Rev. Beth J. Costlow

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

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Baptism of Our Lord

Prepared for:  Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Greenville SC

* Season of Epiphany is one of revelation.
	+ Weekly gospel lessons give a glimpse into who Jesus is and what God is doing through him.
	+ Today: Baptism of Our Lord
		- Luke’s version of that event.
			* God speaks, “You are my son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”
		- Luke’s given us glimpses of Jesus’ identity before this, though.
			* Angel visits Zechariah and tells him that his wife, Elizabeth, will have a child who “even before his birth will be filled with the Holy Spirit” and who will help prepare people to receive the Lord.
			* Angel visits Mary and, although she is both young and unmarried, she will also have a child, and her child will be the Son of God.
		- Then, of course, when the two mothers meet during their pregnancies, Elizabeth’s child leapt for joy in recognition of the child in Mary’s womb, and Elizabeth recognizes that Mary is carrying the Lord.
		- And then there is the third tale of angelic visitors. This time, they appear to shepherds and announce, “to you is born this day…a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”
* Savior. Lord. Messiah. Son of God.
	+ All of these words were spoken about Jesus up to and including his baptism.
	+ Today, we hear God identify Jesus as “Son,” and “Beloved.”
	+ What do all of these titles mean?
	+ And what, if anything, does Jesus’ identity as Son of God have to do with our own identities as children of God?
* First things first. There are a variety of words used to convey Jesus’ identity because there is not any one, single word or phrase that could communicate the role Jesus plays in God’s plan for humanity—really, in God’s plan for the entire world!
	+ Son of God and Lord
		- Identifies Jesus’ divine parentage, but doesn’t tell us everything that Jesus will do.
		- Connected to Lord, as it conveys Jesus’ unity with the creator of the universe and even his own Father.
		- Jesus is Son of God. And Jesus is Lord.
			* Fully human. Fully divine.
			* God in human form, living, breathing, walking and working among humanity.
	+ Savior
		- Not a word that would have been understood by first century followers of Jesus, although we are quite familiar with it.
			* We live in a world where the crucifixion and resurrection have already happened.
			* We know that, with those events, God put even death to death.
			* They are the events central to Jesus’ identity as Savior.
			* They are also events unknown to the people who surround Jesus at his baptism.
				+ Even Mary, with whom that angel used the word “Savior” didn’t really know what was ahead for her son.
	+ Messiah
		- Greek: One who suffers, especially a divine suffering on behalf of others.
			* First century listeners would have made that connection, but none had even an inkling of what was going to happen to Jesus.
		- This is a word that is directly connected to the cross.
		- It is a word connected to eternity.
	+ None of these words stands alone. They are inextricably intertwined: Son of God. Lord. Savior. Messiah.
* Son of God, Children of God
	+ God announces Jesus’ identity as Son at baptism.
		- Jesus publicly takes on the mantle that comes with being Lord, Savior, and Messiah.
			* Making God known.
			* Ministry of suffering servanthood.
			* Salvation.
	+ God claims us as children at our own baptism. Unlike Jesus, it’s not simply a revelation; it’s a whole new relationship.
		- We are children of sinners, incapable of being sinless.
		- “In bondage to sin and unable to save ourselves”
		- Freed by Jesus, the sinless Son of God to claim our identity as God’s children, to serve the world even in our imperfection, and to live fearlessly.