

## The Baptism of Our Lord/ First Sunday after Epiphany

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.”

**42:1-7** 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 *bəchiri*, “my chosen one.” The verb *bochar* “to choose” has roughly the same range of meaning as the Greek verb *eklegomai*, the word often used to translate it in the Septuagint and NT. “In the majority of cases where *bochar* (and thus *eklegomai*) is found, it is not man, but God who does the choosing . . . Yahweh is the subject, the one who chooses.”<sup>1</sup> God always initiates salvation; it is God who chose the place and form of worship (Deut 16:6f; 26:2), the City Jerusalem (1 Kgs 11:13), King David (1 Kgs 8:16; 11:34), the clergy (Deut 18:5; 1 Sam 2:28; 16:41), and his people Israel (Deut 4:37; 7:7; 14:2; Is 41:8; 43:10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

**42:1–4** Quoted in part in Mt 12:18–21 with reference to Christ. There are four “servant songs” in which the servant is the Messiah: 42:1–4 (or 42:1–7 or 42:1–9); 49:1–6 (or 49:1–7 or 49:1–13); 50:4–9 (or 50:4–11); 52:13–53:12. He is “Israel” in its ideal form (49:3). The nation was to be a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:6), but the Messiah would be the high priest who would atone for the sins of the world (53:4–12). Cyrus was introduced in ch. 41 as a deliverer from Babylon, but the servant would deliver the world from the prison of sin (see v. 7). (CSB)

**42:1** All three persons of the Trinity are mentioned here. (TLSB)

Just as chapter 40 was connected to chapter 41 by a repeated clause, Isaiah invites us to read the end of chapter 41 along with the beginning of chapter 42. He does this by means of two catchwords in 42:1, both of which are also in the prior verse (41:29). (CC)

HERE – hen – lo! (Strong's)

The first catchword is the particle immediacy, “behold.” It contrasts the servant in chapter 42:1 with the idols who were on trial in chapter 41. The trial scene in the previous chapter (41:1-7, 21-29) is thereby carried into the First Servant Song (42:1-4). The servant’s mission includes Yahweh’s verdict that the cult statues have failed his courtroom challenge. This verdict is part of the divine “decision judgment” signified in 42:1, 3-4. (CC)

Behold – invites the attention of the world – both the Jew and of the nations – to a new revelation. It looks back to the similar expression of verse 24 and 29 of the preceding chapter, which draw down the curtain upon the idol-gods, while this “behold” reveals One who is to occupy their place, and to be a worthy object of the worship of mankind. (PC)

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. If we were to place all these servants together and look at them, God would direct our attention to this Servant. For example, if all these servants were placed on a table and spread out like rare coins, God would be pointing at one of them saying, “Here’s My Servant. This is the special one.” (PBC)

*my servant.* See 41:8–9 and note; Zec 3:8. In the royal terminology of the ancient Near East “servant” meant something like “trusted envoy” or “confidential representative.” (CSB)

God chose to call many individuals His servants. The service they rendered carried out a wide variety of assignments: Abraham (Gn 26:24; Ps 105:6), Moses (Nu 12:7–8), Caleb (Nu 14:24), David (Is 37:35), Isaiah (Is 20:3), prophets in general (2Ki 17:13; Is 44:26), Eliakim (Is 22:20), Zerubbabel (Hg 2:23), even such heathen kings as Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 25:9) and Cyrus (Is 43:10; 45:1). The title occurs also as a corporate name for all Israelites to indicate the reason for their existence as a nation (Jer 30:10; frequently in Is 40–66). However, neither an individual nor Israel collectively can qualify as the Servant described in vv 1–9 and in the other Servant Songs (49:1–13; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12). In these passages, it becomes progressively clear that Isaiah is not speaking “about himself or about someone else” among his fellow Israelites but is proclaiming “the good news about Jesus” (Ac 8:30–35). In Him alone, God’s soul delights without ever finding fault, as “a voice from heaven” declared at His Son’s Baptism and transfiguration (Mt 3:17; 17:5). Because the Israelites, even the best among them, were in need of forgiveness, they could not save themselves, much less atone for the guilt of their companions in crime throughout the world. But God was promising a sinless Servant who could redeem not only disobedient Israel but also all the nations. The NT validates this interpretation of vv 1–4 by quoting the passage as fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Just: “In Isaiah, if you have ears to hear it, God, speaking of Christ in parable, calls Him Jacob and Israel” (ANF 1:261). Luther: “He is calling us away from errors and therefore showing us someone else.... The prophet points us to the

Incarnate One and says that in this Head alone, in the unity of faith, we who were formerly scattered must be brought together.... This was not written for Christ's sake but for ours, so that we may be sure about His work and teaching and may have certainty about the emptiness of our idolatry. Nobody understands these things unless he believes. You must believe that Christ is a servant. It is as Paul says (1 Cor. 2:2): 'I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.' ... This Christ is an offense to the whole world. Therefore, in order to give us certainty, this commendation of Christ is necessary. We see from experience that nothing is more absurd to the wisdom of the flesh than Christ, the Servant, and His Word. All are offended because of Him. All of us want to be God's servants while we please ourselves. Everything will be taken up and entrusted to Him alone. We should receive this with thanksgiving, but we attain to it ungratefully" (AE 17:60–61). (TLSB)

These are words of demonstration, as if he were pointing to something worth seeing. He is calling us away from errors and therefore showing us someone else. (Luther)

Who is the Servant? In 41:8–9, the nation Israel is explicitly identified as Yahweh's chosen servant. Surprisingly, the Septuagint departs significantly from the Hebrew by introducing the names Israel and Jacob into the text of 42:1 in imitation of 41:8–9. Without question 42:1–7 echoes 41:8–13, especially the key words *servant*, *chosen*, and *uphold*. But the contrasts between them are even more striking: Israel is blind and deaf, while the Servant is perfectly obedient and a light; Israel is rebellious and deserves to suffer, while the Servant is sinless and suffers for the sins of his people. Moreover, the Servant has a mission to the nation of Israel, and therefore cannot be identified as the nation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Jesus frequently designated himself as a servant (Mark 10:41–45, etc.), and the NT frequently identifies Jesus as the Servant-Messiah. Nearly every section of the NT refers to a passage from one of the four Servant Songs or draws on the Servant theme. Matthew quotes both the first and fourth Song (Matt 8:17; 12:18–21); John quotes the fourth Song (John 12:38) and draws it (among many other OT passages) when he records that Jesus was named the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Luke quotes from the fourth Song in the account of Philip and the Ethiopian and explicitly identifies the Servant as Jesus (Acts 8:32–35). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

A prominent name for Jesus in Peter's early sermons was Servant (Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30). Peter also explains the OT designation of Jesus as Servant to the Gentiles in his first epistle (1 Pet 2:20–25), and he quotes the fourth Song (Is 53:9). Paul quotes the second Song during his sermon in Pisidian Antioch (Is 49:6 in Acts 13:47) and twice quotes the fourth Song in Romans (10:16; 15:20). The identity of Jesus as the Servant is crucial for Paul's Adam-Christ typology in Rom 5:12–21 and in his Christological hymn in Phil 2:5–11. Jesus Christ is the Chosen One (Luke 23:35), "chosen by God" (1 Pet 2:4), "before the creation of the world, but revealed in these last times for your sake" (1 Pet 1:20). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Yet there is a collective dimension to the Servant. As Israel was God's chosen people in the OT, so the NT church, the body of Christ, is referred to as a "chosen people" (1 Pet

1:1; 2:9). 1 Peter draws on many Isaian themes, and particularly the Suffering Servant Songs. 1 Pet 2:21–25 quotes from Isaiah 53, the fourth Song, and the entire epistle is permeated with allusions to the Servant theme: “chosen” and “out of darkness into . . . light” (2:9), “called . . . suffered” (2:21), etc. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

It is vitally important that believers understand they are chosen servants. It is a matter of the gospel. No matter how altruistic or humble one is, to be merely a servant is to live under the law, and this results in despair or arrogance in this life and damnation in eternity. “Chosen” is the word which frees the servant from the bondage of the law into the liberty of the gospel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Here He gives Him the doctor’s degree. “If you want to know and be wise, look to this Christ, the Doctor and the One in charge and up and doing. Him I have put in charge. Keep your eye on Him, observe what He does, says, and teaches, because He is My Servant.” This was not written for Christ’s sake but for ours, so that we may be sure about His work and teaching and may have certainty about the emptiness of our idolatry. Nobody understands these things unless he believes. You must believe that Christ is a servant. It is as Paul says (1 Cor. 2:2): “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” (Luther)

Ebed – doer, tiller, slave (Young)

Israel was to be a kingdom of priests – Exodus 19:6 – 1 Peter 2:9 – He will not be like Israel, my rebellious and faithless servant, not even like my prophets, yielding an imperfect obedience. (PC)

Though the word “servant” in the original does mean slave, it is in this connection an entirely honorable term. If he is the Lord’s servant, his is an honorable task. Many have been designated by this title: Abram (Gen 26:24), the patriarchs (Deut 9:27), Moses (Numbers 12:7), David 2 Sam. 3:18), prophets (Amos 3:7), even Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 27:6), so the individual connotation of this title is far more common than the collective on a few instances Israel is referred to by this title. (Leupold)

This close relationship between God’s Servant, Jesus and God’s servants, His people, is visible also in the NT. Jesus assumed the role of a servant in His earthly ministry (Phil 2:5-11). He “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). The servant role is the model He left for us to imitate (John 13, especially v. 16), and the apostles are proud to begin many of the NT epistles by introducing themselves as Christ’s servants (Romans 1:1; etc.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

WHOM I UPHOLD – the father supports and sustains the Son. John 5:26, “As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself.” (PC)

“If you want to avoid error, if you want to find Me, please Me, then hear Him, receive His Word, teaching, and Spirit, for He is My treasure.” Here our ears must be glued to His mouth. Look only at His mouth and Word, and you will not be led astray, though meanwhile Satan rages. (Luther)

Means to lay firm hold of and keep upright. (KD)

He is man whom the Lord upholds or supports. He needs help in His task and He enjoys the very maximum of help in that the Lord upholds Him in every difficulty. (Leupold)

The same Hebrew verb describes Aaron and Hur supporting Moses arms (Ex. 17:12). God’s “supporting” keeps people from sinning (Ps. 17:5; 41:12\_ and protects them (Ps. 63:8-9) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

*chosen one*. See 41:8–9 and note. (CSB)

The Servant’s work will be part of God’s greater plan. (TLSB)

Paul affirms the Old Testament understanding that being chosen is not dependent on human qualifications. He attributes being chosen and predestined solely to the grace of God; it is “according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7). God’s purpose is for us “to be holy” (Eph 1:4), “to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves” (Eph 1:6). This purpose is accomplished through faith in Christ: “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Eph 1:7). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

God’s eternal choosing was actually experienced in our personal lives when we “heard the word of truth” (Eph 1:13). This word of truth is *mishpat* (Is 42:1, 3, 4), the “justice” or “righteousness” of God proclaimed by the Servant *leahemets*, “in faithfulness” or “in truth” (Is 42:3). “Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit” (Eph. 1:13). This sealing with the Holy Spirit occurs in the sacrament of baptism. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Christ was chosen from all eternity (Max Lucado – when Adam and Eve sinned, Jesus packed His bags for Bethlehem) in God’s counsels to the great work of man’s redemption and to be the Mediator between God and man. (PC)

The Servants work will be part of God’s greater plan. (TLSB)

In Matthew 3:17 (Baptism) and 17:5 (Transfiguration) the reference to this passage is so obvious that the evangelist must be viewed as indicating that this passage is a prophecy concerning the Messiah. (Leupold)

Means to be hand picked by God to accomplish His purposes. David (Ps. 89:3), Moses (Ps. 106:23), and the people of Israel (Deut. 7:6-7) also are described as chosen. As a

chosen one, Moses stood in the breach and turned God away from destroying His people (Ps. 106:23) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

This echoes the thought of election. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

### The Doctrine of Predestination

The primary point is that as God's chosen we can rest assured that our salvation will not be taken away from us. Predestination is whatever God has done, is doing and still will do for us during our life on earth to bring us to faith in Christ and to preserve us in this faith unto eternal salvation. Some things to remember:

- 1) It is not a matter of chance.
- 2) It is not motivated by any personal merit on the part of humans.
- 3) People are not predestined to hell. That would be contrary to God's will as expressed in 1 Timothy 2:4, "who desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."
- 4) People can through willful and intentional neglect throw away their faith. There is no such thing as "once saved, always saved" [Cain Gen 4:16 – Pharaoh – Judas/Peter – Jews – Romans 1:24]
- 5) The life of the Christian is not in the hands of "fate." In this short phrase three things are said:
  - Our destiny is in God's hands,
  - The spirit in which God handles us is loving, and
  - Christ is the agent through whom our destiny is managed.

In the NT divine predestination is always presented in the context of gratitude for God's grace, never is the sense of blaming God or questioning God's choices. (LL)

2 Timothy 1:9 "who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,"

Both Christ and God's people were ordained for their tasks before the creation of the world. Israel's sacred history began with election – singled out for a divine purpose. When God wants something done, he calls for Himself people like Abraham, David, and Moses; and Christ selected His twelve. To be chosen always involves work, service, and mission. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

*delight.* Cf. Lk 3:22. (CSB)

This is nothing else than the preaching of the Gospel. It is spoken to you to strengthen you. Before the world He will be an abomination and an enemy of God. He will appear as nothing less than an opponent of God. "Before Me He will be a source of delight. By comparison with the flesh, the world, and the devil, in the eyes of the world nothing but the squalid and the weak will be manifest in Him. In My sight, however, He counts for very much. Therefore listen to Him, even if the world should regard Him as a heretic."

This consolation is necessary for us so that in this time we may cling to His Word and world, knowing that He is the elect Servant in whom God delights. Then we may boast in the saying: “I know for certain that the Word is true, even though all are opposed to it.” Alongside Him all our wisdom and power and treasure are nothing in the sight of God. Not only does He say that He will provide a teacher of the truth who will gather us, but He also says that He will grant the most delightful teaching. Understand this in terms of opposites: As my soul is irked by all religion, so I find delight in this Man alone. I started out to be brief, but I made it long because the text is so golden, so that I might encourage you in this time. (Luther)

Leviticus uses the word for sacrifices that are “acceptable” to God (Lev. 1:4; 7:18; 22:27). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

*my Spirit on him.* Like the “Branch” of 11:2 (see note there); cf. 61:1. (CSB)

The Servant is divinely authorized and empowered to carry out His assigned mission. However, He will not bring justice to the nations by forcing His will on the world by military campaigns as Cyrus did, treading down kings and rulers “as the potter treads clay” (41:25). There will be no noisy, flamboyant victory marches “in the street” (42:2). Yet, He will bring it about that even the weakest in His worldwide dominion will have a rightful claim to the benefits He bestows. (TLSB)

The second catchword is “wind spirit.” The verdict at the end of chapter 41 is that the heathen images are merely “an empty wind” (41:29). The Spirit who cannot be measured (Is. 40:13), empowers the servant to bring the verdict to the nations. The phraseology of the “Spirit” being “upon” someone occurs again in 11:2 and 61:1-3, connecting the Davidic Messiah of 11:1-10 with the servant here and in 61:1-3. Jesus is only person who perfectly fulfills all three descriptions. (CC)

“Friend, regard the righteousness of the laws and of the Pharisees as nothing, because I have not given them My Spirit, but My Spirit is in Him alone.” Paul referred to this with his highest praise: “In whom are hid all the treasures” (Col. 2:3), both physical and spiritual. Meanwhile He seems foolish, weak, and ridiculous, and therefore it is difficult to believe Him. For that reason He says, “To Him, to Him I have given the Spirit. No one ascends to heaven but He alone.” Therefore cling to Him and take nothing to yourselves except what is in Christ, because apart from Him we do nothing and are nothing but heaps of sin. Here, however, He gives us the Treasure, who embraces all those things which He accomplishes publicly through works and plans, as well as all remaining sin. Therefore He commends this unique God to us, because the heavens and earth and demons must tremble. (Luther)

On the OT level the reference to the Spirit almost invariably connotes power. So this statement means that the Servant is richly imbued with power. (Leupold)

God reminds us that He always first gives what He may demand later. His Servant will be endowed with His Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is not just knowledge, but power and insight into God's will. (Is. 11:2) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

*justice*.† The weakest in his worldwide dominion will have rightful claim to the benefits he bestows; see 9:7 and note; 11:4 and note. (CSB)

In this context, the term *mishpat*, “justice,” is a gospel term, not a law term. Unfortunately, there is no English equivalent that does justice (!) to it. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

“‘Justice’ is solely a result of God’s forensic ‘judgments,’ and the response determines whether the ultimate judgment is salvatory or damnatory. ‘Salvation plus’ or ‘both justification and sanctification’ would be better translations . . . [It] is that vicarious ‘justice’ we have in the covenant with Christ, namely the Gospel, by which alone we escape condemnation.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

That is, “He will lead you out among the nations. He is different from Moses. He will be a light and a lamp with the Word to the scattered nations, so that they may believe and understand rightly. He proclaims His words to Jacob and His judgments in Israel. He will bring forth His judgment beyond the synagogue and into the whole world. I sent forth the Word, and it went in a weak and sickly manner because it had a lisping tongue. Here, however, the preaching of the Gospel convicts the world of sin.” So you see that the kingdom of Christ consists in the Word, in rightful speaking, not in display, in gold and silver. It is, rather, a kingdom of righteousness, godliness, and harmony. (Luther)

This is the publication of Christianity throughout all the world. (PC)

It includes not only God’s wrath against oppressors but also God’s mercy. God’s wrath is pronounced against Israel’s wanton life, but God’s form of justice in Christ also provides His mercy and forgiveness. This word for “justice” is parallel to “righteousness” in Is 1:27, where God promises to redeem His people with justice; and again in Is. 9:7 where the Son of David establishes His throne – the kingdom of God – with justice and righteousness. The vicarious atonement of Christ for the sins of the world is God’s unique form of justice. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

Its root word means to “wash.” This ties the concept of justice and baptism together. Jesus fulfills God’s justice by being washed for our sin. In Matthew 3:15 Jesus replies to John’s questioning His baptism, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” God was bringing His justice through Jesus’ baptism. To understand Jesus’ baptism is to understand the cross, for Jesus began to take our sins upon Himself in Baptism. Thus God’s justice was satisfied in washing. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 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 will bring peace (see 9:6). (CSB)

The Servant is described in negative terms because there is no other basis of comparison for Him. He does not push Himself aggressively on anyone. All things and people are precious in His sight. (TLSB)

Israel’s past service to Yahweh involved violent warfare, as in the conquest of the land under Joshua. The mighty Cyrus will serve Yahweh by subduing nations (45:1); he will tread on rulers as if they were mortar (41:25). Hanson writes: “The Servant, rather bears witness with quiet, patient gentleness, confident that the nations will be drawn to God’s reign of justice not by dint of human force by attraction to embodied compassion and righteousness.” In this way, he will be a light for the nations (42:6). This compassionate demeanor comes from fruition in the Fourth Servant Song (see 53:7). Several times in his passion, Jesus remains silent before his accusers (e.g., Mk.14:60-61; Jn. 19:9). His passive obedience allows God’s plan of redemption to be fulfilled on the cross and at the empty tomb. (CC)

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)

This passage is quoted in Matthew (12:18). It is an appreciation of the Word to make us take notice and be submissive and obedient ... He Himself will not be noisy in the streets nor make Himself heard in the open. How does this jibe? The noise is of two kinds: the noise of wrath and that of love. He did indeed cry in the preaching proceeding from love, but not in a noisy way, as the self-righteous and other sects are noisy. In opposition to their harshest clamor the prophet depicts the office of Christ as being most gentle and mild. This is to cry without being noisy, that is, teach gently without rage. In other partisan groups and judgments and lawsuits there is nothing but accusation and shouting on the part of those who suffer wrong on both sides, and even the judge shouts when he passes sentence. Thus the self-righteous are most turbulent, because all of them are by nature sad and stern, all of them are ready to pass judgment. They measure everything by the standard of their own life and most severely condemn everything else ... This is what it means for a Christian not to raise his voice, that is, in an uproar, but rather in grace. (Luther)

Although He is certain of His divine call, and brings to the nations the highest and the best, His manner of appearing is nevertheless quiet, gentle, and humble; the very opposite of those lying teachers, who endeavored to exalt themselves by noisy demonstrations. He does not seek His own, and therefore denies Himself. He brings what commends itself, and therefore requires no forced trumpeting. (The more unsure,

the louder people speak – Parents, pastors, and teachers who need to remind others who they are usually in trouble or in doubt themselves.) (KD)

Contrast the quiet Servant (cf. Is 53:7) with world conquerors such as Sennacherib (Is. 36) and Cyrus (Is. 41:5), who made loud and arrogant boast about their victories. But the Messiah/King comes as a meek one riding a donkey (Zech. 9:9; Matt 21:5). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

This is quoted by Matthew to explain why Jesus warned crowds not to publicize Him (Mt. 12:16). Jesus did not seek fame, nor did He want second-hand reports to distort the purpose of His mission. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

**42:3** *bruised reed*. Someone who is weak (see Ps 72:2, 4). The servant will mend broken lives. (CSB)

Reeds were used for pens, etc. Wicks were made from broken flax fibers that could not be woven properly. Though of little value, these items are still handled carefully by the Servant. Cf 40:29; 61:1–3. (TLSB)

The breaking of reeds and snuffing out of wicks is imagery of warfare and death on a national scale. In the past Yahweh recruited Israel to engage in holy warfare and death to defeat the Egyptians and wipe out the native Canaanites. He also employed armies of other nations to execute his judgment. (CC)

This servant is called to a completely different kind of ministry. When he encounters oppressed people, he is not to oppress them further, but rather help them get back on their feet (cf. Lev. 19:34). He is to wield his God-given authority to care for those living on the margins of society (cf. Ps. 72:1-4). That said, idolatry disqualified Israel from serving with compassion. The more the Israelites worshiped violent and lustful gods, the more they reflected this life of hatred and abuse. Yahweh looked for justice, and instead he saw bloodshed (Is. 5:7). (CC)

Compassion for bruised reeds and dim wicks marked our Lord's ministry. He talked publically with immoral women, socialized with sinners and tax collectors, exorcised demons, healed the lame, and gave sight to the blind. Mt. 9:36 describes him with these words: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them." Another time, "Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I have compassion on the crowd' " (Mt. 15:32). And once, "having compassion, he [Jesus] reached out his hand and touched him [a leper]" (Mk. 1:41). (CC)

We move into the area of pastoral care. Wherever He finds men wounded and bruised by the harshness of life's experience, or wherever He finds wounded and bruised consciences, whether among the Gentiles or in Israel, there He is most tender and delicate in the gentle handling of these souls. (Leupold)

**SMOLDERING WICK** – The Savior would make use of true pastoral mildness in dealing with hearts which are broken and contrite, not only by not driving them to

despair, but by seeking them and caring for them with His full Savior's love.  
(Kretzmann)

Wicks were made from broken flax fibers that could not be woven properly. Though of little value, these items are still handled carefully by the Servant. Cf. 40:29; 61:1-3.  
(CSB)

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)

Not only will He not destroy the life that is dying out, but He will actually save it. His course is not to destroy, but to save. (KD)

John 3:16-17, <sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, <sup>f</sup> that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

He cups His hand around the flame that it may not be quenched or as one writer has put it, snuffed out. This will be the manner in which He will faithfully bring forth justice.  
(Leupold)

This is, brothers who are difficult in their habits, irritable, suspicious, and troublesome, men who see others as pleasant people and regard themselves alone as overcome with despair. Such people Christ also wants to carry. Christian friendship is different from the worldly variety... It is like a hospital, where there are the strong and the weak. The Christian life, therefore, is a mixture of strength and weakness. One supports the other. This is indeed a comforting situation. (Luther)

FAITHFULNESS – emeth – stability, certainty, truth, trustworthiness. (Strongs)

2 Timothy 2:13, “if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.”

JUSTICE – He does not reign by means of weapons and force, still less by craft and guile, but He rules by truth without violence. For that reason the whole world is offended by this kingdom, because it makes its way in weakness. (Luther)

**42:4** *falter*. Cf. 40:28. (CSB)

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)

Jesus, our perfect Servant, fulfilled what servant Israel was unable to do. It was not by human might or power that he completed his Father's mission, but by the Holy Spirit (Is. 42:1; Mt. 3:16;

cf. Zech. 4:6). Unlike the nation of Israel, Jesus completes what he begins (cf. Phil. 1:6). He was able to announce, “It is finished” (Jn. 19:30). He succeeds (Is. 52:13). Mission completed! (CC)

Christ Himself will be the best teacher. He will not fail or put on a sour face like the self-righteous, who walk around stoop-shouldered in gray robes. This describes Christ’s personal manner and appearance against their sadness and sour mien, because He says, Matt. 6:16: “Do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces.” A Christian can well be pious and cheerful at the same time. This is said with regard to his person. (Luther)

*In his law ... hope.* † As do the nations in 2:2–4. (CSB)

The Servant’s purpose is to establish salvation on the earth. Even the coastlands, previously zealous for their idols (41:5–7), should wait for the Law (instruction) of the Servant. (TLSB)

Law here means more than the OT ceremonial laws or even the Ten Commandments. It means all the revelation about this Servant – His Word, including the gospel. (PBC)

*islands.* See note on 11:11. (CSB)

He will carry out His work until He has established justice in the earth. But it will not be universal hostility and opposition that He encounters. Grace will have been doing some work on the hearts of men in distant coastlands. So the encouraging word is added for His teaching the coastlands do wait. Sometimes their longing will be dimly and not consciously define. But it will be there, even if at times it is little more than a negative preparation. (Luke 15:1-2) (Leupold)

The isles are the most distant of the Gentile nations and indicate the universal scope of the Servant’s mission. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

**42:5–7** The Lord gives further purpose for His Servant; He will be a light to the nations, bring freedom, and heal the blind. Cf Mt 11:4–5. (TLSB)

**42:5** WHAT GOD THE LORD SAYS – It must be made perfectly clear that the announcement of the Servant of the Lord and His mission are from the Almighty; and so we have the solemn announcement of the present verse. (PC)

The article used before the word God gives a sense of the true and only God. He is about to speak of achievements so great that men might have doubts as to whether He is able to fulfill them. Therefore He reminds them of the fact that He is none less than the very Creator Himself, who has the power to make the earth of nothing. Here, as so often, the Creator-character of God is the guaranty of His power to achieve any and all of the things He proposes to undertake (see 40:12, 13, 26, 28; 41:20; 43:1, 8, 12, 13 etc.) (Leupold)

*created the heavens ... stretched.* See 40:22 and note. (CSB)

Yahweh employs his creative power to redeem his people (41:19-20; 45:8), using even darkness and evil to serve his salvific purposes (45:7; 54:16). Paul on Mars Hill quotes from a section of Is. 42:4 when he says of God, “He himself gives to all life and breath” (Acts 17:25). Both Isaiah and Paul extol the one true and triune God against the backdrop of idol worship (Is. 42:7; Acts 17:23). (CC)

Is. 42:5 unfolds in the same order as does Genesis 1. Four participles define Yahweh’s mastery over creation. They are, “the one creating/The Creator”; “the one stretching them out”; the one hammering out”; and “the giving one.” The heavy accent on creation counters the claims of the Babylonians regarding their cult statues. The empire professed that its deities were made in heaven, but Yahweh made the heavens. He gives life and breath to people, while idols are lifeless. That some of the comments in 442:5-9 are polemically aimed at the idolatry becomes clear in Yahweh’s claim in 42:8” he does not give his praise to idols. (CC)

In the preceding paragraph the prophet spoke of the person and teacher. He turned from the second to the third person. Now he again turns the speech to the Teacher Himself to tell us that we should listen to this Master alone and do it with sure confidence, and at once he summons us to this one school away from all other schools, as if to say, “This arrangement will stand, and none other will be made.” Thus he scares us away from hearing other authors and teachers. This is very necessary because the devil raises up outstanding, weighty, and varied schools. Therefore this text extols this Teacher so strongly to us. (Luther)

To stretch out or pitch a tent (Gen. 12:8). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

He spreads it out (literally “hammered out”) the earth and made it bring forth what it produces, for it is no sterile earth. He is the one who stretched out the heavens, with the ease with which a man spreads out a table cloth. (Leupold)

*gives breath ... life. Cf. 57:15. (CSB)*

Recalls creation of Adam; God’s breath animates lifeless clay. (TLSB)

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)

This can be read in light of the Spirit’s descent in the Gospel and outpouring following the Epistle (Acts 10:44-47). The Father not only gave life, through the Spirit he also gives new life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

**42:6** *called ... righteousness.* Similar to the call of Cyrus (see 41:2 and note). (CSB)

Despite the Servant's losses and wonder at God's action, God's call to Him is righteous and holy, above reproach. (TLSB)

Just as Isaiah foresaw that Yahweh would mobilize Cyrus for "righteousness/victory (41:2; 45:13), he is told that Yahweh is beckoning his servant "in righteousness" (42:6). Both are Yahweh's means to take what is wrong in the world and make it right again. Cyrus will be Yahweh's instrument for judging Babylon and for liberating the exiles. The servant will minister in such a way that all the nations will hear Yahweh's verdict against idols and then, turning from their sins, embrace the salvation of the one true God (45:22). When the lost are found (see Lk. 15:24) and idolaters repent and turn to Yahweh (see Acts 3:19; 26:20), this will display God's righteousness. (CC)

In this passage you see Him concerned with setting free from sin, with consoling, as He began, "Comfort, comfort My people" (Is. 40:1). For that reason He turns the address to the Teacher Himself in the second person. *In righteousness*, in teaching and promoting it. It is as if He were saying: "Outside of this Christ there is nothing but sin." Here Christ is set up as the only Teacher, Author, and Minister of righteousness. All others, Moses and the prophets, are teachers and ministers of sin, wrath, and death, as Paul beautifully describes it in 2 Cor. 3:9. Here, then, He says that the sole Author of righteousness is Christ. (Luther)

*take hold of your hand.* See 41:13 and note. (CSB)

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."

He now envisions His Servant as standing before Him. God is grasping His right hand to uphold and strengthen Him for the seemingly impossible task which is His. At the same time He is continually guarding Him against the many dangers that would assail Him and thwart His work. (Leupold)

I WILL KEEP YOU – "This, too, is the result of My power. They will have to leave You alone in spite of everything, even while all the tempests are raging. You will stand secure, for I am keeping You." Let us surely believe this alone, and then none of Satan's cunning can hinder us. (Luther)

*covenant.* See 49:8. The Messiah will fulfill the Davidic covenant as king (9:7) and will institute the new covenant by his death (Jer 31:31–34; Heb 8:6–13; 9:15. (CSB)

The Servant establishes a new covenant. Cf Mt 26:28. (TLSB)

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)

*people.* Probably the Israelites (see 49:8; Ac 26:17–18). (CSB)

*light.* † Parallel to “salvation” in 49:6 (cf. 51:4). Paul and Barnabas brought “the light of the world” (Jn 8:12) to the Gentiles by referring to this verse and 49:6 (Ac 13:47). (CSB)

Paul and Barnabas justified their bringing “the light of the world” (Jn 8:12) to the Gentiles by referring to this verse and to 49:6. (Cf Lk 2:30–32; Ac 13:47.) (TLSB)

**42:7** *open eyes.* See 29:18; 32:3; 35:5 and notes. (CSB)

We are faced with a dilemma. Israel is introduced as Yahweh’s first servant in 41:8. The servant is commissioned to open the eyes of the blind in this verse but then Israel is deemed blind in 42:19. *How can the blind lead the blind?* They cannot (cf. Mt. 15:14; 23:16, 24). So another Servant is needed, one who will fulfill what Israel was unable to do. Jesus is this Second Servant. In one instance, he heals a blind man, but then is accused by the Pharisees of acting by the power of Satan, like a sorcerer (Mt. 12:22–24). Acting like Israel of old, the Pharisees are blind (John 9:35–41). (CC)

Jesus called Paul to be his apostle to the Gentiles with words that apply to corporate mission of all baptized: “to open their eyes so they turn from darkness to light, and from the dominion of Satan to God, so they receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified through faith that is in me” (Acts 26:18). (CC)

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

Those trapped due to sin, such as the exiles. (TLSB)

Yahweh’s agent brings nations out of their self-imposed incarceration in bondage to other gods. The verb “to go out” also appears in a similar missional call in 43:8, where Yahweh commands the nation to “bring forth blind people, yet who have eyes, and deaf ones, yet have ears.” Israel is to testify that Yahweh is the only Savior (43:9–11). (CC)

There are two matters here, ignorance and impotence, because apart from Christ there is nothing but darkness and dungeon. (Luther)

Unable and, what’s worse, unwilling to do anything about our condition, we love darkness rather than light. But in love unimaginable, the Servant Christ paid the price necessary to open our blind eyes, to free us from the captivity of sin and to flood the dungeons of our hearts with light. No wonder that in response to all this Isaiah exclaims in verse 10 “I sing to the Lord a new song!” (LL)

**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)

“I am Yahweh” is a nominal clause that encompasses the totality of the one true God. Yahweh is the Creator who gives breath and spirit to people (42:5). He summons, seizes, guards, and appoints his servant to be a covenant for the people and a light for the nations (42:6). His people are tasked with the goal of calling idolaters out of darkness and into his marvelous light. (CC)

God confirms His name (cf. Ex 3:13-15) and emphasizes again His uniqueness. (TLSB) Note from 41:4 – The Lord predates the beginning of history and will continue to exist after the last of temporal things has ceased to be (43:10-13). In all this, He does not change. (TLSB)

I the Lord, will do this, I who am all that the name Jehovah signifies: self-existent, eternal, self-sufficing, independent, omnipotent, and therefore unique, one whose glory cannot be shared with any other being the exists – least of all with images. (PC)

He who bears the distinctive name of God of Israel, the name Yahweh is jealous of this honor of His and will not allow it to be snatched from Him or awarded to any other, because this honor is so intimately tied up with the salvation of mankind. (Leupold)

*my glory.* See 40:5 and note. (CSB)

An apt example of this exclusive claim of glory is when Moses arrogantly asked Israel in the wilderness, “Hear now, you rebels: from out of this rock shall we bring forth water for you?” (Num. 20:10). He and his brother presumed they could claim at least partial credit for the performance of a divine miracle. Despite Moses’ hubristic inclusion of himself and Aaron, Yahweh graciously furnished Israel with water. However, since he will not share his glory with another, he excluded both Moses and Aaron from bringing Israel into the land of promise (Num. 20:12). Yahweh alone would have the glory for doing that. (CC)

He uses the word *glory* because all the ungodly, too, shout about the glory of God but meanwhile arrogate this divine work to themselves, as Paul says to the Galatians (Gal. 6:13), “that they may glory in your flesh.” To seek one’s own glory is the source of all ungodliness, because it leads people to say, “This is what I have accomplished.” Here, however, He wants no one to glow except those who have come to know Christ. All glory is in Him. (Luther)

**MY PRAISE TO IDOLS** – Here he is speaking of the worship that is apart from Christ. You must understand the prophet’s reference to *graven images*. In Isaiah’s time every cult had its own form of outward sculpture. Thus when he speaks of images, we must apply this to the images of ungodliness and abomination in our time. It is

impossible for us, as Christ says, to believe and to cling to the Word while we stand in our own glory. And the more outstanding the talents are, the greater is the glory, as we experience in the case of our enemies. Therefore we must fight against that beast with prayer alone. Let us, then, break loose from our own religion, worship, and works. Let us turn away from our idol and turn to the glory of Christ. (Luther)

All the gods of humanity cannot compare to the Lord. No god in any culture anywhere on the face of the earth can match what the Lord has promised and carried out. Yet there are many opinions about God. Contemporary theology does not erect new images representing deities as ancient theologies once did, but contemporary theology still fashions God according to its own thought. Without the Scriptures, contemporary theology and all subsequent theologies build a god different from the Lord. But there is no other God. There is no other deliverance. Apart from Jesus Christ, all is darkness. (PBC)

**42:9** *former things*. See 41:22 and note. (CSB)

Emphasizes, as did the earlier negative descriptions of the role of the Servant, that what is being done is something new (Jer 31:31-34; Luke 22:20; Heb. 8:1-13; 9:11-28). (TLSB)

In chapters 40-55, Isaiah often contrasts former events that Yahweh prophesied and carried out with Yahweh's promises of new event to be fulfilled in the future. For instance, when Israel will return to the promised land, it will be like a new creation (e.g., 51:3; 55:12-13); just as Abraham was called from the east, Cyrus will come Persian in the east to deliver Israel out of Babylonian bondage; and Israel's procession home will be like a new exodus (e.g., 43:16-21). In the context of idolatry, the claim that Yahweh oversees both old and new events asserts that he alone manages history. (CC)

Let him who has the ability have the name, since I can proclaim and do everything, but no one else can. This passage was treated above (41:22 ff.). But here you see how irrational we are, because the prophet cannot bring us to our God either by promises or by threats. He has to drive us to it because we do not want the proffered grace. A little while ago (40:18 ff.) we heard him boast of a weak God over all idolaters and self-righteous people, since He would prevail over them in deed and in word, something that all the idols could not do. These words must be heard through faith and the Spirit to strengthen our faith when nothing but despair is in evidence. We must know that God can both say and do. Therefore His Word stands fast. So now the prophet represents all the faithful in extolling and praising the wonderful God, who gives strength to all things, even though He seems to be weak. (Luther)

The former things are all that God has done in the past. Among them would be the deliverance of His people from Egypt, and it happened as He promised. Other events happened as God predicted they would. He promised that Abraham's descendants would become a great nation. That happened as He promised. He promised King

Ahaz that the alliance against him and Judah would fail. It did. He promised to deliver Jerusalem from the Assyrians. He did so. (PBC)

*new things.*† The things to be done by the servant of the Lord. (CSB)

These future events will come to pass as certainly as did the predictions of days of old. (Leupold)

**42:1–9** The Servant establishes a new covenant to save the nations. Jesus Christ fulfilled this prophecy on your behalf. He frees you from your sins by His righteousness alone. • O Lord, I praise You for calling me by the Gospel and for giving me Your Holy Spirit, that I may serve You in righteousness. Amen. (TLSB)

#### 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.**

**6:1-23** 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)

“All this we can do, he says, because we are under grace and not under law. He himself explains what this means. To be without the law is not the same things as to have no laws and to be able to do what one pleases. Rather we are under the law when, without grace, we occupy ourselves with the works of the law. Then sin certainly rules (us) though the law, for no one loves the law by nature; and that is great sin. Grace, however, makes the law dear to us; then sin is no longer present, and the law is no longer against us but one with us.” (AE 35:375-76) (TLSB)

“This is the true freedom from sin and from the law. He writes about this down to the end of the chapter, saying that it is a freedom only to do good with pleasure and to live well without the compulsion of the law. Therefore this freedom is a spiritual freedom, which does not overthrow the law but presents what the law demands, namely, pleasure (in the law) and love (for it) whereby the law is quieted and no longer drives men or makes demands of them. It is just as if you owed a debt to your overlord and could not pay it. There are two ways in which you could rid yourself of the debt: either he would take nothing from you and would tear up the account, or some good man would pay it for you and give you the means to satisfy the account. It is in this latter way that Christ has made us free from the law. Our freedom is, therefore, no carefree fleshly freedom which is not obligated to do anything, but a freedom that does many works of all kinds, and is free of the demands and obligations of the law.” (AE 35:375-76) (TLSB)

**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)

**6:1-2** Paul forcefully rejects the notion that we should ignore God’s will and deliberately sin, knowing that He will forgive. That is an abuse of grace. (TLSB)

WE – Paul and fellow Christians. (TLSB)

**6:1** *Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?* † This question arose out of what Paul had just said in 5:20: “Where sin increased, grace increased all the more.” Such a question expresses an antinomian (against law) viewpoint. Apparently some objected to Paul’s teaching of justification through faith alone because they thought it would lead to moral irresponsibility. (CSB)

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)

The second question in verse 1 is a question which is asked by our sinful flesh: “Shall we continue in sin in order that grace may increase?” Our sinful flesh, our old Adam, is thoroughly wicked and evil. It is our greatest cross. We shall carry it about with us until we die. Christians are constantly being tempted by Satan’s logic: “Won’t a little sinning make God more gracious to you since grace is greater than sin?” (Buls)

“Are we to continue in sin so that grace may abound?” The question arose out of what Paul had said in 5:20, “Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” Luther reminds us that Paul did not say this to excuse sin but to glorify divine grace (Martin Luther, translated by J. Theodore Mueller, *Commentary on Romans* [Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1976], 99). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

The question is not “Shall we continue to do sins?” but “shall we continue to pass our lifetime under the lordship of sin?” Another way to put it, with 5:20 in view, is this: Since Israel was given the Law code at Sinai so that trespass should increase until Good Friday in order that grace might super abound at Calvary, should we Christians continue to operate in daily life under Law in the kingdom of sin in order that – carrying the principle in 5:20 forward – grace might continue to abound more so? The answer is “No!” because the interlude of Sinai Law is over, its purpose having been served as of Good Friday. The reign of grace has now been established in all its super abundant fullness. It cannot “super abound” beyond its super abounding on Good Friday. Now, more behavior under Law in the kingdom of Sin will not produce any more grace – nor is any more needed.

Philip Melancthon states, “There is in all men so great an infirmity of nature that when we hear the teaching about gratuitous imputation, we become less fruitful for doing good and carnal security is strengthened.

**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)

“By no means!” The previous question is answered with an emphatic “no” and with a clear explanation: we have died to sin. If we are dead to sin, we cannot continue in it. The definite past tense, “we died,” points to a particular moment of conversion, Baptism, as we shall soon see. It is important to note that while the Christian is dead to sin, he still struggles against his flesh (Rom 7:14–20). There is both an eschatological reality and present ideal to Paul’s teaching. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

*died to sin.* The reference is to an event in the past and is explained in v. 3. (CSB)

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)

And now Paul answers the two questions of verse 1 with another question in verse 2. There is a sense in which all true Christians, like their Lord, are dead, dead with respect to sin. One cannot become a Christian until he dies, dies to sin. How does that happen? Christ frees from sin. Christian life is a state of freedom from sin, its guilt and its power. (Buls)

Arndt: Just as a person who dies is separated from his friends and relatives, so the Christian is separated from sin. (Buls)

Even marriage comes to an end when death takes place. (Buls)

Lenski: The moment a man is dead he ceases to respond to stimuli. (Buls)

Pinch a corpse as hard as you can. It will not respond. Paul is assuming, of course, that his reader believes what he had said in Romans 5:12-21. Bengel reminds us of that when he comments (concerning "we have died to sin") "In baptism and justification." The answer, of course, to the question: "How can we live any longer in it (sin)?" is "We simply cannot." But let's be honest about ourselves. Our flesh is constantly tempting us to change liberty into license. That happens in thousands of ways. The reader of these notes needs no examples of this because he finds so many in his life. But Christian faith fights these temptations. (Buls)

It should be obvious that the verb in this verse is not eschatological but refers now to everyday living. We mention this because in verse 8 a future indicative is also used of everyday living now, not in heaven. (Buls)

BLESSED Augustine says regarding this passage: "With this passage the apostle is giving a complete description of the man who has been placed under grace, where with his mind he is already serving God's law, although with his flesh he is still serving the law of sin." And he continues in his description of these two kinds of servitude of the Law and of sin, saying: "For this man does not obey the desire of sin, no matter how his lusts still continue to trouble him and call him to consent to them, until the time that his body is raised to life and 'death is swallowed up in victory' (1 Cor. 15:54). Thus because we do not surrender to these low desires, we are under grace, and 'sin does not reign in our body' (v. 12). But he over whom sin reigns, no matter how he resists sin, is still under the Law and not under grace." (Luther)

From this quotation the meaning of the apostle's words is clear. For all these propositions: (1) to be dead to sin; (2) but to live unto God; (3) to serve with the mind the law of God and with the flesh the law of sin, mean nothing else than this, that we do not yield to our evil lusts and to sin, even though sin still remains in us. This is the same as saying: (4) Sin does not have dominion, does not rule; but (5) righteousness does rule, etc. Hence later on, in chapter 13:14, he says: "And make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires," as if he were saying: "The desires of the flesh are themselves sin, that is, original sin and the rest of the paternal inheritance from Adam remain, but you must not obey them." Likewise he says, "That the body of sin might be destroyed" (v. 6), which takes place when our spirit resists sin and refuses to give in to it. (Luther)

We are in sin until the end of our life. For this reason blessed Augustine says: "Until our body is raised to life and death is swallowed up in victory, our evil desires will afflict us."<sup>2</sup> Likewise, we read in Gal. 5:17: "The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and

the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would.” And below, in Rom. 7:19 Paul says: “For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do, etc.” Again, in James 4:1: “What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members?” And in 1 Peter 2:11: “Abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul.” And in this way all the apostles and saints confess that sin and concupiscence remain in us, until the body returns to ashes and a new one is raised up without concupiscence and sin, as 2 Peter 3:13 puts it, “According to His promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells,” as if to say that sin dwells in this present world. Just so in Jer. 18:4 ff. in regard to the potter who repairs the broken vase by making another, the Lord says that He will do likewise. For the Lord hates this body of sin and is preparing to remake it into another; therefore He commands us to hate it also, to destroy and put it to death and to seek an escape from it and “the coming of His kingdom” (Matt. 6:10). (Luther)

**6:3–4**† The when and how of the Christian’s death to sin. Baptism is a means by which we enter into a vital faith relationship with Jesus Christ. It is a means of receiving God’s grace, and it depicts graphically what happens as a result of the Christian’s union with Christ. Through faith we are united with Christ, just as through our natural birth we are united with Adam. As we fell into sin and became subject to death in father Adam, so we now have died and been raised again with Christ—which baptism effects. (CSB)

The power of the new and sanctified life flows forth from our connectedness to Christ in Baptism. In Baptism, we join Christ in his death to sin (justification) and are, as Paul says, buried with him. The imagery here is that of drowning. Immersion has better imagery than our present-day sprinkling and pouring, as Luther writes: “The significance of Baptism [is] that the old man and the sinful . . . flesh and blood are to be wholly drowned by the grace of God” (*WLS* § 156). Whether one immerses or not, it should be taught and understood that nothing of the former life or person remains. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

*Hina*, “in order that,” just as Christ was raised from the dead . . . we, too, should *peri patēsōmen*, “walk,” in a newness of life. Describing the one who is crucified with Christ, Luther writes, “The spiritual person . . . must be totally separated from and dead in his heart to all (*temporal*) things. This he does when with all his spiritual strength he despises what belongs to this earthly life” (Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, p 101). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

**6:3** BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST JESUS – Baptism connects us with Christ’s work, clothing us in His righteousness. (TLSB)

WERE BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH – Christ paid the penalty of our sin. Christ’s work is applied to us in Baptism. (TLSB)

Kretzmann: They should remember what they knew with regard to their Baptism, whose meaning had been explained to them. (Buls)

In keeping with this idea Lenski calls this question a *litotes* for: "But I am sure that you know the fact etc." Paul is simply reminding the Romans of something which they had learned before they were baptized. Paul had a very diplomatic but firm way of dealing with his hearers. (Buls)

Baptism into Christ Jesus equals baptism into Christ's death. That is a tremendous thought. How can anyone call baptism a mere symbol? (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: Through baptism we partake of Christ and the fruit of His death. The one does not exclude the other. . . . Faith is nothing else than personal contact with Christ. (Buls)

Arndt: When we were baptized we became partakers of the death of Christ. It was just as though we had died ourselves. The apostle here appeals to baptism, because it is the beginning of our Christianity. . . . Christ died to the sin of others which he bore; we die to sin that we have in ourselves and whose yoke we cast off. (Buls)

Bengel: He who is baptized puts on Christ, the second Adam; he is baptized, I say, into the whole Christ, and so also into his death, and it is just as if, at that moment, Christ suffered, died, and were buried for such a man, and as if such a man suffered, died, and was buried with Christ. (Buls)

The Baptism of our Lord himself gives us some clues to this connection between Baptism and death and new life. The Father spoke, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Mt. 3:17). These words quote from Is. 42:1, the first Suffering Servant Song, and Ps 2:7, which speaks of the enthronement of God's anointed Son as King. Christ was baptized into his role of suffering and death in order to redeem us from sin (cf. the last Suffering Servant Song, Isaiah 53, and Luke 12:50). But his Baptism also was the prelude to his enthronement in glory after his victorious resurrection (Ps. 2). (Concordia Pulpit Resources Volume 3, Part 3)

Blessed Augustine in Book 4, chapter 3, of *On the Trinity* says: "For our twofold death the Savior pays with His single death, and in order to achieve a twofold resurrection for us, He has set before us and offered us His own single resurrection in His sacrament and example. For having put on our mortal flesh and dying only in it and rising only in it, now only in it He joins these things together for us, for in this flesh He became a sacrament for the inner man and an example for the outward man. With regard to the sacrament for the inner man we have this word: 'We know that our old self was crucified with Him, so that the body of sin might be destroyed' (v. 6). But to the example for the outward man this statement is pertinent: 'And do not fear those who kill the body' (Matt. 10:28). He most strongly encouraged His followers to this course through His own death, which was of this kind." The resurrection of the body of the Lord is shown to pertain to the sacrament of the inner man through this statement of the apostle in Col. 3:1: "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above." But to the example for the outward man this statement applies: "Not a hair of your head will perish" (Luke 21:18), along with the fact that He showed His body to His disciples after His

resurrection. Thus in this passage the apostle is speaking of the death and resurrection of Christ insofar as they refer to the sacrament, but not to the example. (Luther)

Hence we must note that death is of two kinds: natural, or better, temporal death and eternal death. Temporal death is the separation of the body and the soul. But this death is only a figure, a symbol, and like death painted on a wall when compared with eternal death, which is also spiritual. Hence in the Scripture it is very often called a sleep, a rest, a slumber. Eternal death is also twofold. The one kind is good, very good. It is the death of sin and the death of death, by which the soul is released and separated from sin and the body is separated from corruption and through grace and glory is joined to the living God. This is death in the most proper sense of the word, for in all other forms of death something remains that is mixed with life, but not in this kind of death, where there is the purest life alone, because it is eternal life. For to this kind of death alone belong in an absolute and perfect way the conditions of death, and in this death alone whatever dies perishes totally and into eternal nothingness, and nothing will ever return from this death, because it truly dies an eternal death. This is the way sin dies; and likewise the sinner, when he is justified, because sin will not return again for all eternity, as the apostle says here, "Christ will never die again," etc. (v. 9). This is the principal theme in Scripture. For God has arranged to remove through Christ whatever the devil brought in through Adam. And it was the devil who brought in sin and death. Therefore God brought about the death of death and the sin of sin, the poison of poison, the captivity of captivity. As He says through Hosea (Hos. 13:14): "O Death, I will be your death; O Hell, I will be your bite." This is prefigured in all the wars of the children of Israel in the Old Testament, when they killed the Gentiles. The other kind of death is eternal and very terrible. It is the death of the damned, where sin and the sinner are not the ones to die, while man is saved, but man dies, while sin lives on and continues forever. This is "the very evil death of the wicked." And when the apostle speaks of the death of Christ in a sacramental manner, he is speaking of the second spiritual death, and thus the meaning of his words is very plain. (Luther)

I used the term "sin of sin." What does this mean? The sin of sin is to act against the law of sin and to transgress the law of the members (Rom. 7:23) and to sin against the lusts of the flesh. This kind of sin is very good. Just as the death of death means to act against death, which is the same thing as life, so the sin of sin is righteousness. Hence Ecclesiasticus (Ecclus. 42:14): "Far better is the iniquity of a man than a woman doing a good turn," that is, it is better that the spirit transgress the law of the flesh and act contrary to the flesh than that the flesh act according to its own law. These are the works of the Lord in which He delights and causes us to delight, as it is written: "The Lord shall rejoice in His works" (Ps. 104:31). And later on, in Rom. 8:3, he says: "For sin He condemned sin." The Spirit uses these negative expressions which are sweeter than the affirmative ones to describe the eternal nature of the things about which He is speaking. Because for death to be killed means that death will not return, and "to take captivity captive" means that captivity will never return, a concept which cannot be expressed through an affirmative assertion. For a person can think of life without eternity. Thus it also says in the same psalm: "Our God is the God of salvation; and to God the Lord belongs escape from death" (Ps. 68:20), rather than the entrance of life.

For the entering into life can, and necessarily must, become a departure from life, but the “escape from death” means to enter into a life which is without death. These are “the delights of Christ” of which it says in Ps. 16:3: “As for the saints in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight,” and in Ps. 111:2, “Great are the works of the Lord, sought out according to all His desires.” (Luther)

**6:4** *buried with him through baptism into death.* Amplified in vv. 5–7. (CSB)

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)

In the spiritual man all things ought to appear to men and to himself in the same way that Christ appeared to the Jews in death and burial. For He is our Precentor that we may address our responses to Him in all things. (Luther)

First, when Christ had died He no longer felt any of those things which happen in the outside world, even though He was still in that world. Thus the spiritual man, although he is present in all things with his senses, yet in his heart he is entirely withdrawn from these things and dead to all of them. This comes about when a man comes to hate all the things of this life from the very marrow of his bones, indeed, when he detests all the things which go on in this life and yet endures them with patience and even with joy and glories in the fact that he is like a dead body and “the refuse of the world, the off-scouring of all things” (1 Cor. 4:13), as the apostle puts it. But we must note that it is not necessary for all men to be found immediately in this state of perfection, as soon as they have been baptized into a death of this kind. For they are baptized “into death,” that is, toward death, which is to say, they have begun to live in such a way that they are pursuing this kind of death and reach out toward this their goal. For although they are baptized unto eternal life and the kingdom of heaven, yet they do not all at once possess this goal fully, but they have begun to act in such a way that they may attain to it—for Baptism was established to direct us toward death and through this death to life—therefore it is necessary that we come to it in the order which has been prescribed. (Luther)

There are thus three kinds of people in this order. First there are those who are impatient with a cross and a dying of this kind, and they are unwilling to die. These people are like the robber on the left, for they blaspheme Christ, at least in their heart and also in their work. The second class, however, are those who endure it, but with great feeling, difficulty, and groaning; yet they finally overcome, so that at least they die with patience. It is very hard for them that they are despised and detested by all. They are like the robber on the right, indeed, a grieving and sympathetic Christ carried them in His body. But the third class are those who, as I have said, enter upon this death with joy, whom Christ Himself prefigured when He died with a loud shout like the most courageous giant. (Luther)

Luther in his large catechism says: “Imagine there was a doctor somewhere who understood the art of saving people from death. 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 is utterly destroys death and preserves all people alive." (TLSB)

JUST AS CHRIST WAS RAISED – We are united to Christ's death and burial so that we will be united to His resurrection and life. (TLSB)

*through the glory of the Father.* By the power of God. God's glory is his divine excellence, his perfection. Any one of his attributes is a manifestation of his excellence. Thus his power is a manifestation of his glory, as is his righteousness (see 3:23). Glory and power are often closely related in the Bible (see Ps 145:11; Col 1:11; 1Pe 4:11; Rev 1:6; 4:11; 5:12–13; 7:12; 19:1). (CSB)

God's power was gloriously reveal in the resurrection. (TLSB)

*live a new life.* Amplified in vv. 8–10. (CSB)

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 life 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)

In all three Synoptists, whenever Christ predicted His death, He also predicted His resurrection. For example, Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19. Note how closely death and resurrection are bound to each other in Romans 4:25. And here, in Romans 6:4, Paul draws a conclusion about what happens to the Christian in baptism. Through baptism he is buried with Christ (Christ literally, the Christian spiritually). Burial proves that death has taken place. Why? Note the correlative. Just as Christ was raised (by the Father) from the dead (literally) through the glory (glorious power) of the Father, likewise also we (who have been baptized) walk in newness of life. (Buls)

Rienecker: In a new state, which is life. (Buls)

Bengel: This newness consists in life. (Buls)

That comes close to genitive of content. This newness of life takes place now, immediately after the person comes to faith or is baptized, whichever comes first. Furthermore, if baptism gives us newness of life, prior to that we had oldness of death. (Buls)

Franzmann: Paul's first concern here, however, is not our future resurrection; he is intent on bringing home to us that fact that through our baptism we share in Christ's

resurrection now. . . . The new life, the life of the world to come is a present reality, present and at work in the Word and sacrament of the Gospel. (Buls)

Kretzmann: In Baptism the believer dies with Christ, in a spiritual sense. He passes through a death, dies unto sin, is really, totally, dead unto sin. (Buls)

Lenski: Life itself, both physical and spiritual, is invisible, intangible, but it shows its presence by a thousand activities, all of which are absent in death. (Buls)

"To walk" is a Scriptural metaphor for living. (Buls)

It should say "so also we were raised" to become kings with Him (cf. 5:18, where, however, the thought is also carefully expressed in a future tense verb). But instead, the completing verb is "we should walk," a subjunctive form which refers to the Christian journey through a span of life stretching from his baptism to his death (or Christ's return). He should traverse that pilgrimage "in newness of life," under the reality of that life which is the gift of the new (eschatological) aeon in Christ. Thus the phrase refers to a gift and an outlook, one has while journeying (cf. 6:11), not primarily to "behaving in a new and better way," or "being morally improved." The outlook, of course does influence behavior.

**6:5-7** Paul expounds on what he has previously set forth in vv 3–4. Baptism is not, as Luther reminds us, a simple washing with water only. Baptism is connected to God's Word and at his command. In the same way that the Word of God brought forth light in a world dark and void (Gen 1:1–5), God's Word brings forth life where we are otherwise dead in sin (Eph 2:1–4). In Baptism, God's people are united with Christ in his death (by drowning) and in his resurrection. Here, the old self is crucified with Christ *hina*, so that, the body of sin might be done away with and that we would no longer be *douleuein*, slaves, to sin. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

**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)

The commentators point out that verses 3-5 have a theme in common: buried with Christ through baptism. But the thought grows from verse to verse 3 is limited to baptism into death. Verse 4 adds the promise that we shall walk in newness of life. And verse 5 states that those who have experienced a death like that of Christ will experience a resurrection like that of Christ. Therefore, from verse 3 to verse 5 we traverse the whole territory from conversion to everlasting life. (Buls)

"Planted together" here denotes very close association. The RSV translates the whole verse thus: "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." That says it very well. My death and resurrection are not the same as Christ's. God made Him to be sin in my stead. He bore my sin and all others. He is the Savior. But, His death cut me off from the guilt and

power of sin. He was the first to rise from the dead. Because of His resurrection I will rise. The point is that in all respects He is my benefactor. He cut me off from sin, He gives me newness of life, He will raise my body on the last day. (Buls)

Bengel: All spiritual quickening power is in Christ, and that power centers in baptism. (Buls)

HIS RESURRECTION – New life has already begun for the child of God; at Christ's return, our bodies will be raised to life again. (TLSB)

**6:6** *our old self*. Our unregenerate self; what we once were. (CSB)

The term “old man” describes what kind of person is born of Adam, not according to his nature but according to the defect of his nature. For his nature is good, but the defect is evil. However, the term “old man” is used not only because he performs the works of the flesh but more especially when he acts righteously and practices wisdom and exercises himself in all spiritual good works, even to the point of loving and worshiping God Himself. The reason for this is that in all these things he “enjoys” the gifts of God and “uses” God. Nor can he be freed of his perversity (which in the Scriptures is called curvedness, iniquity, and crookedness) except by the grace of God. Eccl. 1:15: “The perverse are hard to be corrected.” This is said not only because of the stubbornness of perverse people but particularly because of the extremely deep infection of this inherited weakness and original poison, by which a man seeks his own advantage even in God Himself because of his love of concupiscence. Ps. 72:14: “From usuries and iniquities He redeems their life.” Furthermore, this iniquity is so bottomless that no one can ever understand its depth, and in Scripture, by the grace of God, not the iniquity itself but only the love of it is rebuked. Ps. 11:5: “His soul hates him that loves iniquity.” And Ps. 32:6: “Therefore,” that is, because of iniquity, “let everyone who is godly offer prayer to Thee,” because He hates iniquity. This is symbolized in the curvedness of that woman in the Gospel whom Satan had held captive for 18 years, as the Savior said (Luke 13:11). (Luther)

*body of sin*. The self in its pre-Christian state, dominated by sin. This is a figurative expression in which the old self is personified. It is a “body” that can be put to death. For the believer, this old self has been “rendered powerless” (see NIV text note) so that it can no longer enslave us to sin—whatever lingering vitality it may yet exert in its death throes. (CSB)

Therefore the term “body of sin” ought not be understood as something mystical, as many people do who imagine that “body of sin” refers to a whole mountain of evil works, but rather it refers to this very body which we are carrying around. It is called the “body of sin” because it inclines against the spirit and toward sin. And the seed of the devil dwells in it; hence the Lord in Gen. 3:15 says: “I will put enmity between your seed and her seed.” The seed of the woman is the Word of God in the church, because it inclines toward righteousness and good works. The seed of the devil is sin itself, the tinder and evil lust in our flesh. And this enmity is active all the time, as the apostle says in Gal. 5:17: “The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are

against the flesh.” The flesh has the seed of the devil in it and is seeking to bring forth sin and bear sinful fruit. But the Spirit possesses the seed of God and seeks to bring forth righteousness and the fruits of righteousness. And thus these two “are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would” (Gal. 5:17). (Luther)

DONE AWAY WITH – Paul does not pronounce the old man dead or the body of sin (sinful self) destroyed. They are nailed to the cross and rendered powerless, but yet crying out to be released and have their way. The fact that crucifixion was a slow death – taking hours or even day – fits in with this image of the old man nailed to the cross but not yet having died, as the Christian continues to pass a lifetime in the overlapping aeons.

Note that a new sentence began at verse 5. The punctuation at the end of verse 5 is a semicolon. Verse 6, which cannot stand alone, is subordinate to verse 5. Lenski thinks that "for we know" denotes cause: "since we realize that etc." Arndt rightly remarks: "Christians are aware of it." (Buls)

What is our "old man?" It is the same as the flesh. It is not an essential part of human nature for, if that were so, Christ would have been born a sinner. But since the fall of man, all who are born in the ordinary manner are spiritually blind, dead and enemies of God. It speaks of women as well as of men. What has happened to it? It has been crucified with Christ. What has been crucified has died. My old sinful nature has been killed. (Buls)

Lenski: Our old man was literally murdered in our Baptism, he did not die willingly, but was slain as one cursed of God. . . . 'old man' denotes our entire being as it existed before regeneration, 'old' pointing back to that former existence. (Buls)

Why was our old man slain? In order that our sinful body might be made inactive, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: It is called the body of sin, the sinful body, not as though the body were the essential seat or source of sin but its organ and tool. Sin or the old Adam endeavors to perform the evil lusts through the medium of the body and its members and does perform them in natural man. In baptized Christians, on the other hand, the body of sin is put out of commission. . . . It is God's will that we no longer serve sin. (Buls)

The body is not sinful of itself but sin constantly wants to use it for sinful purposes. (Buls)

Franzmann: This manner of speaking about the body is strange to us. . . . The 'sinful body' is, then, the body as expressive of our old self and its will. . . . This body has been put out of action. (Buls)

The term “to destroy” is understood in a spiritual sense in this context. For if he were intending to speak of a destruction of the body, it would not be necessary that the “old

man” be crucified for this. Because he actually will be destroyed anyway, whether we wish it or not, even in the case of those people whose old man is not crucified. Thus what is necessary cannot be command or counsel. Hence, also according to blessed Augustine, the apostle in explaining this destruction goes on to say, “That we might no longer be enslaved to sin” (v. 6). This is an interpretation (says blessed Augustine) of the expression “that the body of sin might be destroyed.”<sup>13</sup> Thus to destroy the body of sin is to break the lusts of the flesh and of the old man by works of penitence and the cross and thus to diminish them day by day and to put them to death, as Col. 3:5 tells us: “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you.” In fact, in this same passage he most clearly describes both the new and the old man. (Luther)

BE SLAVES TO SIN – Once again, the focus is primarily on the realm in which and the lordship under which one is living, not on how one is behaving.

Completely controlled by the sinful nature. “The Law of the Lord is also necessary so that the old Adam...may not use his own will, but may be subdued against his will” (FC Ep VI 4). (TLSB)

**6:7** *has died*. The believer’s death with Christ to sin’s ruling power. (CSB)

*freed from sin*. Set free from its shackles and power. (CSB)

Those crucified with Christ in Baptism have been freed from sin’s effects. (TLSB)

At the end of verse 6 we have another semicolon but only to introduce an independent clause, it is again explanatory. “You see, the one who has died and has been freed from sin.” This verse refers both to Christ and to us, but in different ways. Christ bore the sins of the world. God made Him to be sin in our stead. He took the curse of the Law upon Himself. The Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. But when He said “It is finished” and died, Christ had no more to do with sin. Ever since He was revived He had nothing to do with bearing sin or atoning for it. We, through baptism, have died to sin. We receive the fruits of Christ’s death. But it can be said of both Christ and us: “The one who died has been freed from sin.” (Buls)

Rienecker: ‘To be declared to be free from sin’ or ‘to be acquitted from sin.’

Arndt: ‘Justified,’ that is, released from sin. . . If we died with respect to it then it has no authority over us any longer. (Buls)

Bengel: As respects the past, he is justified from guilt; as respects the future, from its dominion, verse 14:1. (Buls)

Kretzmann: As Paul declares in the next sentence (verse 7), in the form of a general axiom, he that is dead is free from sin, is pronounced just and free from sin in every respect, from its dominion as well as its curse, with the emphasis upon the deliverance from its jurisdiction. (Buls)

Note carefully that verse 7 is still speaking about our status in this life. (Buls)

**6:8-9** In the same way that resurrection followed the death of Christ, so also resurrection follows the drowning and death of the old man. The believer who dies with Christ to his sin now rises with Christ to a new way of life and living. As death has no power over Christ, neither does it have any power over those who are in Christ (Gal 2:20; Rom 8:37–39). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

**6:8†** As resurrection followed death in the experience of Christ, so the believer who dies with Christ is raised to a new quality of life here and now. Resurrection in the sense of a new birth is already a fact, and it increasingly exerts itself in the believer's life. (CSB)

WE WILL ALSO LIVE WITH HIM – Here's another one of those fact conditions. It does not generate doubt but conviction for the believer. Jesus died literally. I die to sin because of Jesus, in baptism. All the benefits of His death are mine in baptism. "We believe that we shall also live with Him," not just in heaven but now already. "If any man is in Christ, he is anew creature." (Buls)

Franzmann: The reality of Christ's death and resurrection determines our whole existence. . . . Our present life gets its character, direction, and purpose from the fact that we shall live with Him who lives a life beyond death. (Buls)

That is so true. The people of this world are constantly mourning about their wages, their illnesses, thermo-nuclear war , etc., etc., whereas the Christian firmly believes that he will never die. "He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." (Buls)

**6:9** DEATH NO LONGER HAS MASTERY OVER HIM – Christ lives eternally. He is not subject to death; He conquered it. (TLSB)

A number of translations begin a new sentence here with the words: "For we know that etc." Why do we believe that we shall live with Him? Because we know that Christ, risen from the dead, dies no more, death is not ruler over Him. (Buls)

Lenski: Paul expands Christ's part in this our joint death and subsequent living. Our part depends wholly on his part. . . . The great fact, however, is that after being thus raised up 'Christ dies no more' , the emphatic asyndeton restating this from death's side: 'death is no more lord over him. (Buls)

The power and threat of the cruel master, death, is conquered, gone forever. For the believer death is not dying. It means everlasting life! Hallelujah! (Buls)

**6:10** *he died to sin once for all.* In his death Christ (for the sake of sinners) submitted to the "reign" of sin (5:21); but his death broke the judicial link between sin and death, and he passed forever from the sphere of sin's "reign." Having been raised from the dead, he now lives forever to glorify God. (CSB)

John Chrysostom: "He was not subject even to (sin), but for our sin, that He might destroy it, and cut away its sinews and all its power, therefore He died" (NPNF1 11:410). (TLSB)

Christ died, once for all. This is the completed action of Jn 19:31, when Christ declared, "It is finished." Now the baptized in Christ are set free to be the people God declares us to be—joyful and having hope; thankful in all circumstances; bearing witness to him; loving our neighbor and even our enemy as ourselves; and certain that this good work he has begun he is daily bringing to completion in the day of Christ Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

The meaning is that we must undergo this spiritual death only once. For whoever dies thus lives for all eternity. Therefore we must not return to our sin in order to die to sin again. This interpretation is in opposition to the Novatians, for in regard to the necessity and nature of the spiritual life it is to be laid hold on once, because it is eternal. For death does not put an end to this kind of life against its will, as it does with physical life, but this is the beginning of eternal life. Hence we read in John 11:26: "Whoever believes in Me shall never die," that is, as long as he does not willingly turn away from this spiritual life, he cannot die. This spiritual life will be strengthened in the future in such a way that a person cannot be turned away, for no one would want to be turned away who has been given the complete perfection of an eternal will. (Luther)

For just as the ray of the sun is eternal because the sun is eternal, so the spiritual life is eternal because Christ is eternal; for He is our life, and through faith He flows into us and remains in us by the rays of His grace. Therefore, just as Christ is eternal, so also the grace which flows out of Him is from His eternal nature. Furthermore, just because a man sins again his spiritual life does not die, but he turns his back on this life and dies, while this life remains eternal in Christ. This is what he means when he says: "If we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (v. 8). How shall we live with Him, "for we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again" (v. 9)? So also: "the death He died He died to sin, once for all" (v. 10). He has Christ, who dies no more; therefore he himself dies no more, but rather he lives with Christ forever. Hence also we are baptized only once, by which we gain the life of Christ, even though we often fall and rise again. For the life of Christ can be recovered again and again, but a person can enter upon it only once, just as a man who has never been rich can begin to get rich only once, although he can again and again lose and regain his wealth. (Luther)

*to God. For the glory of God. (CSB)*

Five of our versions similarly translate: "The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God." Look at Hebrews 7:27; 9:12,26,28; 10:10. Sin caused His death, but only once. It's over with. Now His life to God goes on and on. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: Christ's life was determined and ruled by sin, namely, by the alien sin of men, which he took upon Himself. What He did, experienced, suffering in the days of His flesh, served to atone for and to destroy men's sin. This purpose was realized when He died. Sin atoned once and for all. (Buls)

Nothing lives to God, however, except that which lives eternally and spiritually, because God is eternal and a spirit, before whom nothing counts except what is spiritual and eternal; but the flesh and temporal things are nothing with Him. Therefore since this life is eternal, it is necessary that the man who dies to sin should die only once, since only an eternal life can follow this kind of death, and in this life there can be no death, for otherwise it would not be eternal. Nor can a person who died once to sin die to sin again, because eternal righteousness follows this death and this righteousness never sins again. (Luther)

A corollary follows: The Novatian heresy interpreted this text in a false way, as if those who fell had no hope of rising again, because a person must die to sin once and for all. But this expression “once for all” (*semel*) does not determine the number of acts of repentance, but rather it is a commendation of the eternal nature of grace, and it denies the possibility of some other kind of righteousness, so that the meaning is that whoever has been baptized or has repented has already so escaped sin and acquired righteousness that never again for eternity is it necessary to escape sin or to acquire another righteousness. But this single and only righteousness is sufficient forever. This is not the case at all with the righteousness of men, where according to moral philosophy, as soon as one virtue has been acquired, there are still others which must be acquired. But the meaning here is not that if a person should lose what he has once possessed, he cannot acquire it again. For the Scripture opposes this error in Prov. 24:16: “A righteous man falls seven times and rises again.” And the Lord said to Peter: “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:22). Therefore, as I have said, this term “once for all” does not set forth or deny the number of the exchange, but it emphasizes the number of the diversity, or rather the eternal nature of righteousness, which in this life can often be lost and regained without conflicting with its eternal nature. For even blessed Peter after the sending of the Holy Spirit sinned in his dissimulation, for example, in Gal. 2:11 ff., which surely was a mortal sin, because it was contrary to the Gospel and the salvation of the soul, since the apostle Paul expressly says that Peter did not act according to the truth of the Gospel. (Luther)

**6:11** IN THE SAME WAY – “Likewise also you.” These words denote the point of comparison. Christians, like Christ, are both dead and living, dead to sin but alive to God. But here we have an addition not found in verse 10. Only because we are united to Christ Jesus by faith can we be sure that we shall remain dead to sin but alive to God. This prepositional phrase assures me that I am a true heir of everything that He did as my Substitute in life and in death. (Buls)

*count yourselves.*† The first aspect of the believer’s life (for the succeeding aspects see note on vv. 12–13). He is dead to sin and alive to God, and through faith he is to live in the light of this truth. (CSB)

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)

*Logizesthe*, “reckon; consider deeply; ponder; think intently.” As the resurrected in Christ, we are to ponder deeply what Christ’s death and resurrection mean, and what it means to live our lives resurrected with him. Obedience to God is the fruit of faith for those who are connected to Christ, as Jesus says in Jn 15:5: “Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

*in Christ*. The first occurrence in Romans of this phrase, which is found often in Paul’s writings. True believers are “in Christ” because they have died with Christ and have been raised to new life with him. (CSB)

#### 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.”**

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)

John knew his assignment and carried it out with deep conviction. He forcefully called all people to repentance and baptized those who confessed their sins. Yet he never lost sight of the fact that his ministry was not an end in itself, but by its very nature preparatory: “After me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Mt 3:11). A reading of the other synoptic gospels for additional details will enrich the preacher’s understanding (Mk 1:9–11; Lk 3:21–22). While St. John does not record the baptism of Jesus, the first chapter of his gospel is filled with references that flow from that event. A careful reading of those verses is strongly recommended for contextual perspective. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

**3:13** Much is packed into this short text. First, it is significant that Jesus traveled from Galilee in the north to the Jordan to be baptized there. The Jordan of course is associated with a long history and theology. It was the eastern boundary of the Promised Land, and the scene of many miracles (Joshua 3–4; 2 Kings 5; etc.). This involves the so-called scandal of particularity: God chooses certain places, persons, things, and times through which he works. The fact that they appear no better or no different than others—or appear even worse, from a human standpoint—causes many

to take offense, as with Naaman in 2 Kings 5. The same certainly was true of Christ himself; the “foolishness” and “weakness” of his cross was an offense to Jew and Gentile alike, but to the eyes of faith he is seen as the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:18–25). The same can be said of the means of grace God uses today; they appear ordinary, even mundane, but the eyes of faith recognize them as God’s tools of salvation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

THEN – Tote – When John the Baptist was at the height of his ministry. For Jesus the quiet life he had lead was about to come to an end.

JESUS CAME – παραγίνεται ὁ Ἰησοῦς—The historical present verb παραγίνεται is repeated from 3:1, and so it links Jesus’ appearance closely to John’s ministry. For the translation of the historical present tense as “*did* appear,” see the first textual note on 2:13. The Savior’s personal name, “Jesus,” has not appeared in the narrative since 2:1. Here it reappears and recalls the reason for this name: “He himself will save his people from their sins” (1:21). (CC)

Jesus traveled at least 15 miles, perhaps much farther, to receive John’s Baptism. The two were cousins (Lk. 1:36-45) and likely knew each other. (TLSB)

First, Matthew writes: “Jesus did appear from Galilee” (3:13). The use of the Christ’s personal name is noteworthy. The angel revealed the name “Jesus” and its meaning to Joseph (1:21), who so named him (1:25), and Matthew called him by name as he turned his narrative to the account of the Magi (2:1), but since then the personal name “Jesus” has been absent from the Gospel. In the rest of chapter 2, Jesus was called “the child” (2:8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 20–21). Then in the preaching of the Baptizer in chapter 3, he was called the mightier “one who is coming” (3:11), the eschatological Judge. Now “*Jesus did appear*” (3:13), the one who is “God is with us” (1:23), who has come to “save his people from their sins” (1:21). (CC)

JORDAN – Near the Sea of Galilee and about twenty miles from Nazareth.

TO BE BAPTIZED – τοῦ βαπτισθῆναι—The articular infinitive expresses purpose, Christ’s reason why he appears at the Jordan: “to be baptized.” This also is precisely the reason why John objects and tries to hinder Jesus. (CC)

Jesus arrives at the very place where the people have been confessing that from which he has come to save them: “their sins” (1:21; 3:6). As they confessed their sins, the people were being baptized by John in response to John’s message: “Repent!” (3:2). Now Jesus has come to the same place, to the same person, and, as Matthew explicitly declares, for the same purpose: “in order to be baptized” by John, who tries to thwart Jesus’ purpose (3:13–14). (CC)

**3:14 TRIED TO DETER HIM** – ἐκώλυεν—This is a textbook instance of the conative force of the imperfect indicative. The context indicates that John “*tried* to prevent” what Jesus intended to do, but failed to do so. (CC)

John the Baptist at first tried to prevent him (that is the force of the conative imperfect *diekōluen* in v 14), Jesus underwent the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins—of which he had none! That apparently offended John the Baptist at first, in much the same way that Peter took offense when Jesus tried to wash his feet (Jn 13:6–10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

John refused to baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees because they failed to repent (v. 8). Because Jesus was without sin, John also wanted to refuse Baptism to this One who was mightier than he (cf. v. 11). (TLSB)

I NEED TO BE BAPTIZED BY YOU – ἐγὼ χρείαν ἔχω ... καὶ σὺ ἔρχῃ—The two pronouns, ἐγὼ and σὺ, are emphatic because they are unnecessary. They underscore John’s stunned response to Jesus. (CC)

In Jesus’ presence, John felt unclean (cf. Is. 6:1-5). He recognized that Jesus could do for him what no one else could. (TLSB)

The Baptizer’s incredulous words should not surprise careful readers/hearers of this Gospel in any age: “I myself have need to be baptized by you, and you yourself are coming to me?” (3:14). John well knew the dramatic contrast that also Matthew’s readers/hearers inevitably sense and that has characterized the church’s interaction with this text for centuries: the contrast between what John’s preaching has revealed about Jesus and the intention of Jesus to be baptized by John. We also do well to ponder the contrast! (CC)

John proclaimed that Jesus would baptize all Israel with the Holy Spirit and fire on the Last Day (3:11). But now Jesus has come—not as the One who baptizes with the Spirit and fire, but as the passive recipient of John’s own baptism. John’s baptism is “for repentance” (3:11), that is, for conversion from unbelief to faith, and for entrance into the people of God. The people who received John’s baptism had done so because they responded to John’s preaching to “Repent!” (3:2) with true penitence. So Jesus’ request to be baptized by John raises many questions: Does Jesus need to repent? Does Jesus need to be converted from unbelief to faith? Is Jesus among the lost sheep who were no longer members of the true Israel and who needed readmission into the people of God? John knows that the answer to these questions must be “No!” (CC)

Most striking of all is this contrast: John is the voice of OT prophecy and so therefore is completely reliable. He has proclaimed that Jesus comes in power, bringing end-time salvation and judgment—a Jesus so superior to and mightier than John himself that the Baptizer is not worthy to perform the most menial service for this Jesus (3:11). Yet now Jesus has come to John, not displaying his power or his incomparably higher status, but in lowliness, to be baptized by John. In light of John’s own preaching, his incredulous words to this lowly kind of Christ are reasonable in every sense of that term: “I myself have need to be baptized by you, and you yourself are coming to me?” (3:14). (CC)

This clearly shows that John recognized Jesus for who he was. He knew that Jesus did not need repentance. He also knew that the Kingdom of Heaven was near. He recognized this in Jesus. The need for Jesus' baptism was incomprehensible to John as it is to us.

**3:15** *Jesus answered.* First recorded words of Jesus in Mt. (TLSB)

This occasion marked the beginning of Christ's Messianic ministry. There were several reasons for his baptism: 1. The first, mentioned here, was "to fulfill all righteousness." The baptism indicated that he was consecrated to God and officially approved by him, as especially shown in the descent of the Holy Spirit (v. 16) and the words of the Father (v. 17; cf. Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1). All God's righteous requirements for the Messiah were fully met in Jesus. 2. At Jesus' baptism John publicly announced the arrival of the Messiah and the inception of his ministry (Jn 1:31–34). 3. By his baptism Jesus completely identified himself with man's sin and failure (though he himself needed no repentance or cleansing from sin), becoming our substitute (2Co 5:21). 4. His baptism was an example to his followers. (CSB)

LET IT BE SO NOW – Jesus is assuming his office and so it is to be without delay. Jesus is agreeing with John, but though he is sinless, he is the sin-bearer, and therefore needs to do this so he can be our substitute.

In the present context of Jesus' mission to save sinners (1:21). (TLSB)

Now we arrive at Christ's crucially significant words in reply to John, at the center of the chiasm formed by 3:13–16a. Jesus replied: "Allow [it] at this time, for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (3:15). (CC)

The interpretation of virtually every word in Jesus' response to John is important. The first word in Jesus' reply, ἄφες, "Allow [it]," indicates that Jesus' Baptism is a concession, an allowance due to his state of humiliation: the sinless Son of God receives the baptism meant for sinners because he shall be the sin-bearer. The adverb "at this time, now" (ἄρτι) validates John's earlier eschatological preaching about the reign of heaven and the Coming One. John had spoken of what the Coming One would do on the Last Day (3:11–12), and Jesus' submission to John's baptism is a public affirmation that John's preaching was true. Moreover, Jesus' Baptism "at this time, now" is necessary preparation for what Jesus will do on the Last Day. Yet the fact that Jesus needs to say, "Allow [it] at this time," to persuade John to baptize him now indicates that John does not yet understand how the Coming One will manifest the reign of heaven "now," in the present time, as the humble sin-bearer. (CC)

PROPER FOR US – The dative pronoun "for us" (ἡμῖν) prevents Matthew's readers/hearers from thinking too exclusively in terms of *Jesus*. The Christ did not say, "It is fitting for *me* to fulfill all righteousness." John also is participating in what it means "to fulfill all righteousness." The participle "fitting, proper, right" (πρέπον) invites a sort of comparison and so a question: "Fitting in relation to what? Why is this action, Jesus

being baptized by John, *fitting?*” Then there is the adjective “*all* [πᾶσαν] righteous.” In some sense, this deed of Jesus’ Baptism has a comprehensive, all-embracing character and meaning. (CC)

**TO FULFILL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS** – Jesus submitted to John’s Baptism, the same that sinners were undergoing, in order to affirm His identity with sinners and to provide them with perfect righteousness (2Co 5:21). Hippolytus: “I am the Fulfiller of the law; I seek to leave nothing wanting to its whole fulfillment. . . . Baptize Me, John, in order that no one may despise baptism” (ANF 5:236). Jesus’ Baptism marked the beginning of His public ministry and anticipated His death on the cross (cf Mk 10:38; Rm 6:3). The fact that all four Gospels report the Baptism of Jesus points to its importance. Luther captured the primary meaning for His Baptism: “[Christ] accepted it from John for the reason that he was entering into our stead, indeed, our person, that is, becoming a sinner for us, taking upon himself the sins which he had not committed, and wiping them out and drowning them in his holy baptism” (AE 51:315). (TLSB)

πρέπον ἐστὶν ἡμῖν πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην—The infinitive πληρῶσαι is the proper grammatical subject of the verb ἐστὶν (“to fulfill is . . .”). The present participle neuter singular nominative πρέπον (from πρέπω, “be fitting, proper, right”) forms a periphrastic construction with the linking verb ἐστὶν, literally, “To fulfill all righteousness is fitting for us.” The plural pronoun ἡμῖν, “for us,” shows that both John and Jesus participate in carrying out God’s historical actions of salvation. John, as the one who baptizes Jesus, acts together with him to “fulfill all righteousness,” that is, to enact God’s deeds of salvation. (CC)

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)

The key phrase is “to fulfill all righteousness” (πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην), an activity that is being carried out by both John and Jesus in the action of John baptizing Jesus. The likely meaning of “to fulfill” is clear enough in this Gospel that focuses so much attention on Jesus’ deeds (and events related to them) as the fulfillment of OT Scripture. Matthew often uses passive forms of the same verb for Scripture being “fulfilled.” Thus “to fulfill” virtually carries in itself the meaning “to enact or participate in the divine scriptural plan of salvation.” (CC)

What does it mean “to fulfill, to enact the scriptural plan, of *all righteousness*”? Presumably this would be the righteousness of which the OT speaks, since it is being “fulfilled.” But *whose* righteousness was spoken of in the OT? Again, the infinitive “to fulfill” can lead the way. On the one hand, the noun “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνη) at times in Matthew’s Gospel certainly does refer to righteous human conduct on the part of Jesus’ disciples, especially when it is specifically referred to as “your righteousness”

(5:20; 6:1). John, however, has announced that “the reign of *heaven* stands near” (3:2), that *God’s* royal ruling deeds are beginning in history. *Jesus* is the one who will both repeat John’s message (“The reign of heaven stands near!” 4:17) and begin to make it come true by bringing that reign himself! *God* is beginning to act. *God’s* righteousness will be fulfilled when John baptizes *Jesus*, and then all people may in faith seek *God’s* reign and *his* righteousness in *Jesus* (6:33). (CC)

Now we come to the key point. In what sense does *Jesus* refer to *God’s* righteousness? Here the prominent OT way of speaking of *God’s* righteousness comes to our aid. In the OT, especially in the Psalms and Isaiah (e.g., 51:5–8), and in later Jewish literature as well, *God’s* “righteousness” (קִדְּוָה or חֶסֶד in the MT; δικαιοσύνη in the LXX) refers readily to the saving deeds that *Yahweh* performs on behalf of his people, and in that sense it often stands in parallel to “salvation.” A parade example is Psalm 71, where the expression “your righteousness” occurs repeatedly, referring to *God’s* righteous and saving acts: “My mouth will tell of your righteousness [חֶסֶד־יְהוָה; LXX: τὴν δικαιοσύνην σου], of your salvation [יְשׁוּעָה; LXX: τὴν σωτηρίαν σου] all the day” (Ps 71:15 [LXX 70:15]; see also Ps 71:2, 16, 19, 24). The eschatological context of *John’s* preaching and ministry makes it all the more likely that this dominant OT sense of *God’s* “righteousness” as his “saving deeds” is present here in *Jesus’* reply to the Baptizer. The end time brings the fulfillment of *God’s* promise to act in history on behalf of his people to save them. (CC)

To put the pieces together, then, *Jesus’* reply to *John* can be fleshed out as follows: *Jesus* has come to be baptized by *John*, to submit to the baptism that sinful *Israel* is undergoing. *John* objects, because he knows that *Jesus* is the One who will be *Mighty Savior* and *Judge* of all on the Last Day. But *Jesus* explains that in the present time (“now”), this shockingly unexpected action is comprehensively fitting (“*all* righteousness”) as the way for *John* and *Jesus* together to perform the saving deeds of *God*, now that the reign of heaven has broken into history in *Jesus*. For *Jesus* to submit to *John’s* baptism is fitting. (CC)

Why? Because it shows perfectly *how* this *Jesus* “will save his people from their sins” (1:21). It shows *how* the reign of heaven will come now, in an unexpected way. With *John’s* participation, *Jesus* will perform “all righteousness,” that is, he will enact *God’s* saving deeds for the people by (literally) standing with sinners, taking the place of sinners, receiving from *John* the baptism that sinners receive. Ultimately, *all* of *Jesus’* ministry will come to its head as the Scriptures are fulfilled (26:54, 56) in the arrest that leads to his trial and condemnation and crucifixion. There the sinless one will offer up his own life as the ransom payment *in the place of the many*. That’s why it is “fitting” for *Jesus* to come and stand in the Jordan and be baptized, to stand (literally) *in the place of the many*. Later *Jesus* will perform the judgment, the separation, the baptism with Holy Spirit and fire of which *John* spoke (3:11); but not “at this time” (3:15). *Jesus’* willing Baptism in the Jordan is a sign that points forward. It is a cruciform harbinger, pointing forward to the hidden and unexpected, shockingly weak and vulnerable in-breaking reign of *God*, to the paradoxical enthronement of the King of the Jews on the cross. (CC)

In this way Christ was “to fulfill all righteousness” (v 15). He was baptized as if he were a sinner in order to begin his public ministry as the sin-bearer, the one who takes away the sin of the world, “so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21; cf. Is 53:11, “my righteous servant will justify many”). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

The importance of Christ’s baptism can scarcely be overestimated. Later in his ministry Christ described his passion as Baptism (Mk 10:38; Lk 12:50), implying that his Baptism committed him to fulfill the purpose for which he came—to suffer and die for the sins of all. It is significant that Jesus applies the term Baptism also to the martyrdom of his apostles (Mk 10:38–39). The implication is that our own Baptism into Christ’s death (Rom 6:3) commits us to follow our Lord, even into death as a martyr, should that be necessary. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

**3:16–17** All three persons of the Trinity are clearly seen here. (CSB)

What happened after the Baptism of Jesus was startling and completely unexpected. The entire Trinity was revealed when the Father’s voice declared Jesus to be His beloved Son and the Spirit descended on Him. Melancthon: “In the NT the persons are most clearly revealed in the baptism of Christ, where the Father says, ‘This is My beloved Son,’ and the Son is seen standing publicly in the river, and the Holy Spirit sits in visible form upon the Son.” (Chem. LTh 1:51). (TLSB)

**3:16 HEAVEN WAS OPENED** – καὶ ἰδοὺ ἠνεώχθησαν [αὐτῷ] οἱ οὐρανοί—The translation above, “and, look, the heavens were opened *to him*,” reflects the dative pronoun αὐτῷ. The inclusion of “to him” in this verse has significant manuscript support. Its originality would also explain the rise of the other (shorter) reading: Metzger notes that “it is possible that copyists, not understanding the force of αὐτῷ, omitted the word as unnecessary.” Therefore, its inclusion is the preferred reading. (CC)

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.’”

First, Matthew declares, “Look, the heavens were opened to” Jesus, and “he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him” (3:16b–c). The opening of the heavens to Jesus signals an end-time event. Perhaps it recalls the prayer in Is 64:1–2 (MT 63:19c–64:1) for God to “rend the heavens and come down.” (CC)

**HE SAW** – καὶ εἶδεν [τὸ] πνεῦμα [τοῦ] θεοῦ καταβαῖνον ὡσεὶ περιστέρην [καὶ] ἐρχόμενον ἐπαύ—In context, the emphasis of the two participles, καταβαῖνον and ἐρχόμενον (“descending ... coming upon”), does *not* seem to be on *perceiving* the fact that these actions occurred (indirect discourse: “He *saw that* the Spirit of God was descending ... and was coming upon him”). Rather, the emphasis is on physically

seeing the Spirit's descent: "He saw the Spirit of God descending ... and coming upon him." Although in predicate position, these participles function adjectivally, describing the Spirit. (CC)

Matthew emphasizes that the Spirit's descent was for Jesus' benefit. (TLSB)

*Spirit of God.* The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus not to overcome sin (for he was sinless), but to equip him (see note on Jdg 3:10) for his work as the divine-human Messiah. (CSB)

Chemnitz says: "The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, not as though he were without the Spirit, the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him; but because it was prophesied that the Messiah, when He became our Mediator, should be anointed, not with oil, but with the Holy Ghost (Ps. 45:8; Is. 61:1), in order that all might rest assured that He was the Prophet whom they should hear. We must also remember likewise that Jesus had the Spirit as the spirit of life, not only as God, but also as man; now He received the Spirit as the Spirit of His office and as the Spirit of power, without measure. Because Jesus was true man, with the weakness and frailty of human nature, albeit without sin, therefore He was, as a man, in need of the equipment and preparation by the Spirit for the duties of His great work." (CC)

Jesus then saw the Spirit descending and coming upon himself "like a dove." Interpreters have not been able to reach firm conclusions regarding the significance of "like a dove." (CC)

More certain, however, are the OT connections behind the Spirit's descent upon Jesus. By highlighting the Spirit's descent and coming upon Jesus, Matthew is proclaiming that Jesus is the One promised in the Servant Songs of Isaiah, especially in Is 42:1–4 and Is 61:1–9. It is as if Matthew anticipates the question "Who is this one who comes to be baptized by John?" and the evangelist is not content with only one facet of the answer. Mt 3:16 proclaims Jesus' identity as the Lord's Servant who, having received the Spirit of God, will perform the work of bringing justification to the nations, gently ministering to the "smoldering wick" and bringing hope to the peoples who trust in his name (Is 42:1–4, quoted in Mt 12:18–21). Jesus, with the Spirit upon him, will preach the Good News to the poor and will comfort those who are mourning (Is 61:1–3; Mt 5:1–12; 11:2–6). Significantly, this humble, Spirit-endowed eschatological Messiah of Israel is the one in whose name the *Gentiles* will hope (Is 42:4, quoted Mt 12:21). Matthew, evangelist of messianic Good News to Israel, never goes long in his narrative without reminding his readers/hearers that the Gentiles too will find shelter and nurture in Israel's Messiah. (CC)

**3:17** An allusion to Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1. (CSB)

AND A VOICE – The Father's voice, so often heard in the OT, was heard anew. (TLSB)

καὶ ἰδοὺ φωνή—A linking verb is implied and must be supplied in translation: “And look, *there was a voice ...*” (CC)

**THIS IS MY SON** – The Father’s declaration is for all to hear, including us today. Even John was not fully aware of Jesus’ divine origin till now (Jn 1:31–34). (TLSB)

Nor is the evangelist finished, even after proclaiming this much of Jesus’ identity and purpose. With a second “look” (3:17), he declares that God the Father’s voice is heard. Matthew does not explain or even emphasize who hears the voice, though he wants his readers/hearers to know that the voice is intended especially for them. (CC)

What is the significance of the words “This one is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased?” (3:17). I have argued elsewhere that both the near and farther Matthean contexts direct us to a particular understanding of Jesus as God’s “Son.” The Father’s words from heaven do not identify Jesus as the Davidic king of Ps 2:7, as is so often proposed. Rather, Jesus, who is God’s Son by right from conception and birth (Mt 1:18–25) is also God’s Son because he is the summation of God’s entire people Israel, God’s “son.” Jesus, the Son, embodies the nation and has come in the place of its people, as the typology that underlies the use of Hos 11:1 in Mt 2:15 has already so strikingly established, and as the immediately following narrative in 4:1–11 will so compellingly describe. At the first exodus, God constituted the nation as his “son” (Ex 4:22). In Jer 31:20 (LXX 38:20; this is a chapter to which Matthew has already made explicit reference in Mt 2:17–18), God, through the prophet, speaks of his love for Ephraim, “my *beloved son.*” (CC)

**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)

ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα—The aorist indicative form of the verb, εὐδόκησα, is unexpected here because it normally indicates simple completed past action (thus it would be rendered, “in whom I *was* well-pleased”). The explanations of this form in the grammars are attempts to explain an anomalous usage which, though very uncommon, is not unknown elsewhere in the NT (e.g., see εὐδόκησα again in Mt 17:5; cf. Rom 8:30). In context, it seems clear that the Father’s pleasure *continues* to rest upon Jesus, and thus the aorist must be translated as if it were a Greek perfect: “in whom I am in a resulting condition of being pleased,” or “in whom *I am* well-pleased.” (CC)

My favor rests on him. Reminds one of the blessing in Divine Service II, “The Lord bless you and keep. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace.” Because the Father looked on the Jesus with favor and accepted his sacrifice, He now looks upon us with favor because of the faith that has been worked within us. (CC)

In this new, end-time exodus of salvation that God is now inaugurating as his reign is breaking into history, Jesus has come as God’s Son, the representative of the nation, to be in the people’s place. The One who has come to be baptized in the place of sinners

does so as God's sinless Son by right, to save God's "son," lost in sin. Jesus is *truly* the Son of God, both in his person and in his purpose. "*This one*" (3:17), and neither John nor the nation, is the one to watch as he perfectly carries out the Father's will, as only a perfect Son can do. All may become members of God's people, God's "son," through Baptism and faith in him. For the Father is well-pleased with his Son's humble Baptism in the place of sinners. And the Father will also be well-pleased with his Son's lowly suffering and death in the place of sinners. The Father will reveal his pleasure in his Son by raising him from the dead. (CC)

The words spoken by the Father highlight the significance of Christ's Baptism: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (v 17). These words quote from two key Scripture passages. In Psalm 2:7, Yahweh, the Lord, says to the Messiah/Anointed One, "You are my Son." This is one of the royal psalms, which focus on Jesus, the Son of David, as the King ruling on Mt. Zion. Christ's Baptism anointed him to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Yet the Father also quotes from Is 42:1, the OT Lesson for today. Though the linguistic relationship between the Hebrew and Greek words is complex, "chosen one" is roughly equivalent to "whom I love," and "in whom I delight" is reflected in "with him I am well pleased." The OT Lesson is the first of the four great Suffering Servant Songs in Isaiah (the others are 49:1–7; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12; cf. also 61:1–3). Christ therefore was baptized into this role, expressed so vividly in the words of the fourth song: "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Is 53:5). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

The contrast between God's anointed King and the suffering of the Lord's Servant is stark and dramatic, but it is only after adopting the role of a servant that the Christ would be glorified (Phil 2:6–11). The Epistle Lesson for today ties these two roles together by referring to Christ's Baptism and anointing, his healing ministry (as the Servant), and his exaltation as Lord over all. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

**3:13–17** Because Jesus is our substitute, we need not fear God's wrath and punishment for our sins. We are washed clean by the blood of the Lamb (Rv 7:14), who prepared the waters of Baptism for us. • Lord Jesus, You stood next to sinners in the waters of the Jordan. Stand with me now, and wash away my sins. Amen. (TLSB)