

**Notes for Next Sunday**  
The Baptism of Our Lord/First Sunday after Epiphany

**The Point of this Week's Readings**

Old Testament (Isaiah 42:1-9). Our text is the first of the four great Suffering Servant Songs, prophecies of Jesus Christ as the Servant of the Lord who will come to save God's people. (The others are Is 49:1-7; 50:4-11; and 52:13-53:12.) Here the Suffering Servant is designated by God as "my chosen one." In the majority of cases where "my chosen one" is found, it is not man, but God who does the choosing. Yahweh is the subject, the one who chooses. God always initiates salvation. God announces this Servant boldly and dramatically. It is as if God had his arm stretched out and pointed to this one as His Servant. "Here He is!" No other servant of Lord received such an introduction, and God's announcement signals something quite different and important about this Servant as compared to all the others. This is the special one.

Epistle (Romans 6:1-11). Luther: "In chapter 6 (Paul) takes up the special work of faith, the conflict of the spirit with the flesh for the complete slaying of the sin and lust that remain after we are justified. Thus we become like the death, and resurrection of Christ, and complete our baptism – which signifies the death of sin and the new life of grace – until we are entirely purified of sin, and even our bodies rise again with Christ and live forever." (AE 35:375-76) (TLSB)

Gospel (Matthew 3:13-17). The baptism of Jesus is placed in the larger context of the ministry of John the Baptist. From the birth of Jesus and the visit of the Wise Men, Matthew's gospel moves directly to the return of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus from Egypt to Nazareth. Matthew does not report our Lord's presentation in the temple or his encounter with the teachers in the temple when he was a boy of twelve. He leaves these details to other writers and focuses immediately on the ministry of John the Baptist. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

*For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.*

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 42:1-9

**"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. <sup>2</sup> He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. <sup>3</sup> A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; <sup>4</sup> he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope." <sup>5</sup> This is what God the LORD says— he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: <sup>6</sup> "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, <sup>7</sup> to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. <sup>8</sup> "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. <sup>9</sup> See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you."**

*42:1 to the nations.* First, note that the target of His words would be "the nations." He would not only serve the single nation of Israel, but His work would also have value for the Gentiles. (PBC)

*42:2 not shout or cry out.* He (Jesus the Suffering Servant) is so sure of Himself and of the cause He represents that He can well expect His message to carry itself successfully through every test. How often Jesus shunned publicity, even though His aim was to carry His gospel to all men. (Leupold)

42:3 *bruised reed*. Someone who is weak. The servant will mend broken lives. (CSB)

42:3 *smoldering wick*. Where the flame of devotion burns at all, however feebly and dimly, the Messiah will take care not to quench it. Rather He will tend it, and trim it, and give it fresh oil, and cause it to burn more brightly. (PC)

42:4 *not falter*. The last Servant Song (52:13–53:12) makes clear how the Servant will establish His “justice in the earth.” There is only a hint about suffering here. Though He may become weak and exhausted by “the anguish of His soul” (53:11), He will not give up the struggle. (TLSB)

42:5 *gives breath ... life*. He did greater things even than these. He put animating breath into bodies so that they become living animated beings, and even higher than that, put spirit, a capacity for higher things, into these beings. (Leupold)

42:6 *take hold of your hand*. Taking the servant by the hand harkens back to Is. 41:9, where the same idiom (to seize, grasp”) pertains to Yahweh’s call of the nation’s patriarch, Abraham. Just as Yahweh commissions Abraham “to be a blessing (Gen. 12:2) through whom “all the families of the earth” will be blessed (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8), so the servant is “a covenant for the people and “a light for the nations.”

42:6 *covenant*. There once was a covenant made with Abraham. This covenant was significantly expanded to involve all Israel at Mt Sinai. A greater covenant is now under consideration, one that involves all the nations on the face of the earth. In some mysterious way the Servant Himself is the essence of that covenant, not only the one who transmits it. (Leupold)

42:7 *free ... from prison*. From the prison of Babylon and also from spiritual and moral bondage (compare 61:1 with Lk 4:18). (CSB)

42:8 *I am the Lord; that is my name*. Here He performs the act of exclusion. He strongly condemns everything that is taught apart from Christ, as if to say, “Do not undertake to be saved and justified in any other way. (Luther)

#### EPISTLE – Romans 6:1-11

**What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup> By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? <sup>3</sup> Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. <sup>5</sup> If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. <sup>6</sup> For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, <sup>a</sup> that we should no longer be slaves to sin— <sup>7</sup> because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. <sup>10</sup> The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.**

6:1 *Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?* Franzmann: There is a certain logic in the opening question: 'Since the increase of sin leads to the abounding of grace (5:20), shall we persist in sin in order that grace may abound?' But it is cool, Satanic logic; there is in it the Satanic suggestion that we should exploit God, make His grace serve our selfish will, use His gifts to support us in our rebellion against God. It is the logic which the Tempter used on Jesus (Matthew 4). (Buls)

6:2 *by no means!* Paul's answer to which all true believers must agree. It is variously translated: "Perish the thought! Certainly not! By no means! No, no!" Koine Greek did not use exclamation points. In English, one should be placed here. (Buls)

6:2 *died to sin.* In Baptism, God applies Christ's death to us so that we receive the benefits of Christ's sacrifice. Belonging to Him, we reject the illogical question in verse 1. (TLSB)

6:3 *were baptized into His death.* Christ paid the penalty of our sin. Christ's work is applied to us in Baptism. (TLSB)

6:4 *buried with him through baptism into death.* As Jesus was covered by the earth in His burial, we are buried in baptismal water. Early Christian baptismal practices reflected the Jewish *tebilah* rite of purification, which was by immersion. However, there were other ways to wash or baptize. (TLSB)

6:5 *united with him in His resurrection.* Christ identifies Himself with us; His death pays for our sins, and His righteousness is credited to us. His death was on the cross; ours is in Baptism, which gives the benefits the benefits of His work on the cross. (TLSB)

6:7 *freed from sin.* Those crucified with Christ in Baptism have been freed from sin's effects. (TLSB)

6:11 *count yourselves.* Because Christ has united Himself to us, we do not use forgiveness as an excuse to sin (v. 1); instead we joyfully live in service to Him. (TLSB)

#### GOSPEL – Matthew 3:13-17

**<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. <sup>14</sup> But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" <sup>15</sup> Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. <sup>16</sup> As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."**

3:15 *to fulfill all righteousness.* A substitute has to go into the game to replace someone and get into the action and not mail it in, so Jesus needed to completely do all the things that is required of humans. A quote from Luther, "If that shall be performed that the poor sinners may come to righteousness and be saved, you must baptize me. Because for the sake of sinners I have become a sinner, must therefore do what God has charged sinners to do, in order that they may become just through me. (CC)

3:16 *heaven was opened.* Actually rent asunder. Luther, "Heaven opens itself, which hitherto was closed, and now becomes at Christ's baptism a door and a window, so that one can see into it; and henceforth there is no difference any more between God and us; for God the father himself is present and says, 'This is my beloved Son.'"

3:17 *with him I am well pleased.* As the Father's beloved Son, Jesus fulfilled all righteousness (v 15), something that Israel, God's OT son, failed to do. (TLSB)