

Lessons for the Festival of the Baptism of our Lord

January 8, 2017

Psalm 29 (*antiphon: vs. 3*)~ *A hymn of praise to God who rules over all his creation.*

Isaiah 42:1-9 ~ *The Servant of the Lord will establish justice.*

Romans 6:1-11~ *Through our baptism in Christ we are dead to sin.*

Matthew 3:13-17~ *Jesus was baptized by John to fulfill all righteousness.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: Let it Be Done.

John thought it out of line for Jesus to be baptized by him, but Jesus assured him it was to be done to fulfill all righteousness. The servant in Isaiah's song would bring justice or righteousness to all nations as he established a new covenant for all people including the Gentiles. When we are baptized into Christ, God says, "It has been done!" Where the penalty for sin is concerned, it has been carried out; we have died. In Baptism, our new life as God's children has begun; we are alive! As children of God, we say, "Let it be done, Lord," as we reach out to bring God's healing to bear on the nations.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord, when You were baptized in the waters of the Jordan, You willingly accepted Your task of faithful Servant to restore me to God in righteousness. Help me say, "Let it be," when I see opportunities to serve You by restoring wholeness and health in this world. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: God invested Himself in Christ to establish us in righteousness; He has made us whole and holy through Baptism. Reconciled to God, we are now reconcilers in this world, sent out to invest our lives in bringing wholeness to those who are shattered.

OFFERING PRAYER: O Lord, these gifts we bring today
For You to bless in many ways,
To work Your righteous will and way
So all the world may sing Your praise.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: Our lives are so fragmented by sin that we just cannot do anything right. We are so concerned about doing things right – and proving that we are right – that we drive more distance between ourselves and even those we love. Because of the distance between God and us, Jesus comes to us, just as He came to John. He approaches us in His Word and Sacraments. In Baptism God sets about removing the distance between us by giving us His righteousness. His grace in Christ restores our lives to wholeness and peace, the way He intended them to be in the beginning.