

## Pericope Study for Sunday, January 8, 2017 – Epiphany 1A

Presented Tue 1/3/17 by Richard Burgess

### Collect / Prayer of the Day

O God our Father, at the baptism of Jesus you proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Make all who are baptized into Christ faithful to their calling to be your daughters and sons, and empower us all with your Spirit, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

### General Thoughts on Epiphany 1A

Today's theme seems not so much baptism *per se* as the baptism (Acts & Matthew) and servanthood (Isaiah & Matthew) of Jesus. How are baptism and servanthood related? What does Jesus have to do with baptism?

What does your baptism mean to you? Baptisms of your family & friends? Baptisms of the people you baptize?

Baptism is central to Christianity. Why? Some Christians baptize infants (eg, Catholics, Mainliners), some only adults (eg, Evangelicals, Anabaptists), most only the living but some the dead (eg, Mormons), and some not at all (eg, Quakers). What do you make of all this diversity regarding baptism? How do you handle it?

### **Some resources on baptism:**

Luther's Small Catechism, "Baptism" section:

Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW) p 1164 – 1165

Augsburg Fortress App (free): <http://info.augsburgfortress.org/luthers-small-catechism-new-mobile-app>

World Council of Churches, "Baptism, Eucharist, & Ministry":

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/baptism-eucharist-and-ministry-faith-and-order-paper-no-111-the-lima-text>

### Possible Sermon Titles for Epiphany 1A

As usual, use at your own risk.

Title	Is	Acts	Mt
Called in Righteousness	X		
God Delights in God's Servants	X		
Out with the Old; In with the New	X		
Acceptable to God		X	
Fear God; Do What Is Right		X	
God Shows No Partiality, But Does That Include Everyone?		X	
The Gospel in Six Verses or Less		X	
A Little Bird and the Voice of God			X
Fulfilling All righteousness			X
Is God Pleased with You?			X
Kal El Calls			X
Watch Out for Descending Doves!			X
Well Pleased with the Beloved			X
Who Is Baptism About? God? Jesus? John? You?	X	X	X

**Isaiah 42:1-9 (NRSV)**

<sup>42.1</sup>Here is my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;  
I have put my spirit upon him;  
he will bring forth justice to the nations.

<sup>2</sup>He will not cry or lift up his voice,  
or make it heard in the street;

<sup>3</sup>a bruised reed he will not break,  
and a dimly burning wick he will not  
quench;  
he will faithfully bring forth justice.

<sup>4</sup>He will not grow faint or be crushed  
until he has established justice in the  
earth;  
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

<sup>5</sup>Thus says God, the Lord,  
who created the heavens and stretched  
them out,  
who spread out the earth and what  
comes from it,

who gives breath to the people upon it  
and spirit to those who walk in it:

<sup>6</sup>I am the Lord, I have called you in  
righteousness,  
I have taken you by the hand and kept  
you;

I have given you as a covenant to the  
people,  
a light to the nations,  
<sup>7</sup>to open the eyes that are blind,  
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,  
from the prison those who sit in  
darkness.

<sup>8</sup>I am the Lord, that is my name;  
my glory I give to no other,  
nor my praise to idols.

<sup>9</sup>See, the former things have come to pass,  
and new things I now declare;  
before they spring forth,  
I tell you of them.

**Notes, Observations, and Thought  
Questions:**

42.1-4 The first of four Servant Songs in 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Isaiah (42.1-4; 49.1-6; 50.4-11; 52.13–  
53.12)

42.2 *He will not cry or lift up his voice, or  
make it heard in the street* What is this  
silence? Quietism? “Actions speak louder  
than words”?

42.4 This would seem to imply that justice is  
a quick, short term work. History has proved  
otherwise. What then does it mean to *not  
grow faint or be crushed*? Might this make  
the Servant a nation or group of people  
instead of an individual? Does 42.4c modify  
the first part of the verse: *until . . . the  
coastlands wait for his teaching*? Have the  
coastlands waited for his teaching?

42.9 *the former things have come to pass,  
and new things I now declare* What are the  
*former things*? The *new things*? What is the  
pivot around which this change of agenda  
revolves?

## Acts 10:34-43 (NRSV)

<sup>34</sup>Peter began to speak to [Cornelius and his household]: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, <sup>35</sup>but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. <sup>36</sup>You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup>That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: <sup>38</sup>how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. <sup>39</sup>We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; <sup>40</sup>but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, <sup>41</sup>not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup>He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup>All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

## Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

Structure:

10.34a Introduction  
10.34b-35 Universality of the Gospel  
10.36-41 Jesus’s story in a nutshell  
10.42 We ordered to tell the story  
10.43 As prophets were also told

10.35, 43 Compare 10.35 *fear (God) and (do) what is right* with 10.43 *everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins* Bookends / inclusio? How are these two verses similar? Different?

10.36-41 This is a highly condensed summary of the Gospel. What is the emphasis? (I would say the focal points are 10.36b *he is Lord of all* and 10.40a *God raised him on the third day.*) What is the purpose of putting it this way for Cornelius, et al? Applicability to your congregation? Others? You?

10.37 *the baptism that John announced* This is the only reference to baptism in this lesson. Is this why it was chosen for “The Baptism of Our Lord”? How is it related to the passage as a whole?

10.40b-41 *allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses* What is the difference between being a primary witness to Christ (the apostles) and a secondary witness (the rest of us)?

**Matthew 3:13-17 (NRSV)**

<sup>13</sup>Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup>John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" <sup>15</sup>But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. <sup>16</sup>And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup>And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."



**Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:**

3.15 What does it mean *to fulfill all righteousness*?

3.16 *the Spirit of God descending like a dove* What does the dove image do for you? What can you do with it?

3.16 *dove* What is the significance of the Holy Spirit being represented as an animal / bird instead of as a human?

3.16-17 How are the *Spirit of God descending like a dove* and the *voice from heaven*, which is presented as God the Father, related? Trinitarian significance? Not?

3.17 *a voice from heaven* Hebrew for "voice of God" is *Kal El*, ie, Superman's birth name. Any homiletic possibilities here?

3.17 *This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.* How / why is God well pleased with Jesus? How is this significant to us? In what ways are we also God's children, beloved, and pleasing to God? How are we different than Jesus in these respects?