

## Notes for Next Sunday

### Baptism of Jesus

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

Old Testament (Isaiah 43:1-7). This chapter begins with an unexpected thought. The last verse of the previous chapter announced God's burning wrath upon His people. They did not obey His law; they were blind and deaf to all that God had done for them. Because of their sins, God had sent the violence of war upon them. But they remained blind and deaf. We might have expected that Isaiah would continue with a fierce announcement of judgment. Instead God through Isaiah tells them "Do not be afraid." God reminds them that He has redeemed them and called them by name (v. 1).

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. He teaches us that we are not by faith so freed from sin that we can be idle, slack, and careless, as though there were no longer any sin in us. Sin is present; but it is no longer reckoned for our condemnation, because of the faith that is struggling against it. Therefore we have enough to do all our life long in taming the body, slaying its lusts, and compelling its members to obey the spirit and not the lusts. 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 (Luke 3:15-22). Like both Simeon (2:25) and Anna (2:38), the people are waiting expectantly for something to happen in connection with John's preaching. This alerts the hearer to the heightened messianic expectations brought on by John's baptism and to recognize their climax when Jesus is baptized. (CC) Though Jesus did not need to receive Baptism in order to be forgiven, he nonetheless submitted to it. (TLSB)

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

#### Old Testament – Isaiah 43:1-7

**But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. <sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. <sup>3</sup>For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. <sup>4</sup>Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life. <sup>5</sup>Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. <sup>6</sup>I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth— <sup>7</sup>everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."**

*43:2 waters ... rivers.* Probably an allusion to crossing the Red Sea (Ex 14:21–22) and the Jordan River (Jos 3:14–17). (CSB)

43:2 *walk through the fire*. Fulfilled literally in the experience of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Da 3:25–27). (CSB)

A pure piling up of words, as is the Hebrew custom. Waters, rivers, fire, flame shall not harm you, as if to say, “Before you cry and speak, I know what you need. Even though you might be in extreme trouble, nothing shall harm you, and you shall be inwardly safe. Do not become frightened. It is the form of the church to be in water, in rivers, in the fire. But I will be with you, so that nothing will harm you.” (Luther)

43:3 *I am the Lord*. “For that reason you will be preserved, not because you are strong and righteous. No, but rather because I am the Lord.” (Luther)

43:3 *ransom*. God restructured the whole ancient world for the sake of a small people apparently sinking into oblivion in a foreign land. Israel’s liberation is described as if God paid the Persians for giving the exiles freedom by giving the Persians Egypt. (TLSB)

43:6 *ends of the earth*. God’s people will come not only from Babylon but from wherever they have been dispersed throughout the world. On the day of Pentecost, we note such a gathering of Jews from all over the Mediterranean world came to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 2). That day they heard the gospel, and God gathered them into His NT church. But a greater gathering is yet to be. It will occur on the Last day, when God will bring all His people into the heaven He has prepared for them, no matter where they have been scattered. (PBC)

43:7 *created ... formed*. A Christian is already one with Christ and already has participation in Him. He is member of the member, and flesh of the flesh, just as a wife shares in the name and property of her husband. So the Christian in his entire being becomes a participant with God. Before, he was a most degraded creature, but now he is altogether glorious, not indeed by virtue of his own works and designs but because Christ has called him by name. So we are altogether Christ’s, since Christ has called us, and all our works are not our own but Christ’s. Therefore we are said to have been created for the glow of Christ. (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. <sup>11</sup> In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

**6:1-11** After the doctrinal section in Galatians (chapters 3-4) Paul, in chapter 5, deals with two sins which are the constant danger of every Christian. The first is the temptation to return to the Law as a means of justification before God. The second (verse 13) is the danger of using Christian freedom as license to sin. Jesus warns about this sin in John 5:14 and 8:11. Hebrews 10:26 is also applicable here. Once a person has become a Christian he must ever be on his guard against slipping back into that from which Christ redeemed him. (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)

6:4 *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)

6:4 *live a new life*. Christ's work gives us a new life, free from the guilt of sin. Luther: "Imagine there was a doctor somewhere who understood the art of saving people from death or, even though they died, could restore them quickly to life so they would afterward live forever. Oh, how the world would pour in money like snow and rain. No one could find access to him because of the throng of the rich! But here in Baptism there is freely brought to everyone's door such a treasure and medicine that it utterly destroys death and preserves all people alive" (LC IV 43). (TLSB)

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

#### Gospel – Luke 3:15-22

**15 The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. 16 John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." 18 And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them. 19 But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, 20 Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.**

3:15 *people were waiting expectantly*. John's resemblance to Elijah (cf 1:17) suggested to some that he might be the Messiah. (TLSB)

3:16 *baptize you with the Holy Spirit*. Fulfilled at Pentecost (Ac 1:5; 2:4, 38). (CSB)

3:16 *and with fire*. Here fire is associated with judgment (v. 17). See also the fire of Pentecost (Ac 2:3) and the fire of testing (1Co 3:13). (CSB)

3:17 *His winnowing fork*. See note on Ru 1:22. The chaff represents the unrepentant and the wheat the righteous. Many Jews thought that only pagans would be judged and punished when the Messiah came, but John declared that judgment would come to all who did not repent—including Jews. (CSB)

3:22 *Holy Spirit descended*. The appearance of the Holy Spirit as a dove recalls Gen. 1:2, when the Spirit hovered over the waters in the first creation. The dove also recalls Noah after the flood (Gen. 8:8) (CC p. 161)

3:22 *You are my son, whom I love*. The Father's affirmation echoes two messianic prophecies (Ps 2:7; Is 42:1), reinforcing that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. "You must honor Baptism and consider it glorious because of the Word. For God Himself has honored it both by words and deeds. Furthermore, He confirmed it with miracles from heaven. Do you think it was a joke that, when Christ was baptized, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended visibly, and everything was divine glory and majesty?" (LC IV 21). (TLSB)

