



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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January 13, 2013

Epiphany 1 - Baptism of Our Lord

Sermon Text: [Luke 3:15-17, 21-22](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [1 Samuel 16:1-13](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 2](#)

Second Lesson: [Titus 3:4-7](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 3:15-17, 21-22](#)

Messiah is Revealed

By the testimony of John

By the testimony of God

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

As you know, I spent December 25, Christmas Day, through January 1 in the hospital. Cellulitis in my right leg. My leg swelled up bigger than some people would say my head is. It was an interesting time. I had a fever for quite awhile and a lot of different things. The one thing I will say is that the people in the hospital were a wonderful blessing, a blessing from the hand of God. The doctors, the nurses, they were all wonderful. They were so wonderful in giving, they gave me about six different antibiotics. It was like an all-you-can-eat buffet of antibiotics that I got to have, which was nice because it's what they needed to do. However, when you take all these different antibiotics, they have different effects on your body. So they were constantly having to check because it might lower your potassium or your calcium, or it might affect other things on your body. It might make you contagious. One day when the family came, they had to put on these cool yellow gowns and walk around with gowns and masks on. They really enjoyed that. But that was all effects of the antibiotics.

They can't just look at you and say, "You look a little low on potassium." So to find that out, what do they have to do? They can't see it. They have to take a test, right? They have to stick a needle in your arm, pull out some blood and do that a couple times a day and constantly check your blood. It started to feel like this arm was a pin cushion. If you had walked in and saw me, you would have thought your pastor was a junky or something. There were needle marks all over. But they had to do that because the test would then reveal what the antibiotics were doing to my body. It had to be revealed. They couldn't just look at it and decide. They couldn't just look at it and see. They had to do these tests to reveal.

That's kind of like what we see happening in Epiphany. Jesus is revealed as the Son of God. He looks just like another ordinary guy. He looks just like everyone else. He is doing the things everyone else is, except sin. You wouldn't look at him and think that's divine, that's the Son of God. I don't think Jesus walked around like he did in the movies when you see him with that faraway look in his eyes, looking like he's some kind of weirdo or something. He looked like everyone else. So he had to be revealed.

It wasn't a blood test that did it. What revealed Jesus as the Messiah, or the Anointed One, the One promised like in Psalm 2, the One promised throughout the Old Testament, what revealed him was his powerful words and actions. But at his baptism, God stepped in and said to everybody, "Pay attention! This is the One I want you to focus on." God sent the forerunner, John the Baptist, who said, "Pay attention to the One following me! Don't pay attention to me." The Messiah is revealed by testimony... the testimony of John that we hear this morning, and the testimony of God himself.

We heard about John during Advent. We read about him and his strange clothes and his strange place of living and all that stuff. But think about what it says here in what I read to you. People were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ.

You know what a temptation sinful pride can be, right? You get to thinking a little more of yourself than you ought to. We are all prone to "it's all about me," right? That's kind of how we all are. There's that sinful nature in us. Think of what a temptation that must have been for John to walk around with his chest out a little bit more. All these people are leaving Jerusalem and taking this journey into the desert to come hear this guy that's dressed goofy and is preaching powerfully. You can see how Satan recognizes this is the forerunner, so he's going to be in John's ear saying "It's all about you."

But the Lord blessed John with faithfulness. You heard the message John said that I read to you. "It's not me. It's not about me. In fact, there is one coming after me, and I am not even worthy to reach down and untie his sandals. That's how much farther above me he is, so don't focus on me." His testimony always pointed to the other One, the One coming, the coming One, the Messiah.

In what we read today you might say, "It didn't really say Jesus specifically." But when you look back at what he said and if you remembered his message and then you knew the ministry of Christ, you can see Christ here. He came to gather the wheat into the barn. That's a beautiful Gospel message that John the Baptist gave us, isn't it? He came to bring those who would believe in him to the Father, to reconnect them to the Father, to take away their sins and bring them into the barn that is heaven. Yes, that's his mission. That's what he came to do, to take away the sins of the world. Isn't that what John said one time? "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" ([John 1:29](#).) He pointed at Jesus. Bringing the wheat into the barn. He would save the world. Yet many would reject him and he would separate the chaff from the wheat and the chaff would be consumed by fire. So there was that message of Law also that those who aren't connected to the Messiah, the coming One, they are going to go to hell. As simple as that.

Think about John's testimony for a minute. Then think about your testimony. Sometimes is it easier for us to talk about things that are related to Jesus more than just Jesus himself? How many conversations have you had with people about who

Jesus is and what he has done, and how many conversations have you had instead about things like “religion,” who’s right and who’s wrong? We can get sidetracked, can’t we?

Our testimony doesn’t always focus specifically on the One who gathered us like wheat into his barn. We can say, “Come to our church. We have great worship. Come and hear our worship. Come and see what we do. We do wonderful things at our worship. Come hear our choir concert. Come hear the children’s program and all that.” Have we ever told anyone about Jesus when we say those things? I’m not saying it’s wrong to invite people to those things, but do you see the difference? Do you see what I’m talking about?

John the Baptist didn’t come and say “Hey, listen to me. I’ll tell you about the One.” He said, “Focus on the One.” He talked about the One and what he would do. You and I know the One. You and I know our sins. We know our pride. We know the times we’ve denied him. We know how we deserve to rot in hell and how he’s given us heaven. So let’s not just talk about the peripheral things. Let’s tell people about the One who did those things. That’s what he’s called us to do.

You and I, we are no different than John the Baptist. Okay, we dress different and probably smell different, but we’re no different. John had times where he probably struggled too. Remember when he was in prison and he sent some of his disciples to ask Jesus “Are you the One to come, or should there be another one?” ([Luke 7:18-20](#).) That almost seems like he was wondering, right? He struggled just like you and I struggled. Yet, when we focus on God and his message, we can remain faithful, and we can share the Gospel. We can point people to Jesus as the Anointed One who took away our sins. That’s what we’re here for. What a privilege it is to do that.

It was kind of fun the first day the visiting nurse came to the house after I got home. Obviously she figured out I was a pastor because I am living between a school and a church. It’s either that or I’m a caretaker for a cemetery. But we got to talking a bit. We talked about some struggles she had when her father was dying and what not, and the experience she had with her church about some things about her father’s struggle with fear. It was really cool. I was just sitting there propped up on the bed in the lighthouse room and I could talk to her about the cool thing that we both know now. It’s not about what we do. It’s about what Jesus did for us. We can point people to Jesus. He is going to put people in our lives at various times and in various ways where we can clearly say it’s all about Jesus. Isn’t that the coolest message in the world? We’ll screw everything up left on our own, but he never will.

In fact, isn’t that what the Father said? When Jesus came and was baptized by John, he was there in the Jordan. Jesus being baptized? He has no sins to be washed away. In fact, in one of the other Gospels John says, “I shouldn’t baptize you. You should baptize me.” But Jesus said “This must be done to fulfill all righteousness.” ([Matthew 3:13-17](#).) Jesus steps into that water to take our place. This is the start of his

public ministry where he is saying to everyone, "I am coming to take away your sins." So he stands in that water and he is baptized to say he is there for us.

When he is there, then heaven opened in some way evidently. I don't know what that means, but heaven opened. I have no clue what that means. But in a way that was not the norm, heaven opened. The Holy Spirit comes down in the form of a dove, anoints Jesus with the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, just like Samuel anointed David with oil. The Spirit comes and anoints Jesus. Then the Father's voice comes from heaven so that they could hear it. "This is my Son whom I love. With him I am well pleased."

With him I am well pleased...that's the Father's testimony about Jesus. Jesus willingly left heaven, came to earth to take our place, take our sin, carry it to Calvary, to take it away...with him I am well pleased because he's carrying out the will of God. He's carrying it out for you and for me...for all of our sins, for all the things we have done, for all of our doubts, for all of our anxieties, for all of our worries, for all of our sinful attitudes and actions, he took them all away. So the Father is well pleased with him. That's the message of a Holy God.

If you are a parent or have been a parent, have you ever noticed how kids at a certain age always know more than you? Does that ever happen? They know more than you, right? As they grow, eventually they figure out they didn't know more than you, right? You probably did the same thing with your parents, right? Have you ever thought about how at times you and I still do that with God? The Father says, "With him I am well pleased. He's done all things well." As you and I go through life, we face different challenges. We face different struggles. We face different things in our life that just flat out stink. We aren't always well pleased with God when he lets it into our life, are we? We are like that little kid that thinks they know better than God.

Again, we sin against our God when we do this, when we as sinful human beings are so arrogant as to think we know better than God. Which makes the love and grace of Christ all the more amazing, doesn't it? He stood in baptismal waters he didn't need, to identify with us. He gives us baptismal waters that we so desperately need to baptize us into his perfection, his perfect life and his perfect death in our place. He washes away our sins. He does all of this even though at times we act like a spoiled child who knows better than God. That's his perfect love for us. The Father was well pleased with him, so we want to grow in our faith so that we put our trust in him.

The way we do that is by listening to him, listening to the voice of our Savior, listening to him through the Word, listening to him say to us through the Sacraments, "This is my body. This is my blood for the forgiveness of your sins." This is the voice that leads us to say "Yes, Lord, you will do all things well. I don't know how you are doing it or what you are doing now, but I trust you will do all things well." And we just put ourselves in his hands because the hands of the One that was nailed to the cross are the hands of the One who loves us and who will sustain us and who will strengthen us through any difficulty we face. He's already given us heaven. He won't abandon us now. That's God's testimony. Live in it. Amen.