

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin R. Eden

Epiphany 1- The Baptism of Our Lord
Saturday, January 9, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, January 10, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

“For This Reason He Was Born”

Mark 1:4-11

During the Advent season, we spoke of John the Baptist as being the dominant Advent figure. His calling was to “prepare the way for the Lord.” His ministry was meant to prepare the children of Abraham to receive the Christ, the one who would redeem all of God’s children from our slavery to sin. And at Christmas, we celebrated that our Redeemer has been born.

But John is not only an important Advent figure, he is also a major character in the Epiphany season. The Epiphany season is where Jesus is revealed as the Christ, the Redeemer, the Son of God, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Our Redeemer has come, and He has been revealed to us.

For whatever reason, on Monday morning when I read through the texts for today, the words “John appeared” caught my attention. The word translated as “appeared” is a very common Greek verb: “ginomai”. In my handy Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker Greek Dictionary, on the third page of options and examples of uses

of ginomai the very last option is the meaning “to appear.” And “John appeared” is a fine translation.

However, I believe you miss the point if you don’t know the first and most common use of “ginomai”. The first and most common use is “to be born”. We heard this same word all throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons. This is what the angel spoke to John’s father Zechariah; this is what the angel spoke to Mary and to Joseph. When the time came for John to be born and for Christ to be born, this is the word that is used.

I believe the Holy Spirit guided Mark to use this word to emphasize that it was for this purpose that John the Baptizer was born. Then reading the rest of verse four, another word jumped out at me “proclaiming”. This is another familiar Greek word – a form of “kaerusso”. The motto for the Fort Wayne Seminary is “Kaeruxson ton logon” – “proclaim the Word” from 2Tim. 4:2.

John was born for the purpose of proclaiming the Word, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, and as we heard throughout the Advent season – to prepare the way for the Lord. And all the people from Judea and Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized.

We tend to gloss over what John’s message was. When he called the people to

repent, he was warning them about the wrath of God. The full wrath of God was going to be poured out on humanity because of the sin of Adam and the sin of Adam's children. The only good news in John's message was that the Redeemer was coming.

At the Baptism of our Lord, like all the faithful were meant to do, we turn our attention away from John and look to Jesus – for it was for this reason John had come. And like John, Jesus had been born for one purpose. And He would come proclaiming not just a word of warning to repent. He came to be the Redeemer of Israel and the all the world. He came as the One who would stand between us and God's righteous wrath as the full weight of the Law comes down on Jesus instead us you and me.

I mentioned in one of our Advent services the explanation of John's words that he is not even worthy to untie the strap of His sandal. This is more than just John making a comparison as to how much better, more powerful, more important the Messiah is. John is proclaiming the Christ to be the Redeemer.

He is the One who will buy you back from your slavery to sin. He is the One who will purchase your freedom at a great price. He is the One who will restore you back into the family of God. He is the One who will take the punishment and crushing weight of the burden of your sin He carried to the cross.

That is what John is alluding to with his comment about not being worthy to

untie the strap of the Redeemer's sandals. The best example of this is seen in the book of Ruth when Boaz fulfills his duty as the kinsman-redeemer, buys/redeems the historic family land, marries Ruth, and continues her dead husband's family tree. To make this transaction complete, in the presence of the elders of the city, Boaz takes off his sandal. That is how the redeemer was identified. John says, "I am not worthy to stoop down and untie His sandals." John the Baptist has come to identify the Redeemer. He says, "I am not the Redeemer. I am not the Messiah."

But there is One who has been born for this purpose and who will proclaim "liberty to the captives" as the prophet Isaiah says. Jesus comes not just with a word of warning (although He does come with a word of warning). The Redeemer comes proclaiming Good News, forgiveness, salvation, and ultimately life eternal.

It is at Jesus' Baptism that He takes the burden of the weight of the sin of the world on His shoulders and will carry it to the cross and grave. It is a beautiful, glorious exchange. At His Baptism, Jesus takes your sin and places it upon Himself. At your Baptism, Jesus takes His righteousness and places it on you.

It is for this reason He was born. And it is a beautiful, glorious message He proclaims. Amen.