

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

Today's gospel lesson presents some challenges for preaching. Some of this text was part of a larger selection of the lectionary for the third Sunday in Advent. So, instead of following a similar idea since Pastor Greg has already preached on John the Baptist and today is the Baptism of our Lord, I'd like to take a different look at the text, focusing more on the different voices that are in the texts for today.

In the Old Testament Lesson for today, we hear God speaking through the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah tells us that God calls us, claims us, protects us, and saves us. God has called us by our names, we are his.

Psalm 29 tells us that the voice of the Lord is over the water; the voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The psalm continues describing what the voice of God can do. It paints an image of strength and awe.

The voice in Acts comes in the prayer that Peter and John prayed. They prayed that the Holy Spirit would come to the Samaritans who had been baptized in the name of Jesus when they laid their hands upon their heads. The Samaritans received the Holy Spirit.

And finally, we come to the voices in the gospel lesson. The first voice we hear is John the Baptist who tells us that he isn't the messiah. One will come after him and baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. The second voice is from heaven saying "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

What are these voices saying to us? All of these voices point to God's action. God is the one who calls and claims us in the waters of baptism. God protects us, saves us, and sends us the Spirit.

God sent the Spirit to the Samaritans when Peter and John prayed. The Spirit descended upon Jesus after he was baptized while he prayed. In the Gospel of Luke, we get the sense that the author wasn't emphasizing Jesus baptism as much as he was emphasizing what happened after it. Luke doesn't tell us who baptized Jesus or where he was baptized. The emphasis

is on the Holy Spirit taking the form of a dove and God's voice from heaven telling Jesus that he was God's Son.

The voice from heaven is Jesus' introduction as God's Son. God is well pleased with Jesus, and Jesus really hasn't done anything yet. The next verse in Luke tells us that Jesus was thirty when he began his work. I think we need to think about how God viewed Jesus. Robert Tannehill in his commentary "Luke" states:

God is affirming a special relationship with Jesus and uses words that express the closest kind of familial and emotional bond. Jesus is my Son, he is the Beloved, and he is one with who God is well pleased. With these words, God confirms a special relationship with Jesus and expresses confidence in him. But with the relationship goes responsibility, for the relationship implies obedience and the gift of the Spirit implies a mission. God's expressed confidence in Jesus binds God's cause to Jesus, who is now responsible for it. Jesus must respond to God's trust by doing God's will.

The author of Luke stresses the special relationship that Jesus has with God the Father.

We also have a special relationship with God. In our baptism God calls us and claims us as his own. God has called us by our names, we are his. He has given us the Holy Spirit to guide us throughout our lives. In our relationship with God we are called to seek justice and peace, love and serve others, and share the good news with our neighbors here in Calvert County and throughout the world.

Brian Stoffregen raises the point that the Lucan account of this passage is more than to inform us of Jesus' baptism. Stoffregen writes:

He (Luke) relates this story also to indicate something about our baptisms, our need to be in prayer, our anointing with the Spirit, and our subsequent battles with evil and ministry in the world. We have a beloved and well-pleasing relationship with God. With that comes the responsibility to love out of that relationship – to fulfill the mission God sends before us – to live up to the confidence God has placed on us.

We too have responsibility in our relationship with God. God has confidence in each of us to do his work in the world. God has confidence in

each of us to pray, to seek justice and peace for all people, to help others, and to share the gospel.

Today, God calls and claims Joshua, Kirsten, Ross, and Jared into his family. As brothers and sisters to these children we, along with their parents, need to share the love of God with them through our words and our actions. Through our actions with the guidance of the Holy Spirit we will share God's love with them. We are all children of God and have a beloved and well-pleasing relationship with him.

The voice that was well-pleased with Jesus is well-pleased with us. We are God's children and he loves each and every one of us unconditionally. The Spirit is with us to guide us as we do God's work in the world.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.