

Baptism of our Lord

January 8, 2023

The theme for the Epiphany season is the showing forth of Jesus as God's Son, the Messiah, our Savior. He was first known publicly at His baptism.

The Baptism of Jesus is the source of the power and application of Holy Baptism. As God the Holy Trinity was present there, so He is present in every Baptism in His holy Name. Since earliest times, Christians have shared the conviction that all which Jesus placed into the water of His Baptism is bestowed by His Word in the water of our own Baptism. Our Baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is a “washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5) in which we receive Christ’s righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

We are bold to confess that such water united with the Word of God is nothing less than a “gracious water of life and renewing in the Holy Spirit.” It is no mere initiation. Holy Baptism confers an entire lifetime of Christian vocation—that *“the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires and, again, a new man daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”* (Luther’s Small Catechism.)

The People That in Darkness Sat

Lutheran Service Book 412, Lutheran Worship 77, The Lutheran Hymnal 106



1 The peo - ple that in dark - ness sat A glo - rious
2 To hail Thee, Sun of Righ - teous - ness, The gath - 'ring
3 To us a Child of hope is born, To us a
4 His name shall be the Prince of Peace, The Ev - er -



light have seen; The light has shined on them who long In
na - tions come; They joy as when the reap - ers bear Their
Son is giv'n, And on His shoul - der ev - er rests All
last - ing Lord, The Won - der - ful, the Coun - sel - or, The



shades of death have been, In shades of death have been.
har - vest trea - sures home, Their har - vest trea - sures home.
pow'r in earth and heav'n, All pow'r in earth and heav'n.
God by all a - dored, The God by all a - dored.

5 His righteous government and pow'r
Shall over all extend;
On judgment and on justice based,
His reign shall have no end,
His reign shall have no end.

6 Lord Jesus, reign in us, we pray,
And make us Thine alone,
Who with the Father ever art
And Holy Spirit, one,
And Holy Spirit, one.

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L In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth. (*Psalm 124:8*)

L Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

C Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. (*Psalm 19:12, 13*)

L If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord who could stand?

C But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared. (*Psalm 130:3–4*)

L Let us, confess before God that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and as His people let us take refuge in His infinite mercy seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, saying:

C God, be merciful to me, a sinner, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen. (*Luke 18:13*)

L Almighty God, merciful Father, in Your holy Church, You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

Introit Psalm 2:7–11, 12c; antiphon Isaiah 42:1a

L Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights.

C I will tell of the decree:

The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you.

L Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.

C You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

L Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.

C Serve the Lord with fear,
and rejoice with trembling,

L for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessèd are all who take refuge in him.

C Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

L Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights.

Kyrie

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Christ, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |

Gloria in Excelsis ~ Glory to God in the Highest

- L** Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
- C** **Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father: We worship You, we give You thanks, and we praise You for Your glory.**
- L** Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, You are Lord and God, You are the Lamb of God:
- C** **Lord Jesus Christ, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.**
- L** Lord Jesus Christ, You are seated at the right hand of the Father; and we ask you to graciously receive our prayer.
- C** **For You alone are the Holy One,
You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

Collect of the Day

- L** Let us pray: 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.
- C** **Amen.**

Isaiah 42:1–9

- ¹Behold 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.
- ²He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
- ³a bruised reed he will not break,
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
- ⁴He will not grow faint or be discouraged
till he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his law.
- ⁵Thus says God, the LORD,
who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people on it
and spirit to those who walk in it:
- ⁶“I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness;
I will take you by the hand and keep you;
I will give you as a covenant for the people,
a light for the nations,

⁷to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.
⁸I am the LORD; that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to carved idols.
⁹Behold, the former things have come to pass,
and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth
I tell you of them.”

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Gradual Psalm 117:1–2a; 96:8

L Praise the Lord, all nations!

C Extol him, all peoples!

L For great is his steadfast love toward us,

C and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

L Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;

C bring an offering, and come into his courts!

Psalm 29

L ¹Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

C ²Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

L ³The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters.

C ⁴The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

L ⁵The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

C ⁶He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.

L ⁷The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.

C ⁸The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

L ⁹The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare,
and in his temple all cry, “Glory!”

C ¹⁰The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.

L ¹¹May the LORD give strength to his people!

C May the LORD bless his people with peace!

Romans 6:1–11

¹What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We 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.

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We 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. ⁷For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

C Thanks be to God.

L Alleluia, Alleluia, You are my beloved Son; Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, With you I am well pleased. Alleluia.

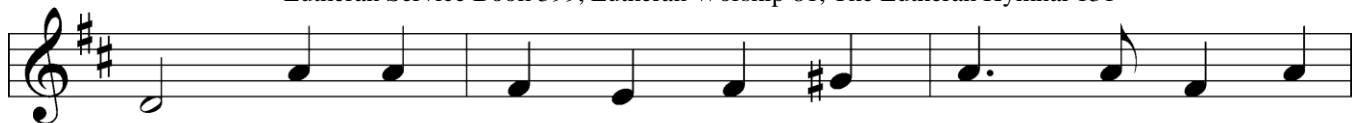
L The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 3rd chapter.
C Glory to You, O Lord.

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.
C Praise to You, O Christ.

Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living
and the dead.

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Lutheran Service Book 399, Lutheran Worship 81, The Lutheran Hymnal 131



1 The star pro - claims the King is here; But, Her - od,
2 The east - ern sa - ges saw from far And fol - lowed
3 With - in the Jor - dan's sa - cred flood The heav' - n - ly
4 And oh, what mir - a - cle di - vine, When wa - ter
5 For this Thy glad e - piph - a - ny All glo - ry,



why this sense - less fear? For He who of - fers heav'n - ly
on His guid - ing star; And, led by light, to light they
Lamb in meek - ness stood That He, of whom no sin was
red - dened in - to wine! He spoke the word, and forth it
Je - sus, be to Thee, Whom with the Fa - ther we a -



birth Seeks not the king - doms of this earth.
trod And by their gifts con - fessed their God.
known, Might cleanse His peo - ple from their own.
flowed In streams that na - ture ne'er be - stowed.
dore, And Ho - ly Spir - it ev - er - more.

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Devotional thoughts:

One of the great mysteries of life is how Valerie and I have managed to remain married for so many years. We come from completely different backgrounds. As hard as it is to imagine, she grew up in a home where they opened their Christmas presents on Christmas morning. I grew up in a home where we properly opened our Christmas presents on Christmas Eve! Yet by the grace of God, we overcame this irreconcilable difference and raised four children along the way!

We all love mysteries but more than that we love unraveling mysteries and revealing what was hidden. My favorite mysteries are Christmas presents! When you see beautifully wrapped gifts under the tree, your imagination runs wild. What could be concealed under all that red, green, gold, and white paper? Could there be a bicycle, a Nintendo, LEGOs, or a baby doll?

I know. You are thinking, "Why is he talking about Christmas presents? Christmas is long over." My answer is, "Yes and No." Our Christmas ended on Thursday with the 12th Day of Christmas. But for Orthodox Christians, Christmas was yesterday, January 7th on our Gregorian calendar but December 25th on the Julian calendar.

On Friday, following the last day of Christmas, we celebrated Epiphany! You may know that Epiphany recalls the coming of the Wise Men and their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These were the first Christmas presents! In honor of the Magi and their visit to baby Jesus, my children always would ask for Epiphany presents! I could have begun with the mystery of Epiphany presents but you probably didn't exchange Epiphany gifts this year!

Actually, although the Wise Men brought gifts, Epiphany is not as much about giving gifts as it is about opening a gift. On Christmas, God gave us the most wonderful gift of all. He gave us a Savior in the form of His Son born to the Virgin Mary and laid in a manger. Christmas is about the mystery of the Word made flesh (John 1:14, 1 Timothy 3:16). Epiphany is about opening the gift and discovering the splendor of God's love for us in Christ.

We are in the Epiphany Season. It will last until February 19th when we celebrate the Transfiguration of our Lord. For these seven Sundays, we will be unwrapping the most wonderful Christmas present of all.

The Greek word for Epiphany is Epiphany (ἐπιφάνεια – *epiphaneia*). It means "manifestation or appearance." The Bible also uses another word (φανερώω – *phaneroō*) for epiphany that has a similar meaning.

The Epiphany season is about God revealing the mystery of the great gift of His Son to us. His revelation began with the prophets of the Old Testament who promised the Savior. It included the angels and their visits to Mary and Joseph and the Shepherds. It is the star in the East that led the Wise Men until it came to rest over the place where the child was.

It continues today with the magnificent event in the Jordan River. Every year, on the Sunday after the Epiphany of our Lord, we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus.

The Bible tells us that even John the Baptist needed an Epiphany to recognize Jesus as the Savior. He said, "I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed (manifest – epiphanied) to Israel" (John 1:31). No one can know that Jesus is the Savior unless God reveals this wonderful truth to him.

John went on to say, "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (John 1:32-34).

At Jesus' baptism, John learned what we celebrate in the Epiphany Season. He learned that Jesus is not only a man born of the Virgin Mary but He is the very Son of God! The Greatest Authority of All has verified this for us with His own voice when He said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Historically, the next Sunday in the Epiphany Season would be Jesus' first miracle at the Wedding at Cana. There He began to prove to His disciples that He is indeed the Son of God when He changed water into wine. Unfortunately, we now only hear that lesson read once every three years. We will hear it again in two years.

Finally, at the end of the Epiphany Season, we will be with Jesus, Peter, James, and John at the top of the Mount of Transfiguration and hear God the Father again declare, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matthew 17:5). On that day, we will joyfully confess what we have learned during the Epiphany Season: Jesus is

the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made;

This will prepare us for the Lenten and Easter Season when we will again discover

That Jesus:

for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures
and ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of the Father.
And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead,
whose kingdom will have no end.

When I finish opening my Christmas presents, I am happy to discover that there is one more. Today, we have two more mysteries to unwrap. We have two more epiphanies to celebrate.

John the Baptist was mystified that Jesus would come to him to be baptized. Of all people, He was the only one who never sinned. John said, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

The answer is the first sentence spoken by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. If you have a red-letter edition of the Bible, it is something that is easy to notice. He said, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Jesus came into the world to save sinners. To do that, He became one of us. In His Baptism, He identified Himself with you and me! His baptism pleased His heavenly Father just as your baptism pleases God.

The final epiphany at Jesus’ baptism is the presence of all three persons of the Holy Trinity. God the Father is there in the form of His voice. God the Son is present in the person of Jesus. God the Holy Spirit is there in the form of a dove. At Jesus Baptism, God revealed (an Epiphany!) Himself to be the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is the same Triune God who welcomed you into His family when you were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Through Holy Baptism, you are a beloved child of God.

As we celebrate throughout the Epiphany Season, it is good to remember that the first Epiphanies continue to this very day. In 1 John 3:8, the Bible tells us, “The reason the Son of God appeared [φανερόω - make clear (visible, manifest- Epiphany)] was to destroy the works of the devil.” Every time that good triumphs over evil, every time you confess your sins and receive forgiveness, the reason for Jesus’ Epiphany is fulfilled.

John goes on to say, “In this the love of God was made **manifest** among us [Epiphany], that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:9-12). Every time you show love to one another, the promise of Epiphany is fulfilled.

Epiphany is a time for us to celebrate that Jesus is made known to us as Savior and Lord. He was revealed to the Wise Men as “King of the Jews.” In His baptism, He was revealed to be God’s “Beloved Son.” In His miracle at Cana, His disciples witnessed for the first time His command over nature. We know Him as King of the Universe, Lord of the Church, and King of Heaven. We know Him not only as the babe born in Bethlehem but as the only-begotten Son of God. We know Him as the One who was given for our salvation so that by believing in Him, we may have eternal life. We stand in awe at the foot of cross and declare with the centurion, “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:54). We go with Mary Magdalene to the empty tomb and hear the angel give her the great and wonderful epiphany, “He is not here, for He has risen, as He said” (Matthew 28:6). May the Holy Spirit bring you joy as you continue to unwrap and explore the mysteries of God’s love for you in Christ! Have a blessed Epiphany Season.

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:4-7).

God’s richest blessings to you in Christ.

L Heavenly Father, You were well-pleased with Your Son when He fulfilled all righteousness and submitted to Baptism with sinners in the Jordan River. As You have joined us to Christ’s death and resurrection by Holy Baptism and given us Your Spirit, strengthen our hearts and open our ears to hear Your Holy Word and rejoice that You have made us Your beloved children in Him.

C Amen.

L Lord God, as You have opened the Kingdom of Heaven to Your people through Holy Baptism, give us faithful teachers to proclaim Your Son, Jesus Christ, and all godliness, so that many would repent of their sins and join Him in His kingdom.

C Amen.

L Lord God, heavenly Father, You have called Your Church from every tribe and nation. Grant that Your people throughout the world would rejoice in the death and resurrection of Christ and live as those who have died and risen with Him in Holy Baptism.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, give our leaders wisdom for the challenges ahead. Send Your holy angels to watch over all of our loved ones, especially those who live in distant places. Protect all who attend to our needs during this ongoing pandemic.

C Amen.

C I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

C Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

L Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

L The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

C Amen.

All Who Believe and Are Baptized

Lutheran Service Book 601, Lutheran Worship 225, The Lutheran Hymnal 301



1 All who be - lieve and are bap-tized Shall see the Lord's sal - va - tion;
2 With one ac - cord, O God, we pray: Grant us Your Ho - ly Spir - it.



Bap-tized in - to the death of Christ, They are a new cre - a - tion.
Help us in our in - fir - mi - ty Through Je - sus' blood and mer - it.



Through Christ's re-demp-tion they shall stand A - mong the glo-rious,
Grant us to grow in grace each day That by this sac - ra -



heav'n - ly band Of ev - 'ry tribe and na - tion.
ment we may E - ter - nal life in - her - it.

The Baptism of our Lord

From earliest times the birth of Jesus, Epiphany, and The Baptism of our Lord have been closely associated in the Church Year. By 385 Epiphany and The Baptism of our Lord was a major eight-day celebration in Jerusalem.

The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River is a much-loved subject of Christian art. It adorns stained glass windows, paintings, and icons.



Although The Baptism of our Lord is often passed over in many non-liturgical churches, it affords us the opportunity to direct our attention to Jesus' message and ministry. John the Baptist, Jesus, and His disciples all share a common message, "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand." From their time until now, baptism and repentance have been closely connected.

As we celebrate the beginning of Jesus' ministry at His baptism, let us see its fulfillment in the cross and resurrection. Jesus' Baptism is the ideal time for us to remember that in baptism we have been truly connected to Jesus' death and resurrection. May we daily return to baptism in repentance and live the new life we have received by the working of the Holy Spirit through baptism.

Pastor Quardokus

This picture (Baptism of Jesus) is from *Die Bibel in Bildern* (The Bible in Pictures) by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872). In this book, he tells the stories of the Bible with 240 pictures. This depiction is of Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River; the Holy Spirit appears overhead in the form of a dove.

Service Notes:

One person may serve as Leader or this may be shared with a number of individuals.

Read one or more of the lessons. Hymns may be sung or read. Use as much or little of this service as you would like.

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Enhancing Your Worship

Meditating on God's Word and Works

I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27
My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148 NKJV

Baptism of our Lord

January 9 - 14, 2023

Introduction

Most modern forms of mediation turn a person inward. Biblical meditation turns a person outward toward what God has said and done especially what He has said and done through Jesus for our salvation.

Each Sunday has its own special theme directing us to meditate on God's word and actions. This theme is found in the Propers of the Day (the parts of the service that change week to week). From Advent through the Easter season these themes focus our attention on the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection. There is always much more in the propers than can be covered in any Sunday service. God willing, I will use the propers for Sunday to provide you with a devotion each day to help you mediate on what God has done for you.

Monday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C** Amen.

Introit Psalm 2:7–11, 12c; antiphon Isaiah 42:1a

- L** Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights.
- C** **I will tell of the decree:**
The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you.
- L** Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.
- C** **You shall break them with a rod of iron**
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."
- L** Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
- C** **Serve the Lord with fear,**
and rejoice with trembling,
- L** for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessèd are all who take refuge in him.
- C** **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;**
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.
- L** Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights.

Verse of the Day: Mark 1:11b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, You are my beloved Son; Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, With you I am well pleased. Alleluia.

Kyrie

- L** O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.
L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.
L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

Our introit brings us back to Psalm 2. It is particularly appropriate for The Baptism of Our Lord. Verse 7 says, “The Lord said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you.’”

The Messiah, the Savior, the Christ is a unique individual. There is no one like Him in all of history. He is the only-begotten Son of God. He is the only one of whom God has said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

The word “begotten” has fallen out of favor in the English language. Many contemporary translations avoid it whenever possible. However, it conveys an important truth about the relationship between God the Father and God the Son! Jesus is not an adopted child. He is of the same substance as the Father!

We will never fully understand the relationships between the persons of the Holy Trinity. But the Bible is clear that Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God. Jesus, who is very God of very God, has given Himself up for us. Through His sacrifice, we are able to be adopted into the family of God. Although we will never be of the same divine substance as the Father and the Son, we will enjoy the blessings of living with them in the eternal mansions of heaven.

- L** Let us pray. O Lord, thank You for revealing to us that Jesus is Your beloved Son. Thank you that through our connection to Him through faith that we too are called Your children and will live with You forever in heaven.
C Amen.

Tuesday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Mark 1:11b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, You are my beloved Son; Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, With you I am well pleased. Alleluia.

Kyrie

- L** O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.
L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.
L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

- L** Let us pray: 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.
C Amen.

I once sat at a lunch counter in a little restaurant. It was the kind with the server in the middle between two parallel counters. As I recall there were four of us sitting there. We all were eating alone. Directly across from me was a man with a long black beard. Next to me was another gentleman. Sitting across the way and over two chairs was a young woman.

The four of us struck up a conversation. At some point, we took up the subject of religion. How we got started on it, I'm not sure. I do remember the young woman saying that she was a Christian. To this, I must have made a comment about God. Then she made such a startling statement that I've never forgotten it.

She said, "No, I don't believe in God or anything like that!" I'm not sure what she meant when she said that she was a Christian who didn't believe in God. I suppose that she was trying to say that she lived by Christian principles of right and wrong, although I can't be sure.

I've always wondered if there are large numbers of people like this woman who claim to be Christian but do not believe in God. At least she was being honest.

An absolute tenet of our faith is believing in God. The Baptism of our Lord reminds us that not only do we believe in God, we believe in the Triune God revealed in Holy Scripture. In addition, we believe that the true man, Jesus Christ, is also true God. He is one undivided person who is both God and man.

How could anyone believe such a thing? It is God, the Holy Spirit, who works faith in our hearts through word and sacraments. For many of us, the Holy Spirit brought us to faith in baptism. For others, He first brought us to faith through hearing the Gospel then baptism followed. This was the case for my father which is a story for another day.

He keeps us in the faith as we continue to hear and learn God's word in the Bible. Or as one collect says, we read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it!

I love the outdoors and nature. It reflects the majesty of God. But only through word and sacrament does the Holy Spirit bring me the forgiveness of sins and make me part of God's family.

I don't know what happened to that young woman. I pray that the Lord brought her to true faith. I am thankful for the gift of forgiveness and eternal life that has been granted to me and all believers through faith in Jesus.

Prayer: 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.

Wednesday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Mark 1:11b

L Alleluia, Alleluia, You are my beloved Son; Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, With you I am well pleased. Alleluia.

Psalm 29

L ¹Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

C ²Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

L ³The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters.

C ⁴The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

L ⁵The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

C ⁶He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.

- L** ⁷The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.
C ⁸**The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.**
L ⁹The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare,
and in his temple all cry, “Glory!”
C ¹⁰**The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.**
L ¹¹May the LORD give strength to his people!
C **May the LORD bless his people with peace!**

Kyrie

- L** O Lord, **C** **Have Mercy on us.**
L O Christ, **C** **Have Mercy on us.**
L O Lord, **C** **Have Mercy on us.**

What jumped out at you when you read Psalm 29? Among the things that you might have noticed are “The voice of the Lord,” the power and might of God, and the waters and flood. This makes it an appropriate psalm for The Baptism of our Lord. All three of these were present at Jesus’ baptism.

Some Christians doubt that baptism has any power or impact on those who receive it. They claim that baptism is only something that a person does to be obedient to God. They neglect to understand the power and might of God’s word that He connects to the waters of baptism.

Martin Luther reminds us in the Small Catechism:

What is Baptism?

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God’s command and combined with God’s word.

How can water do such great things?

Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God’s word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three:

“He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying.” [Titus 3:5–8]¹

Prayer: Gracious Lord, we give thanks that in Holy Baptism we receive forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the devil, and eternal salvation. Bless continually by Your Word and Spirit that we may faithfully keep the covenant into which we have been called, boldly confess Jesus as Savior, and finally share with all Your saints the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Thursday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C **Amen.**

Verse of the Day: Mark 1:11b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, You are my beloved Son; Alleluia.
C **Alleluia, Alleluia, With you I am well pleased. Alleluia.**

¹Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism With Explanation*, Contains the basic principles of the Lutheran religion with some explanation.; Translation of: *Kleine Katechismus - English.*, electronic ed., 3 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997, c1986).

Kyrie

L O Lord,	C Have Mercy on us.
L O Christ,	C Have Mercy on us.
L O Lord,	C Have Mercy on us.

Isaiah 42:1–9

¹Behold 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.

²He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;

³a bruised reed he will not break,
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.

⁴He will not grow faint or be discouraged
till he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his law.

⁵Thus says God, the LORD,
who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people on it
and spirit to those who walk in it:

⁶“I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness;
I will take you by the hand and keep you;
I will give you as a covenant for the people,
a light for the nations,

⁷to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

⁸I am the LORD; that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to carved idols.

⁹Behold, the former things have come to pass,
and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth
I tell you of them.”

There are several verses in this portion of Isaiah that jump out at me as being significant in my life and ministry. Of them all, Isaiah 42:3a, “a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench” has affected my life and ministry more than the others.

What do you expect of other Christians? What should they expect of you? In my experience, this has been an ongoing debate among church members, leaders, and pastors.

In a perfect world, we would all be totally and completely committed to Jesus and our faith in Him. We don’t live in a perfect world. We live in a sinful world. No one is totally and completely committed to Jesus. So what is the minimum that we should expect from others in the fellowship of believers? What do you expect of yourself?

I once knew a couple who were very active in the church. They appeared to be highly committed to the

Lord. More than once they approached me with the request that I would expect and require more from the members of our congregation. How would you answer them?

I vividly remember the opening devotion for one of our meetings. One of this couple gave a long and impassioned speech to the leaders of our congregation about every Sunday church attendance with the strong implication that those who didn't attend every Sunday shouldn't be leaders in the church.

I'm not sure how it was received by those in attendance. I have no doubt that some applauded this little lecture and others were offended. How would you respond?

Certainly, it's not entirely unreasonable to expect church leaders to set an example for the rest of the congregation. But what happens if they don't?

Why do I remember this event that happened decades ago? Guess. I clearly remember this exhortation because the very next Sunday neither the husband nor the wife attended worship!

I discovered later that on the weekend, they had traveled to another state for a wedding. Was that a valid excuse for missing church? It was in their mind. Would they have been so understanding of others who missed church? I'm not sure.

What's my point? It's easy to set high standards for others. It's not always easy to live up to them ourselves. Our human tendency is to expect others to be as committed as we are but to excuse ourselves if others demand more.

What about Jesus? What does He expect? He expects perfection! In the Sermon on the Mount, He said, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). You may have noticed that no one is perfect, no, not one!

How does God deal with your imperfection? He welcomes you. He makes you His own. He forgives you. He tells us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

No matter how far you have strayed. No matter how weak your faith is, He does not reject you. "A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench."

I pray that in the church, we will be as welcoming, loving, and understanding as Jesus is toward us.

Prayer: O Lord God, thank You for welcoming us into Your family for Jesus' sake. Grant to us compassion for those who demonstrate a weak faith. Amen.

Friday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Mark 1:11b

L Alleluia, Alleluia, You are my beloved Son; Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, With you I am well pleased. Alleluia.

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

Romans 6:1–11

¹What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We 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.

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We 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. ⁷For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

I had an odd experience many years ago while officiating for a funeral of a former member. This gentleman had been a very faithful member of our congregation. A few years before, an employment opportunity took him to another state. Unfortunately, he soon died there unexpectedly.

His wife asked if we could have his funeral at Christ Lutheran and I agreed. But there was one more detail to her request. The burial would take place about 90 miles away!

All went well until we arrived at the cemetery. I had ridden with the funeral director. He went into the office. He was in the office for what I thought was an unusually long time. I waited in the car with a long funeral procession waiting behind me.

Eventually, the funeral director returned to the car with the news. The grave had not been dug! He had been told that their equipment had suffered a breakdown.

I couldn't believe it. How could they be so callous to a grieving family? I am convinced that the honorable thing to do would have been to rent the needed equipment to complete their obligation no matter what the expense. I did not consider broken machinery to be an acceptable excuse.

Of course, when I fail to meet an obligation, I will seek to excuse myself. That's what sinful people do. We look for excuses to sin!

The Apostle Paul was worried that his description of God's amazing grace in Romans chapters 3-5 would be used by some as an excuse to sin. He asked, "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" His answer was, "By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?"

Now that we have been baptized into Christ, this is not who we are. We are no longer enslaved to sin! We are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

We may still sin out of weakness. But this is not who we are. As God's children, we are called to lives of holiness.

God's grace is active in our lives. He continues to forgive us for Jesus' sake but we must never use that as an excuse to sin.

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for the grace that is ours in Christ Jesus. Grant us Your Holy Spirit so that we would flee from sin and not look for ways to excuse our sinful ways. When we do stumble and fall restore to us a right spirit and the joy of our salvation. Amen.

Saturday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Gradual Psalm 117:1–2a; 96:8

L Praise the Lord, all nations!

C Extol him, all peoples!

L For great is his steadfast love toward us,

C and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

L Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;

C bring an offering, and come into his courts!

Verse of the Day: Mark 1:11b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, You are my beloved Son; Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, With you I am well pleased. Alleluia.

Kyrie

- L** O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.
L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.
L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

Isaiah 42:8

⁸I am the LORD; that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to carved idols.

There are so many significant verses in Isaiah 42:1–9, it might be easy to miss verse 8. Yet what it tells us is as important today as it was when Isaiah wrote it.

We do not worship a “generic” god. We worship the true God who has revealed Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He told Isaiah that He will not share His praise with false gods and idols. Humans are not free to pick the God of their liking or create gods that fit their personal preferences.

We live in a country where we have the freedom to worship as we see fit. It is important that the government not impose its ideas concerning religion upon us. As a corollary to this freedom, it is important that we grant others the same rights as we enjoy. However, this does not mean that we should ever compromise the truth of God’s word or lessen our commitment to the true God.

Our God is the God who created the heavens and the earth. He is the God who revealed Himself to us in the Old and New Testaments. He is the one who sent His only-begotten Son to be our Savior. He is the one who grants us eternal life. He is the only One who is worthy of our praise. Let us never give His glory to false gods and idols no matter how much we are pressured to do so by the society around us.

Prayer: O God, during this Epiphany Season we are reminded that You have revealed Yourself to us in the person of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Grant that we would ever be faithful to Him in all we say and do. Amen.

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