Sola Lectionary Text Study

Baptism of our Lord

January 11, 2026

The Son is an innocent man who does more than is required of him; the Holy Spirit comes in a friendly form; the Father has a friendly voice: "I am not sending you prophets or apostles or angels; instead you have my Son, with whom I am completely pleased.

–Martin Luther–

Sermon, January 6, 1534

Proclamation Points

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

First Lesson: Isaiah 42:1-9

Isaiah spoke of the Lord's Servant at work, bringing justice and righteousness into the world. With God's Spirit upon him, he would accomplish God's will in the world. The servant was not arriving as a conqueror, but as a redeemer. He would release the captive and give sight to the blind. In this servant, God was doing a new thing.

God's servant is one who, in faithfulness, will not be deterred until the job is complete. This is the one of whom the prophet spoke: our Savior, Jesus Christ, who remained faithful unto death. God's faithfulness continued to be revealed, even beyond death, in the resurrection of Jesus from the grave.

- *How does Christ's steadfastness in his earthly life demonstrate how he continues to work faithfully in the world?*

Psalm 29

In a rather jarring contrast to Isaiah, the Psalm shifts our focus from servanthood to majesty. The Lord, the God of Israel, is powerful and without peer. When he decides to act, things happen. Cedars are broken. Nations skip. The wilderness shakes. The oaks whirl and the forests are stripped bare. There is power in the voice of the Lord. Power that is unmatched by anything we see in this world.

But even in light of the tremendous power of the Lord, the Psalmist has only one request: that God would bless his people with peace. The Psalmist hopes to see the wondrous power of the Lord of Hosts put to work for the sake of peace.

- *Are you more likely to think of God in the image of a servant in Isaiah or in the majestic language of the Psalm? Why?*
- *Why is it important that we hold on to both of these images?*

Second Lesson: Romans 6:1-11

Having received the miraculous gift of forgiveness through Christ, the Romans had come up with a new problem. They wondered whether, since God is so merciful — since they are free in Christ — was there any reason they had to live by any particular code of conduct. Was there any reason they couldn't just run wild?

Paul pointed out that this is not the question of one alive in faith; it is the question of one dead in sin. The question of running wild is of one who still clings to darkness. Those who have been crucified with Christ have been freed from sin and death. The darkness is banished. The question itself is an indication of the power of sin still at work in the hearts of believer.

- *What makes sin and darkness so appealing to us? Why does this problem of sin keep hanging around?*
- *In what way does the sinner in us need to die daily? In practical, everyday terms, how does God spiritually put us to death and raise us to new life?*

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 3:13-17

Leading up to the moment of Jesus' baptism, John the Baptist calls people to repentance, or a turning away from their sin. The Pharisees and Sadducees apparently did not feel the need to repent and confess their sins. They were sure of their standing before God because they were descendants of the patriarch, Abraham. John is clearly upset by their lack of understanding and proclaims that one will come after him who is greater than he. This one will separate the wheat from the chaff.

- *In what ways do we become so overly confident in our standing with God, that we fail to see our need for him in our lives?*

Isaiah prepared our imaginations for a servant. The Psalmist prepared us for majesty. At the Jordan River we encounter the one who embodies both. Jesus goes to the river, entering into the waters that are teeming with the sins of his people, and takes that sin upon himself. He takes the form of a servant, placing himself even under the authority of John the Baptist.

But the majestic voice of the Lord will not be ignored on this day. As John does what Jesus has asked him to do, God proclaims for all to hear, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

- *What is God's intent in Jesus' baptism by John? In what way is Jesus taking upon himself our identity?*
- *How does the voice of the Father answer our questions by pointing us to Christ himself?*

The fruits of repentance are the visible sign of a changed life; a life that does not depend on lineage, social standing, wealth or anything else. Fruits of repentance are a blessing but also a witness to the One who transforms life. As Jesus arrives on the scene, John wonders why Jesus would want him to baptize him. He can't imagine what Jesus is doing. But the Messiah was coming into the world as a servant. And he would not let anything get between him and his people. Not even their sin.