

King of Glory Lutheran Church

January 8-9, 2022

Year C: Baptism of Our Lord: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

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***Isaiah 43:1-7***

*But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. <sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.*

*<sup>3</sup>For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. <sup>4</sup>Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. <sup>5</sup>Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; <sup>6</sup>I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth—<sup>7</sup>everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."*

***Luke 3:15-17, 21-22***

*<sup>15</sup> As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah <sup>16</sup> John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."*

*<sup>21</sup> Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, <sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."*

When you were born you were given a name.

It might be a name that you share with another family member. Or a name with a special meaning. Or a name that your parents liked the sound of.

Maybe your name was picked out months before you were born or not chosen until after you arrived.

My parents were certain that I would be a boy and had to make a quick switch to Debra when they couldn't name me David. I kind of like that I surprised them.

Some of us love the name we were given and others wish we were called something different.

And over the course of our lives people call us by other names like nicknames or titles that we become known by.

Names are important. They are part of our identity. They reveal relationships.

Being called by name brings with it a powerful experience of being known and recognized and welcomed. On your worst day, or when you are lost, or when you are alone hearing someone call you by name changes everything.

It was certainly true for the Israelites when they were far from home, living in exile in Babylon.

The prophet Isaiah speaks an important word from God to them, words we heard today in our first reading from Isaiah, "Do not fear for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."

The Israelites had been torn from their country. They had every reason to be afraid. For these people living in exile, this word from God offered hope and comfort. Even in an unfamiliar place, amidst strangers and an unknown future God remembered their names and claimed them as God's own people.

"Do not fear for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."

God's voice spoke to God's people in a terrible time, claiming the Israelites when they felt lost and abandoned.

When they thought that everything they knew and loved was gone forever. God's voice called to them in their despair and their fear in Babylon. God's voice that redeems, restores, and reclaims.

We hear God's voice again today in our gospel reading from Luke.

After the baptism of Jesus, the heavens opened and a voice came from heaven saying, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." Or from another translation The Message by Eugene Peterson, "This is my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life."

In this season of Epiphany, of revealing, Jesus' baptism shows us who he is. God claimed Jesus as God's own Son in an amazing way, with the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit falling upon him. Jesus was revealed as God's Son loved and known by God.

And this is the beginning of Jesus' ministry in the gospel of Luke – this claiming, this marking, this naming. From this point on Jesus goes out to preach and forgive sins and heal. Touching those who were treated as though they were nameless and unknown. But they were always known by God.

As always, Jesus goes ahead of us, showing us the way, showing us how to live out the life God has called us to live. Showing us today that we are God's children, that we too are God's beloved.

Because we too have been claimed and named by God in baptism. Today when we remember the Baptism of our Lord, we have the chance to remember the gift of our own baptism.

In baptism you were sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. In baptism you were given a new name, "child of God." A name that marks you before all other names as God's own. It is God who calls you by name, knowing you now and always.

Wherever you go, the places where everyone knows your name or places where everyone is a stranger, there is always One who knows your name. God who has claimed you and loves you. "I have called you by name; you are mine" God promises us. By the mark of baptism, by water and the word, we know this promise.

Baptism is not something that we have to do so that God knows us. Baptism is a gift God gives us so that we remember each and every day that we are known and loved no matter what.

In this world it can be easy to forget who you are, get lost in a crowd, get tired of looking for a place where you will be welcomed by the sound of your own name.

But you should never forget that there is always One who knows your name, who has named you “child of God” which is the most important, most treasured name you have.

One of the reasons the church exists and one of the reasons that we come together week after week as the body of Christ is to remember that we are children of God, claimed and gathered and sent out into the world.

We gather together to hear the good news proclaimed, remember God’s promise of love and forgiveness in the waters of baptism and share a meal together at the Lord’s table.

When we are brought together through Word and Sacrament it is our God who invites each one of us, calling us by name.

And as God’s people, marked by God’s love, we are called to reach out to people whose names we do not know but are children of God, like ourselves. People who long for a place where they are known, long to hear God’s call and know God’s love.

This week I think God is challenging you and me to learn one person’s name that you don’t know. At the grocery store, in your neighborhood, at school, at work, or in this congregation. Call that person by name. Let them know that you see them and value them.

It may seem like a small thing but there is power in a name, power in being recognized, power in being known.

Hold on to God’s Word of hope and promise to you today, “Do not fear for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.”

Trusting this good news let us continue to welcome people in the name of Christ into our lives and our community. Together as children of God, called by name, we will see God revealed this day and always.

Amen.