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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
January 12, 2019
1st Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: Acts 10:34-38, Matthew 3:13-17
Hymns: 20; 27; 360; 37:3 (242:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Isaiah 42:1-7

“Behold! My Servant whom I uphold,
My Elect One *in whom* My soul delights!
I have put My Spirit upon Him;

He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.

² He will not cry out, nor raise *His voice*,
Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.

³ A bruised reed He will not break,
And smoking flax He will not quench;
He will bring forth justice for truth.

⁴ He will not fail nor be discouraged,
Till He has established justice in the earth;
And the coastlands shall wait for His law.”

⁵ Thus says God the LORD,
Who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it,
Who gives breath to the people on it,
And spirit to those who walk on it:

⁶ “I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness,
And will hold Your hand;
I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the Gentiles,

⁷ To open blind eyes,

To bring out prisoners from the prison,
Those who sit in darkness from the prison house. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Would you take a look at this!

We make a discovery, we see something amazing, and that may be our response to those around us. "Will you take a look at this!" When we see something happening on TV, such as a great play in the football game, we are quick to call people into the room to see the instant replay. "You've got to see this!" But what if the "this" hasn't happened yet? What if the Who hasn't yet been born? Then it is up to the Lord who alone knows all things to tell us exactly what He wants us to know and see. And that is what our text was doing for the Old Testament believers. Through the word of the prophet we also are --

THEME: Seeing Jesus as God's Servant Delivering Salvation.

Our text begins with God's statement regarding Jesus so that we -

I. See Jesus Authenticated.

Actually authentication lies at the very center of our worship this morning. We understand from Scripture, from all Scripture, that these words of God are about Jesus. Not only our text from Isaiah, but also this morning's gospel lesson reporting the events surrounding Jesus' baptism, and the epistle lesson reporting Peter's observations regarding Jesus all speak to Jesus' authenticity as the Christ.

Our text begins with the Lord God calling attention to His Servant who as to be born still six centuries in the future.

Isaiah 42:1 “Behold! My Servant whom I uphold,
My Elect One *in whom* My soul delights!
I have put My Spirit upon Him;
He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.

The Lord calls everyone’s attention to the Savior that was to be born into the world. What the Lord declares through the prophet Isaiah is that there will be One whom the Lord will uphold, or sustain with His power and authority. There will be One whom He has chosen who will be sent into the world in whom the Lord GOD delights. There will be One upon whom the Holy Spirit of God will rest, and bring God’s anointing as the right and true person that has come into the world as the promised Messiah who lives to fulfill God’s will for the salvation of the world.

Now we are dealing with prophecy here, so we need to look for fulfillment of that prophecy. We need look no further than Jesus’ baptism. It was made clear that Jesus was the One sent by God to be Savior of the world.

Jesus came to John to be baptized by Him. It was not a matter of Jesus being guilty of any sin, but rather a matter of fulfilling all righteousness for those who would be saved through faith in His name. Understanding this truth John agreed to baptize Jesus. As Jesus walked up out of the Jordan River the voice of God the Father declared that Jesus was God’s beloved Son in whom He was well pleased. The words of the prophet were made clear; **this** is that Servant of whom Isaiah wrote!

But wait there was more! Isaiah spoke in our text of the Spirit of God coming upon that Man. That also was **visibly** fulfilled at Jesus’ baptism! Jesus as true man, the Son of Man, was authenticated as being the only-begotten Son of God, and the Savior of the world.

John had actually been told directly by God that One was coming to be baptized by him, and when John saw the Spirit descend and abide upon that individual John would know this was without doubt the One whom God sent as Savior of the world.

In our text and in several other places in Isaiah as well Jesus is referred to as the Servant of the Lord. This also is significant because it was not man's plan for salvation that was to be fulfilled by and through Jesus, but God's plan. It was a plan that was great enough for this Servant to bring forth justice for the world.

Justice can be so easily misunderstood. For the Servant of the Lord to bring forth justice in the world should sinners tremble? Indeed on the last day we know that Jesus will come to judge the world, and will separate those who will enter into heaven from those who will spend eternity in the torments of Hell. Is this what the prophet speaks of here? Not at all! This is the justice of God's covenant of grace in which God reveals a righteousness which is separate from the law; a righteousness God would credit to sinners. The Servant of the Lord was sent by God to secure life and salvation for a fallen world. And that is what this authentication verifies.

The message of God's covenant of peace is to be secured and then proclaimed to all people, including the people of the Gentile nations. This purpose and plan of God to secure salvation and deliverance from sin and death for all the world is presented for us to know for ourselves concerning our salvation.

As we proceed farther in our text we --

II. See Jesus Operating with Gentle Persistence.

Isaiah 42:2-4 "He will not cry out, nor raise *His voice*, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.

³ A bruised reed He will not break,

And smoking flax He will not quench;
He will bring forth justice for truth.
⁴ He will not fail nor be discouraged,
Till He has established justice in the earth;
And the coastlands shall wait for His law.”

The Lord knew what kind of Messiah the people of Israel would desire when Jesus came. The Lord always knew how the work and words of Jesus would be twisted by modern theologians in our day to serve their political and social agendas, calling for upheaval of governments and revolution and turning over social order. In the words of our text we see Jesus, and that is **not** the kind of Savior He is at all. He was not a rabble-rouser calling for rebellion. He called for repentance, and peace with God. Yes, Jesus preached in the temple courts, as well as in the synagogues, but Jesus’ message was concerning the Kingdom of God, not the kingdoms of this world.

Jesus looked with compassion upon people, seeing them as lost and wandering sheep without a shepherd to lead them in the way of God’s truth. He had compassion upon them as He saw people suffering in sickness and infirmity because of sin’s corrupting curse in this world. Jesus reached out to people to care for them, to heal them, to save their souls. This verse regarding Jesus’ gentle care of souls is precious for us as we struggle with temptation, and sin and weakness in our own lives. “*A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench.*” (v.3) We see Jesus as the one who will not break the bruised reed of spiritual infirmity when we are assaulted with grief, or regret, but will comfort and restore strength to our fainting hearts. We see Jesus and know that He will not snuff out the weak smoking flax of the wick of our faith, but will fan that last ember of faith to restore it to a brightly burning flame once more.

Ultimately, we see Jesus as the One whose compassion and love for lost souls led Him to resolutely go up to Jerusalem, to suffer the pangs of the cross, the curse of

God, endure death and the grave. He would not turn away from His mission of salvation until salvation for the world had been secured and He could confidently declare from the cross, "**It is Finished!**" He suffered that we might be delivered from suffering.

In all this we --

III. See Jesus Fulfill the Lord's Covenant.

It is significant that we comprehend the beginnings of our salvation. All other religions of the world began with a man thinking great things of himself or great things of humanity. That is all a delusion. This is the devil's intent. All the religions of this world are nonsense, and it actually doesn't take very long to see the contradictions, and vanity of world religions. The devil would lie to deceive us into thinking that this is also the beginning of Christianity. Many in the world have already fallen into that point of view. They think and man's history books may say "So a man named Jesus was born, and this great teacher was so highly thought of that a religion began around Him that exalted Jesus to a divine status, and all this happened about 2000 years ago." Our text presents the truth about Jesus six centuries before He was born into the world. In our text we see Jesus as the One who fulfills the eternal creator God's covenant of salvation. Listen once again to these words:

Isaiah 42:5-7 Thus says God the LORD,
Who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it,
Who gives breath to the people on it,
And spirit to those who walk on it:
⁶ "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness,
And will hold Your hand;
I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the Gentiles,
⁷ To open blind eyes,
To bring out prisoners from the prison,
Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.

He who made the world, who gave us life and breath, who alone keeps the world functioning, He speaks of the salvation He brings through His chosen Servant, who is Jesus Christ. He called Jesus to be our Savior. We might say, of course He did. We say that from faith, but it is demonstrated in Jesus' baptism and life. Time and again Jesus taught that He was here on earth to fulfill the will of His Father, who sent Him. Jesus made the point repeatedly that He did nothing apart from the Father, or on His own authority alone. It always came from the Father. God was with Him and blessed Jesus in His mission of salvation. Isn't that a mystery? God blessed Jesus in His mission even as the Father cursed Jesus upon the cross as He endured God's wrath for our sins!

In all this Jesus was that Light of salvation shining in a sin darkened world. Sin had obliterated the Light of God, any and all true understanding of God, as well as any and all love for God. All that was lost to man when sin entered into the world. All that was left was darkness, spiritual blindness, and the prospect of the eternal prison house of hell.

Jesus was sent by God, endorsed by God, joined with the Father and Holy Spirit to secure the covenant of God's peace. God put His plan into place to bring a righteousness to sinful man that He Himself secured. God credited that righteousness to this world that man might be reconciled to God by the death of His Son!

This is the light of salvation and the liberty which Jesus and only Jesus brings to us that we might live through Him.

"Hey! You've got to see this!" That is what Epiphany is all about. For the next several weeks we will be repeating that again and again as God directs our attention to Jesus that we might see "His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.