



LESSONS

ISAIAH 43:1-7

PSALM 29

ACTS 8:14-17

ST. LUKE 3:15-17, 21-22

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

ALMIGHTY GOD, YOU
ANOINTED JESUS AT HIS
BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY
SPIRIT AND REVEALED HIM AS
YOUR BELOVED SON. KEEP
ALL WHO ARE BORN OF
WATER AND THE SPIRIT
FAITHFUL IN YOUR SERVICE,
THAT WE MAY REJOICE TO
BE CALLED CHILDREN OF
GOD, THROUGH JESUS
CHRIST, OUR SAVIOR AND
LORD, WHO LIVES AND
REIGNS WITH YOU AND THE
HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD,
NOW AND FOREVER. AMEN.

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Liturgical Day: The Baptism of Our Lord
The First Sunday after Epiphany

Date: January 10, 2010

Sermon Title: Anointed by God

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the sixteenth chapter of first Samuel, the prophet Samuel traveled to the home of Jesse, in Bethlehem, to find a new king for Israel. When he arrived there, he worshipped with Jesse and his family, and one-by-one he looked at each of Jesse's sons. First he looked at the eldest, Eliab, and thought he must be the one God had chosen. But the Lord spoke to Samuel and said, "No, not this one." Next he looked at Abinadab, and the Lord's response was the same. So too with Shammah and the others, until seven of Jesse's eight sons had met Samuel — but none of them was the right one. Finally Samuel asked Jesse if all of his sons were present. Jesse told him that his youngest son, David, was out watching the sheep.

David was brought in, Samuel was moved by God to make him king, and immediately he anointed him. Samuel took a flask of oil, poured it on his head, and the Spirit of the Lord rested upon David from that time onward. David had been anointed by God, through the ministry of the prophet Samuel, to become Israel's king. After that, nothing that King Saul could do (and he tried regularly) would keep David from fulfilling his calling. Eventually he became Israel's greatest King. Why? Because God had anointed him for that ministry, and there is a power in God's anointing.

In the third chapter of St. Luke (the third book in the New Testament), the prophet John the Baptizer was baptizing in the region around the Jordan. Many people came to him, repented of their sinfulness, and were baptized by him as a sign of their desire to have renewal in their lives. While John was there, Jesus (who, like his ancestor David, was born in Bethlehem) came out and joined the crowd that was following him.

After Jesus had been baptized, he began to pray. As he prayed, the heavens were opened and the Spirit of the Lord descended, and rested on him. And a voice was heard, coming from the heavens saying, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." Jesus was anointed by Spirit, through the ministry of John, to become the Savior of the world. After that, nothing that the devil or the religious insiders in Jerusalem would do could keep Jesus from fulfilling his calling. Eventually he defeated death itself, winning the right to offer eternal life to you and me. Why? Because God had anointed him for that ministry.

When God's hand is laid upon a faithful believer, something powerful happens. There is a choosing — an anointing — a setting aside for ministry. David knew that, and even though he may have been tempted to turn away from his calling, the Spirit of God that lived on in him continued to lead him on to rule God's people from Jerusalem. Jesus knew that, and even though (during the last week of his life) he asked to be relieved of that call, praying so fervently that tears of blood formed on his brow, the Spirit of God that lived on in him continued to lead him on to Golgotha. David and Jesus were both anointed for the ministry that God gave to them, and the strength of that anointing gave them an extraordinary power: the power of the Holy Spirit.

Today is the First Sunday after the Epiphany — a day called *The Baptism of Our Lord*. Each year on



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God's work. Our hands.

this day, we remember our Lord's baptism, and consider God's gift of Baptism that has been given to us. There are many meanings associated with Baptism. Primarily, Baptism confers to us the promises of the faith, as we say often on Sundays: *Through our baptism into the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have been given the gift of forgiveness and the hope of eternal life.*

Baptism is also a sign of regeneration. Especially for those of us who receive this gift later on in life, Baptism can be a sign of what God has accomplished in a person's life, inspiring us with faith, and giving us a desire to belong to the church. For some people, Baptism is an act of entrusting a son or a daughter to God: asking that God be with them as they grow and mature, desiring that they will become adults who love and cherish the faith. But this morning, I find myself remembering that Baptism is also an anointing — a means by which God calls us to ministry.

Now some of you might think that sounds kind of strange. You might be tempted to say, "That may be true, but not for me. I'm not a minister. I'm not a missionary. I'm not an evangelist. I have my own occupation, and it's certainly not preaching." But nothing could be farther from the truth. Our faith teaches that when we were baptized, we were anointed for ministry — each and every one of us — a ministry that takes place in our day-to-day lives, whatever the setting for those days might be. Part of what it means to be a person of faith, is to discover where and how God is calling us to use our personal gifts for ministry.

Martin Luther and his colleagues had a phrase for this: they called it the *Priesthood of All Believers*. Back in the sixteenth century, priests were powerful people. They were well educated, well connected, and well known. They carried out virtually all the ministry of the church. Nothing was done in the name of Christ, unless they had some part in it. Luther and the reformers realized that this was wrong, and began to emphasize that ministry was not the property of priests alone. All people who are baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, are also baptized into his ministry. As the Spirit enters into a life in Baptism, it empowers that person for ministry. It is a choosing: God's choosing. It is an anointing: God's anointing. And based on that belief, our church teaches that all the baptized are members of the priesthood of this church, not just those (like me) who have been set aside for the ministry of Word and Sacrament. But also you, who are involved in ministry day after day after day. Ministry is not just what happens inside these walls: it is what happens when believers take the calling of their baptism seriously, and seek to live it out every day of their lives.

A schoolteacher makes a special effort to reach out to one of her students who is struggling because of trouble at home, and participates in the ministry of God's kingdom. A politician takes a difficult stand on an issue of justice, and participates in the ministry of God's kingdom. A mail carrier helps a lost child find his way back home, and participates in the ministry of God's kingdom. A student stands up for another student who is being teased by a crowd, and participates in the ministry of God's kingdom. A homemaker brings a meal to a family where there is grief or illness, and participates in the ministry of God's kingdom. A store clerk offers the gift of kindness to a customer and participates in the ministry of God's kingdom. An office worker shares the faith with someone who has lost their way in life and participates in the ministry of God's kingdom.

Brothers and sisters, priests every one of us, we've come here to celebrate the fact that God has blessed us with faith, and assured us of salvation. We've come here to be reminded that through us, the Holy Spirit seeks to carry on the ministry our Lord began, and for that purpose, each of us has been anointed in the waters of our baptism. May we leave this place, confident of those promises. And determined to share them with the hurts and the pains of this world Amen.

Amen.

David J. Risendal, Pastor

English Text: ⁱ

^{3:15} As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his

ⁱ A list of Bible lessons for the coming weeks is available at www.elca.org/worship/church_year.

sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

[¹⁸ So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. ¹⁹ But Herod the ruler, who had been rebuked by him because of Herodias, his brother’s wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done, ²⁰ added to them all by shutting up John in prison.]

²¹ Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” ⁱⁱ

Greek Text:

^{3:15} Προσδοκῶντος δὲ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ διαλογιζομένων πάντων ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν περὶ τοῦ Ἰωάννου, μήποτε αὐτὸς εἴη ὁ χριστός, ¹⁶ ἀπεκρίνατο λέγων πᾶσιν ὁ Ἰωάννης· ἐγὼ μὲν ὕδατι βαπτίζω ὑμᾶς· ἐρχεται δὲ ὁ ἰσχυρότερος μου, οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἰκανὸς λύσαι τὸν ἰμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ· αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρὶ· ¹⁷ οὗ τὸ πτύον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ διακαθάρει τὴν λωπα αὐτοῦ καὶ συναγαγεῖν τὸν σίτον εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην αὐτοῦ, τὸ δὲ χυρὸν κατακαύσει πυρὶ ἀσβέστῳ.

[¹⁸ Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ τερα παρακαλῶν εὐηγγελίζετο τὸν λαόν. ¹⁹ Ὁ δὲ Ἡρῳδῆς ὁ τετραάρχης, ἐλεγχόμενος ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ περὶ Ἡρωδιάδος τῆς γυναικὸς τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ καὶ περὶ πάντων ὧν ἐποίησεν πονηρῶν ὁ Ἡρῳδῆς, ²⁰ προσέθηκεν καὶ τοῦτο ἐπὶ πᾶσιν [καὶ] κατέκλεισεν τὸν Ἰωάννην ἐν φυλακῇ.]

²¹ Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ βαπτισθῆναι παντὰ τὸν λαὸν καὶ Ἰησοῦ βαπτισθέντος καὶ προσευχομένου ἀνεωχθῆναι τὸν οὐρανὸν ²² καὶ καταβῆναι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ γιον σωματικῶ εεδει ὡς περιστερὰν ἐπ’ αὐτόν, καὶ φωνὴν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ γενέσθαι· σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα. ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱ St. Luke 3:15-17, 21-22, *New Revised Version Bible* (© 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America).

ⁱⁱⁱ St. Luke 3:15-17, 21-22, *The Greek New Testament*, Aland, Kurt, Black, Matthew, Martini, Carlo M., Metzger, Bruce M., and Wikgren, Allen, (© 1983, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart).