

**January 13, 2008**  
**The Baptism of Our Lord**

*"The Father's Perfect Choice to Save the World"*

**ISAIAH 42:1-7**

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*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.*

Last Sunday evening a charter bus filled with skiers was traveling south from Telluride, Colorado to Phoenix after a weekend skiing trip. The bus driver decided to take an alternate route in southeastern Utah, a dangerous winding road that few buses or large trucks ever dare to travel at night. The bus hit an embankment, the driver over corrected, and the bus rolled down into a ravine. The roof was ripped off and the bodies went flying into the remote area of the desert. Some died at the scene, some were seriously injured and a few were able to come to their senses and help others as they waited for rescue people about an hour later. Among the injured were 10 people some of us know, members and friends of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Tucson, people who worship with my daughter and Jim and Roberta's daughter Lorisa on a weekly basis.

When accidents such as this happen to friends you know or members of your church or even members of your own family, you want people on the accident scene who can do the job right. You want them to carefully place broken bodies and bleeding bodies into stretchers and carry them to safety. You want teams of doctors and nurses to be waiting at the emergency room to make the right decisions for medicine and trauma intervention.

Today we celebrate the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ. When the Father spoke from heaven telling the world he was pleased with the life that Jesus was living, it was a way of saying to us, "I am telling you beyond any reason or shadow of doubt that my Son is the one who is going to rescue you and do the job right." You see, dear people, we were born into this world with a wrecked, broken, bleeding, hopeless condition because of our sin. There is no one out there to rescue us and we could not save ourselves. That is why our Father, who did not want to see us perish forever, sent his Son for us. In this sermon we want to look more carefully at these words of the prophet Isaiah for in these words we hear our Father tell us that Jesus is the perfect choice to rescue us. We also hear the Father speak to Jesus. It is the most amazing rescue operation the world has ever known, and you and I are part of it.

## **Listen to the Father tell us about Jesus**

Listen to what the Father says about Jesus, your deliverer, your rescuer. Be even more convinced that your hope is in the right place. "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." The Father calls Jesus his Son "my Servant." Jesus said in Matthew 20:28, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many." Everything we see in Jesus says to us he really wants to serve me help me. The person who has just been in a major accident never forgets the face of those who came to rescue them and help them. When we see the face of Jesus we see someone who has come to serve us who really cares about us.

The Father has such good things to say to us about Jesus and his qualifications to help us. He says that Jesus is "My chosen one in whom I delight." Remember what the Father spoke from heaven at Jesus baptism. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The Father was pleased with the way Jesus lived his life how he cared about people. When Jesus completed living a perfect life on this earth and the perfect sacrifice to pay for all sin, the Father raised him to life again. This was the Father's way of saying I accept what my Son has done. It was the stamp of approval, the recommendation, the guarantee that we are putting our trust in the right place. If your son or daughter has broken bones from a serious accident you would want the best bone specialist to set the bones right so your child could run or walk again. Our Father did not leave your salvation to chance or error. He sent his Son for us to set us straight. The delights in what his Son has done.

The Father says of Jesus, "I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations." The Spirit anointed Jesus at his baptism. The word "Messiah" in the Hebrew and "Christ" in the Greek means "the anointed one." Immediately after anointing Jesus the Holy Spirit led him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. The Father and the Spirit wanted Jesus to be tempted in all parts as we are. The Father wanted his Son to prove himself victorious so he could provide justice to the nations. The word for justice is a beautiful Hebrew word "Mishpath." It is often used together with the word righteousness. If I have someone who is going to set my bones straight, I want him to do it right. If I want someone to set my life straight with God or make it right with God then I want someone who does it all for me. I don't want him leave anything up to my weakness or faults or chance.

This past week we heard that the governor of our state is proposing to let some minimum risk prisoners go free from our prison system. When it comes to my problem of sin with which I was born and which is found in every facet of life, I cannot hope that God will be lenient with me on judgment day. I cannot hope I get out early for good behavior. I cannot make any amends for past sin that are acceptable to God. My only hope is justice, a verdict of not guilty, won for me at the cross when Jesus cried out, "It is finished."

Listen even more to what the Father says of Jesus his Son, our servant our Savior. "He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets." Do you like people yelling at you if you make a mistake driving, or if you make a mistake at work, or how about those car salesmen in Santa Maria who yell at us on television to come and buy a car from them? Maybe you know some parents who yell at their kids or kids who are always yelling at each other. Jesus does not yell at us even though we deserve to hear him say on judgment day, "Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting punishment." Instead we hear our Jesus say

to us, "Come to me all you who are weak and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest."

Listen even more to what the Father says of Jesus his perfect choice. "A bruised reed he will not break and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out." I am holding in my hand what you might call a bruised reed or broken stick. I am holding in my hand a lamp with a wick that is burnt down and needs to be replaced. What does Jesus do with us when we are broken down often because we make a mess of our lives? What does Jesus do with us when the wick burns low and we don't shine very brightly for him? Oh, I know what I would do with a broken stick? I would throw it away and get new one. Oh, I know what I would do with a smoldering wick. I would pull it out of the lamp and get a new one. Not our Jesus. He takes what is broken, redeems it, makes it his own and uses it for his glory.

Listen even more to what the Father says of his perfect choice Jesus. He says, "In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on the earth. In his law the islands will hope." When the bus crashed, our fellow Christians from Shepherd of the Hills who were not hurt seriously hurt, looked for their friends who were badly injured. They tried to help others by finding warm clothes scattered in the high desert, and they gathered around each other and prayed. Friends stay by you, especially when death is knocking at your door. No one is a better friend to have than Jesus. Death will come to all of us at some time. Then we need someone to help us through the doors and escape the judgment to come. Jesus offers you justice, a proclamation of not guilty. He was faithful. He prayed the night before he died, "Not my will but yours be done." "For the joy set before him he endured the cross and the shame."

Dear Christian you are saints of God now and forever only because Jesus was faithful. And in these last days of the world history we see the prophecy coming true that the distant islands will put their trust in his Word, his law, his proclamation of "not guilty." People everywhere are coming to confess with Paul in Romans 8, "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ."

### **Listen to the Father speak to Jesus**

The Father has spoken to us about Jesus, but now listen to the Father speak to Jesus in these words of Isaiah. God introduces himself with his credentials as the creator of the heaven's and the earth. "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 of it, who gives breath to the people, life to those who walk on it." Can I trust God to make the right choice for me? Look at how good he has been at creating the universe in which we live. Psalm 19 tells us, "The heavens declare the glory of God..." God knows what he has doing. He gives life and breath to every being. He provides for the birds of the air and the beasts of the field. Psalm 145 says, "The eyes of all wait on you O Lord and you give them their food at the proper time." Ask the bird singing in your backyard and it will tell what a good job the Father does in watching over his creatures.

The Father speaks to his beloved Son, here in Isaiah and he says to him. "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, to open the eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit

in darkness." The Father had great plans for his beloved Son. He speaks to him and says, "I have called you in righteousness." The Father wanted his Son to become one of us, live under the law, and be tempted as we are, so he could fulfill all righteousness and provide us with righteousness as a free gift. Jesus depended on his heavenly Father for strength and help because he had set aside his power as God to give himself for us. The Father promised him, "I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you." See a father take hold of his child's hand to help her through a rough situation. See our heavenly Father take hold of Jesus and help him through the rough times. That is why Jesus prayed to his Father, "O Father, give me the glory I had with you before the world began." When we hear the Father saying these words we become all the more convinced that Jesus is the only place we need to put our hope and trust.

There are so many choices we make in life from the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the cars we drive, the friends we develop. We also choose people to help us with our problems. Mechanics for our cars, bankers for our finances, doctors to help us when we become ill. There is only once choice that works when it comes to having eternal life now and forever. That choice has been made by our Father when he gave us his Son, and the Holy Spirit has led you to trust in this perfect choice the Father has made for you. Amen.