

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Christmas Day Service
Monday, December 25, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

“Baptism Equals Jesus”

Titus 3:4-7

It really isn't surprising that one of the options which the three-year lectionary series has traditionally chosen for the Epistle reading on Christmas Day is one of the key passages in support of Baptism? You may ask, “Why talk about Baptism now?” We get to talk about Baptism all we want when we celebrate the Baptism of our Lord on the first Sunday of Epiphany.

But Christmas is about Baptism. Think of it as a math equation: “Baptism equals Jesus.” You cannot separate Baptism from the physical incarnation of Christ. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We are the ones who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb.

In the hymn we just sang, “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing”, for what reason did Jesus leave His throne in heaven to be born in lowly estate? The hymn writer says, “Mild He leaves His throne on high, Born that man no more may die;

Born to raise the sons of earth; Born to give them second birth.”

Christmas is about the Son of God’s first birth providing us with an opportunity for a second birth in the waters of Holy Baptism. If it were not for that washing of regeneration (I’m going back to my old 1941 catechism days. I am bilingual in regard to the Small Catechism because I memorized it one way and since 1986, we have been using our current translation. It’s funny how those words you learn in your youth stick with you) if it were not for that washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit, we would be wasting our time this morning – Christmas wouldn’t be about anything but Barbie dolls, eggnog, and Hallmark Channel movies.

That little child lying in a manger, surrounded by all the wonderful sights and smells that a barn has to offer; that seemingly helpless little child wrapped in swaddling clothes came to you to wrap you in His baptismal robe of righteousness. In the weeks of Advent leading up to this celebration of the birth of our Lord, we have heard a lot from the prophet Isaiah. Two weeks ago we heard words that I said again last night: Isaiah said, “for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with a robe of righteousness.”

Those words from Isaiah have really been our theme the past few weeks.

This is what our Lord has done for you with the Gospel in general, but in Baptism in particular. He was born so that our Old Adam could die and we could be reborn. Christ was born to give us “second birth” as the hymn writer says. He saved us. And we are saved “Today.” There is no waiting around for salvation to come.

As I said last night: You are a creation of God, not just because He gave you a body and breathed life into you here on earth, but you are a creation of God because God said to you, “Let there be light.” When you were called to faith in Baptism, God said to you, “Where there was once darkness, let there be light.” The light of Christ is in you. You carry with you the Gospel and the name of God. You are saved today.

This Christmas celebration happens every year because, as God’s new adopted children, we recognize that Jesus entering into the world changed everything. You gather to celebrate each year, because, as God’s child, you recognize that when Christ entered into you, everything changed for you.

Many people say that Christmas is about spending time with your family.

For God's people this is especially true. That is what we did yesterday and that is what we are doing right now – spending time with our family – our Father in heaven, our brother Jesus Christ, and all of God's children adopted through the waters of Holy Baptism.

And the Lord provides us with the best Christmas dinner – the broken body and shed blood of the incarnate Son of God. And we are invited to this feast, which is a foretaste of the greater feast to come. Unfortunately, our gathering here gives the appearance that there are only a small sampling of God's children present who could be worshipping with us. The reality is that today, we join in this feast with angels and arch-angels and all the company of heaven.

All of those saints who have gone before us, all of those saints of past generations who were given "second birth" join us in lauding and magnifying God's glorious name. They join us in celebrating, as the hymn-writer says, that Christ was "born that man no more may die" – so that you may be clothed with the garments of salvation; and covered with a robe of righteousness." Have a Merry Christmas. Amen.