

The Baptism of Our Lord - January 8, 2023  
Text: Romans 6:1-11  
Theme: Anointed for Service

**In the Old Testament reading, we hear God saying through the prophet Isaiah,**

**"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."**

**"I have put my Spirit upon him." Who is the "him" of whom Isaiah speaks? Not Isaiah, because Isaiah certainly cannot accomplish what the text goes on to describe, "he will bring forth justice to the nations." In the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 12, the Evangelist quotes this section from Isaiah. It is when the religious leaders are opposing Jesus for violating Sabbath Law. Jesus had allowed the disciples to gather grain on the Sabbath because they were hungry, and He had healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. The Pharisees wanted to know who He thought He was violating Sabbath Law. Matthew correctly identifies who "He" is of whom Isaiah speaks. Matthew says,**

**"This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:  
'Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; and in his name the Gentiles will hope.'"**

**Matthew quotes almost verbatim from the prophet, Isaiah. The "Him" of whom Isaiah speaks is the same "Him" who Matthew follows as a disciple. It is Jesus.**

**Today we celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord when the people who were gathered at the Jordan River literally saw Jesus anointed with the Holy Spirit as he descended upon Him. But the question that we ought to ask is "so what?" How does Jesus being anointed with the Holy Spirit impact us? That is where St. Paul's epistle to the Romans helps us out. We say these words from St. Paul at every funeral service.**

**"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."**

**Because we have been baptized, we too have been anointed with the Holy Spirit just like Jesus was. When Jesus died on the cross, our sinful nature died as well. When Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, we rose too as holy, redeemed people of God who had once more received their place in the family of God. When we were baptized, we received what Isaiah promised. We are the Gentiles of whom Isaiah and Matthew speak – the Gentiles who have received God's justice and that is amazing news for us because without it, we are damned.**

**However, you and I both know that righteous and holy or not, we continue to sin. Anyone who says that they don't sin is a liar. We all sin. Why? If Jesus died for us and rose for us, why do we continue to sin? What we live with day in and day out is the left overs of our broken, corrupt, sinful human nature. Sin is sort of like cancer. We come here and we confess our sins. We remember our baptisms and we receive the body and blood of Christ. All our sin is forgiven. We are completely clean. But you can't fix original sin in this sinful body. Original sin is not something we do but something we are. The doctors tell us that a great many of us have cancer but it just has not shown itself yet. It is lurking in a cell somewhere. One day, it may decide to start growing. Maybe the doctors will cut it out or radiate it or poison it with chemotherapy, and it might be beaten back for a while but it's still there corrupting our flesh until it decides to start growing again. Paul says,**

**"We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him."**

**That is what your baptism means. You are free from sin. Now, sin will still affect you. Because there is sin in the world there is death, disease, war, famine. You might also choose to sin. We all have free will. When I say you are free from sin, I mean that sin has no eternal consequences for you and cannot overpower you. No one**

**is forced to sin and sin cannot cause you any pain beyond this life. When you think about sending that rude or hostile text or writing that hurtful email, remember that you don't have to do it. You are free from the power of sin. When you want to lie to protect yourself, remember that you don't have to do it. You are free from the power of sin. When you are sick of your spouse and think about how appealing that certain other person is, you don't have to pursue that thought. You are free to live a life worthy of the anointing you have received. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit and just as Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit to complete the work for which the Father sent Him, you have been anointed by the Father in Holy Baptism to complete the work that He has given you as well.**

**In the coming weeks of the Epiphany season, we will see more and more of the power of that anointing we have received through Jesus in our baptisms. Are we making good use of it? Are we even aware of the power we have? Remember when Jesus told His disciples that if they had faith the size of a mustard seed, they could move mountains? What can we accomplish for the Lord if we are serious about using the power that He has given us in our baptisms?**

**On this day we celebrate Jesus' baptism because His anointing passes through the water of baptism into us. Our original sin has**

**been drowned. Don't ever let Satan tempt you to believe that you are hanging by a thread over the fires of Hell because of your sin. Your sin was forgiven when your original sinful nature died in baptism. It is true that like cancer continues to hide out and try to cause mischief in our bodies, original sin will do the same, but, unlike cancer, the plague of sin has been cured. We are citizens of Heaven anointed to serve our God now in this life and forever in eternity. Never forget who your baptism has made you.**