

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church

Shobonier, Illinois

Baptism of Our Lord A

January 11, 2026

Isaiah 42:1-9; Matthew 3:13-17

It's All About Jesus - and Me

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. (Isaiah 42:1 ESV)

Dearly Beloved in Christ, the only Savior of the world:

Last week we heard that after Joseph and Mary found the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple, and after returning to Nazareth, Jesus "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." (Luke 2:52). Today, we see that play out in Jesus' baptism.

But before we get to that, consider that we live in an age of narcissism, where everyone thinks more highly of himself than he ought. In our self-centered egos we often think the world revolves around us, as though we're the center of everything, or at least that's the way it should be. If we don't see it in ourselves, we do see it in others who think and act as though they define reality, decide what's true or lawful or not, and despise anyone and everyone else who would dare disagree with them and their way of thinking or looking at things. In short, whether we'd say it or not, we often live our lives as though "It's All About Me!"

So, when we hear that God says through the prophet Isaiah, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights . . ." (Is. 42:1), we might be tempted, if only for a moment, to think He's talking about us.

But, of course, we would quickly realize that on our own, God would never, could never, say that about us! For, from God's all-seeing, all-knowing vantage point, He sees and knows enough about each of us for His soul to take no delight in us. For He hears every word we utter and conversation we have, reads every email that we exchange, sees every social media post we write or share, and knows all our deepest thoughts.

That's why His soul aches and grieves over our actions, over our speech, over our personal conduct, and over our attitude of thinking that the world revolves around us, and our ready willingness to do whatever it takes to make that happen. And that separates us even more from God!

No, in Isaiah, God is speaking about Someone far more worthy of His delight. He's speaking about His perfect Servant, the Messiah, Whose job it would be to "faithfully bring forth justice."

God would "call Him in righteousness..." "take Him by the hand..." and "give Him as a covenant" to make right what was made wrong by Adam and Eve and all their children who would follow them.

In other words, God would raise up His perfect Servant, who would bring those who were captive to sin in the dungeon of hell and restore them to that which they once had — perfect peace and harmony with God!

This gracious work begins to be fulfilled by Jesus in today's Gospel reading from St. Matthew. Jesus, God in the flesh, come to be the world's Redeemer, and as a 30-year-old Man, comes to the Jordan River and presents Himself to John, requesting Baptism.

Of course, John is in disbelief, as we would be. "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" (Matt. 3:14). For John knows that Jesus is without sin, without need for repentance, without need of a Redeemer at all!

But our Lord answers John in a way that says even though John rightfully sees things as they are, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."

You see, Jesus had come to the Jordan River and to John to fully identify with the fallen human race so that He could be its Redeemer, and bring about the righteousness that man so desperately needed. Jesus submitted to the baptism that sinful men were undergoing, showing that God, Himself, is providing that perfect Redeemer-Servant.

Here again we have an epiphany — a revealing of God personally breaking into human history to save His beloved people. We see the Lord, Himself standing in the muddy waters of the Jordan River, standing with sinners, taking their place, and receiving from John the Baptism that sinners receive.

In reality, Jesus' Baptism is pointing to the whole effort of Jesus' ministry on earth, for Jesus came to this world to stand in the middle of us, to identify with us and our sin, and save us. For what we see in the Jordan is gloriously concluded when Jesus is lifted up on the cross of Calvary, surrounded by sinners, to save the whole world from sin!

And when He does that, Jesus, the servant of the Lord Most High "fulfills all righteousness." He does that by being punished for what He did not do, and dying for the sins that He did not commit. Truly, He identified with sinners so that He might save them, redeem them!

Earlier we said that our human egos often look at events and place ourselves in the middle, like "it's all about me." But, in reality, Jesus' Baptism is all about Him! His Father is pleased with Him. His Baptism is about Him identifying with our sin and then "faithfully bring forth justice" as Isaiah predicted.

God's justice toward our sin would ultimately be rendered upon Jesus to be "a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, and to bring out the prisoners... who sit in darkness" away from the love of God.

So, if Jesus' Baptism was to allow Him to identify with our sin, what about our Baptism? What is it? What does it do?

It is a holy washing that connects us to Jesus' holiness and righteousness. That's what St. Paul tells us in today's Epistle reading from Romans. All that Jesus did for us becomes ours in those precious waters! "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." (Rom. 6:4).

Thus, Jesus' death becomes our death, and His rising from the dead becomes our new life in Him. In those simple Baptismal waters, God works faith in the man, woman, or child. And then, through faith in Christ, the person receives the greatest of gifts: forgiveness of sins and eternal life!

So, dear Baptized of God, "consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God" through the work of Jesus. And because of that, because your sins are washed away, because you have been raised to a new life in Jesus, you can now rightly say, "Jesus' work in the Jordan – and on the cross – is all about me!"

But in saying such a thing, you're not bragging about yourself. No, you're only stating a fact. You're simply telling what Jesus did for you – and the whole world. Indeed, Jesus did it all for you and me because He loves us. He did it all for you and me so that we might be His adopted children forever. Thanks be to God! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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