

GOOD NEWS PROPHECY FULFILLED IN CHRIST JESUS

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 gave My Spirit upon Him; justice He will cause to bring forth to (the) Gentiles.¹

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

This morning's the Lord's service to His people was preceded by a powerful 20th century hymn. In it, we declared God's sending His Light—Who is Christ—Who thrusts back the darkness of sin, death and hell. Then, just before this sermon, we sang of Jesus' Baptism in a wonderful 16th century hymn. There we declared the fulfillment of the Good News prophecy that is fulfilled in Christ Jesus. That of course, followed our Collect Prayer that summed up the theme of the First Sunday in Epiphany chosen centuries ago. All of that has been done to draw together in your hearts and minds the Good News declared fulfilled for all people in the Baptism of our Lord. Our text began:

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.²

As you heard the reading of the Old Testament for this day, did you recall that several of those phrases show up regularly in the Sunday services? You will sing some of them later today. After you have received the forgiveness that comes from the Lord's justice on earth, the personal touch of Jesus in, with, and under the elements of bread and wine, you will sing the ancient words of the Nunc Dimittis. There, using words Simeon was moved to declare as he held the Salvation of Israel in his arms, you will declare that God sent Jesus, before the face of all people to be a light, and His glory. As you sing, you are free to remember that you have taken God's Light of revelation into you. These are the words, in particular, from which this teaching is drawn:

"I have given You for covenant to people, for light to Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to cause to bring out prisoners from (the) dungeon, from (the) house of prison those who sit in darkness."³

¹ Isaiah 42:1.

² Isaiah 42:1.

³ Isaiah 42:6b-7.

At least once a year, those words show up in the Lord's Services. It is helpful for you to know when the readings show up, for they lead you into the light and life of Christ. In the first half of the Church Year, that is into Christ incarnate in the flesh, living, dying, rising, ascending in the body. In the second half of the Church Year, you are led by the readings into Christ in the Church through Word and Sacraments.

Remember, Faith comes through hearing – the hearing of God's Word.⁴ The more you hear – read, mark, learn and inwardly digest – the Word of God, the more you will recognize it when it falls upon your ears. The Holy Spirit uses the means of the Word, planted into your ears, to reveal to you, to you all as one, the mysteries of God! To hear again of the revelation of God's mystery, hidden for almost eight centuries under promise, we return to the first line of the Old Covenant reading for this day:

*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.*⁵

Those are God's Word of promise, given by Him through the mediation of the prophet for the faithful to cling to as they were soon to be headed into exile on account of the unfaithful, unbelieving majority of their nation. The Lord's Promise to send His Anointed One, their Messiah/Christ was given to hold them up in the truth that God would lead them into freedom from sin, death and the devil, and into life eternal. For generations, the faithful clung to that promise. Why even some of their teachers held forth that the opening line of the text was best read, "Behold, My Servant, the Messiah."⁶ Others, failing to capture the pure Promise of God's grace in the Messiah, translated the text, "Behold My servant Jacob, My chosen One, Israel, in whom My soul delights." Even so, the context of this ancient Hebrew text literally is rendered as you have heard it translated repeatedly today:

*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.*⁷

⁴ Romans 10:17.

⁵ Isaiah 42:1.

⁶ Aramaic Targum cited by Aug. Pieper, "Isaiah II," p.176.

⁷ Isaiah 42:1.

As the Lord moved Isaiah to open the first of his “Servant Songs,” he set the text in the context that shows it declares the Servant to be the Messiah, the Christ. The New Testament Scriptures, as the ultimate translators of the Old Covenant texts, makes clear God’s intent in giving His promise to His faithful people whose lives would be darkened, by the fall of their nations (Israel and Judah), captivity, and deportation. God’s Word of promise would sustain the faithful through more than seven centuries as they suffered under one worldly pagan ruler after another. Hear again the prophecy and its fulfillment that bore up the few in their times of trial and tribulation:

*Behold My servant whom I uphold, My chosen One in whom My soul delights.
I gave My Spirit upon Him...*

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

God gave the prophecy through Isaiah to the people of old to the ages. In the water of the Jordan as Jesus came up from that water it was declared that one—Jesus—was the one whom God’s pleasure lasted—upon one whom His Spirit was given. There it is shown to Jesus and to John, so we have two witnesses that fulfill the Old Covenant’s requirement for a pure testimony in a court of law. There we have declared that Jesus is the one the people have been waiting for. In the Spirit’s descent, the Father places His word upon the Son.

There are more mysteries to be revealed, as we hear the next Word of encouragement to those who were, and are, suffering under sin’s assaults:

He will not cry out, and He will not lift up (His voice), and He will not make His voice heard in (the) street.⁹

⁸ Matthew 3:16-17

⁹ Isaiah 42:2

Since we hear Isaiah's song to be that of the one we call the suffering servant, we see a Messiah, a Christ, an anointed one of God who would lead his people, not in the way of a conquering, triumphant military leader shouting, "Follow me!"

*He will not cry out. He will not lift up his voice. He will not make his voice heard in the street.*¹⁰

No, He will gather where his people are found, where those who are in need.

He will speak to them of the fulfillment of God's promises in Him. He will heal their diseases, take their infirmities upon himself. He will declare to them the forgiveness that he came to bring. That same Christ comes to you today in this fallen world, a world in where many people look to political entities, to rulers across the world, to bring about peace and true justice.

We have the One who does not cry out against them but against sin, and who took sin upon Himself, that sinners might be free – that they might hear these words of mystery and find in them the Christ of the Scriptures. The Word continues:

*(The) bruised reed He will not break, and (the) dimly burning wick He will not quench; faithfully He will cause to bring out justice.*¹¹

The people long ago, who would suffer for the iniquities of their fathers, their brothers and sisters, needed this consolation. Weighed down with punishment their faith had not brought upon them, yet suffering, many would say, unjustly, they were given God's Word of comfort. And so too are you. When this world and its trials, when the devil and his temptations, when your own sinful flesh moves you toward sin, you are given God's word of comfort.

The reality is from this text, *(The) bruised reed He will not break, and (the) dimly burning wick He will not quench;*¹² is that you, brothers and sisters cannot outsin the grace of God. No matter how far you have wandered from God and His Word, He still comes

¹⁰ Isaiah 42:2

¹¹ Isaiah 42:3

¹² Isaiah 42: 3a

to draw you back, to move you to repentance – to give you His blood-bought forgiveness.

For Christians today, those words mean that God will not break the repentant sinner, who cries out to Him for forgiveness. God will not extinguish the Faith that clings to His means of forgiveness, no matter how dimly Faith seems to glow.

Have you ever said, “I don’t have enough faith,” or “My faith is lacking”? Repent of that! In baptism you have been given the faith of Jesus. That is perfect faith. You have His faith upon which you might call. He is faithful because He fulfills His promises just as he shows in this text. You have enough faith, for you have the faith of Christ, which defeated sin, death, devil himself and opened the gates of hell to free the captives to head them into heaven – to lead you into His presence. God in Christ nurtures the faith by ever calling the faithful to return to His sacrifice for our sins. He calls you to return daily to your baptism. The Prophecy you know by the Faith to be completed in Jesus the Christ continues:

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 law and gospel.¹³

Years ago, people waiting in captivity – Babylon – under the Greeks and then the Romans, they held onto those words of Promise. And God in His good time fulfilled His word. Just so, you who have been liberated from captivity to sin, death and the devil are not, as you remain in the Faith, to be discouraged. For you know and you believe and live because it comes forth from your mouth as you sing the words of the Lord’s services. The reality that God has, in the depth of the Christ, established His justice on earth. This is not justice as the world sees justice. To place the errors, the sins, the trials and all the failings on one man – and that man sinless in himself. But it is the justice of God, to reverse that which Adam did when he brought sin into the world. By placing upon Jesus all sin, allowing Him to carry to death and the grave for you. His justice was to punish

¹³ Isaiah 42:4.

his beloved for all mankind, but most especially for you who continue to believe in His justice in the Christ. Nothing He did in establishing His justice was done on account of who you are, or what you do or how much faith you have, what your foremothers or forefathers did or did not do. It was all done solely for you out of God's grace, mercy and love – for what He would make you – forgiven sinners, bound in Him together with all who call upon His name in the Faith. You see, you are also the fulfillment of this prophecy, for you live here, in the coastlands far from the promise. Hear and believe God's word:

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:¹⁴

That dear ones is the Creator God giving forth His Word to create new life in you, to return you again to the word which restores you to rightness with the Father. He says,

"I YHWH [the LORD have] 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."¹⁵

Do you notice who did all the work? God did the work. *"I have called you. I have done it. I have led you. I have brought you out."*

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)

Psalm 100:1-2a (Isaiah 6:1b, Revelation 19:6); Isaiah 42:1-7; I Corinthians 1:26-31; Matthew 3:13-17

January 8, 2017

Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

Soli Deo Gloria

¹⁴ *Isaiah* 42:5.

¹⁵ *Isaiah* 42:6-7.

*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."*