

Ah Hah! You Can't Beat This!

Baptism of our Lord – 01/11/26 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Isaiah 42:1-9 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 1, [Yahweh declares,] **“Look at this, My Servant whom I hold fast; My chosen One, who pleases My soul; I am setting My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth the just verdict for the nations.”**

v.8, **“I am Yahweh. That is My name. And My glory I give to no other, nor My praise to idols.”**

Introduction

✧ This last Tuesday, January 6th, was the Day of Epiphany on the Church calendar. When you or I have an “epiphany” it means that we just had a sudden, profound realization or insight about something that we did not understand; that we did not realize before. It means that some deeper truth; some kind of life-altering information has now been revealed to us. I like to say that this season of Epiphany, as an extension of the Christmas season, is the time when the Scripture readings uncover layer after layer of truth regarding Who this baby born in Bethlehem really is! It is a series of “Ah Hah!” moments; helping us to see and celebrate our Savior Jesus.

✧ In the earlier days of journalism, before we were so blatantly bombarded by the so-called latest, greatest, up-to-the-moment news flash on our TVs and phones; when real newspapers were still the primary means of delivering the word; if something really big happened, the newspapers would print not only their regular daily edition, but also what they called an “Extra.”

➔ And to spread that news as quickly as possible, newsboys would stand out on the street corners waving that special copy around and shouting for all to hear, “Extra! Extra! Read all about it!” Then they would peak people’s interest by yelling a quick description of the big news: “Pearl Harbor Bombed!” “War in Europe is Over!” or “Man Walks on the Moon!”

✧ Well, in our text today, God Himself shares a great epiphany with all of the people around the world. It is indeed an exciting, “ah hah” truth that few people knew about in the late 7th century BC.; a truth that sadly fewer and fewer people know or even want to care about now over two and half centuries later.

➔ But friends, it is still huge news! I’m not exaggerating when I say that this really is life-altering in nature. And that’s why our text begins with God saying, “Behold!” The Hebrew word is used over 100 times in the Old Testament as an attention grabber, as if to say, “Look at this”, “Pay attention to what I am revealing to you here.”

➔ It’s very clear that God has something important to say to us. He wants our full attention, because He has the huge news that His set-apart and chosen Servant is coming for the people who are in exile and suffering in the Old Testament time of Isaiah, and has now come for those of us after the days of His birth, death, resurrection and ascension. Yes, God’s news is so special that He is Himself shouting out here in Isaiah 42, “Extra! Extra! Read all about it!” “I am giving My Servant to you and to all nations around the world!”

I. What a Mission He has!

✧ And my dear Christians, right away in the first verse of this epiphany from God, He shows us that His chosen Servant is coming with a mission like no other!

➔ This special Servant whom Yahweh says, “pleases” His very soul, will bring forth God’s declarative verdict of all that is just and right – to the nations of all the earth. The Hebrew word is one of the most important words in all of Scripture. It is מִשְׁפָּט (mishpāt), used over 400 times

in the Old Testament. It describes a “legal judgment” or “verdict”. So this special “servant”, actually serves as Yahweh’s legal emissary.

➔ And what is the verdict that He comes to declare? Well, that has to do with the fact in verse six that Yahweh tells this servant, Jesus, that He gives Jesus to His people as “a covenant”; that is as the fulfillment of the covenant promise that God set with His people from of old.

- ✘ Look, the truth is, that you and I, as well as all people throughout this world’s entire history have failed to keep the old covenant that God originally made with us. He gave us His Law – we know it as God’s 10 Commandments, which He actually intended for us to see as His 10 Gifts for how we are to live as His people, now that He saved us from the slavery under Pharaoh and the death that we deserve because of our sin-filled nature. His first and greatest covenant is that He will be our God and we will be His people. It is the greatest gift ever given. And therefore He says in the First Commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me.”

➔ And yes, all of us human beings have failed at keeping our side of the covenant every day of our lives, haven’t we? But, because He still loves us so much, He continues to keep His part to perfection.

➔ And so, to save us again and make it possible for us to remain His people, Yahweh sends His Son into our flesh; into our earthly existence to be a new covenant for us.

- ✘ It is the only way that the legal fulfillment of God’s final verdict regarding our eternal outcome can still be met and His just nature can remain unblemished.

➔ God promises to send His “suffering servant”, as He is called in Isaiah, chapter 53, to take our guilt upon Himself; to suffer the punishment of shedding His blood and dying on the cross the death that should rightly be ours. By doing this, Jesus then establishes a new way for us to be cleansed of our sinful corruption and be made acceptable to God.

➔ This is why God tells His Servant in verse six that He will be “a light for the nations.” Jesus even explained this in John 8:12 when He said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Jesus shines His light of forgiveness and grace into the darkness of our sin, death and hopelessness so that through faith in Him, we are now blessed to live in the beacon of the certain hope and assurance that we have new and everlasting life!

➔ Why? because of the verdict that Jesus makes possible for us all. Yes, because of Jesus, God, who is the perfect Judge over all, declares all who trust always and only in Jesus’ saving work in our place to be “innocent”; “not guilty” since He has wrapped us in His very own “righteousness.”

- ✘ Ah Hah! Now verse seven makes so much more sense. God gave Jesus to us “to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison” all those sinners “who sit in darkness.”

II. What a Servant this is!

- ✘ Oh what a Servant this is! In our Gospel Reading, God the Father leaves no doubt about who this Chosen One truly is. He actually makes His voice known, publically, so that all those human ears that are present on the day of Jesus’ baptism could audibly hear Him declare: “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Mt. 3:17).

➔ What a great epiphany! The mystery is now gone. The indisputable truth is out for all people to embrace and believe. This Jesus, the One born to the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem; the One raised by her and Joseph in Galilee; the One standing now knee-deep in the Jordan River is both God’s Son and the promised Servant of Isaiah.

✘ And just as verse one in our text clearly says will happen, the people on the banks of the Jordan that day have now given their eye-witness reports to the Gospel writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. “When Jesus was baptized...behold (look, see, ah hah), the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him” (Mt. 3:16).

➔ Yes, Yahweh put His Spirit upon Jesus (v. 1) which then means that the truths about Jesus in verses six and eight of our text also apply to the fullest. First of all in verse six, “I am Yahweh; I have called You in righteousness.” Jesus is the very righteousness of God. And then in verse eight, “I am Yahweh. That is My name. And My glory I give to no other, nor My praise to idols.” Jesus has, and deserves forever, the full glory of God.

✘ Yet this Servant of God does not blow His own horn or demand His own way. Verse two says “He will not cry aloud or lift up His voice, or make it heard in the street.” No, He’s not coming for Himself, but to serve His Father in service to all of us ... sinners who are hurting and broken and on the edge of despair because we know there is nothing that we can do to save ourselves.

➔ Therefore verse three says, “a bruised reed He will not break, and a faintly burning wick He will not quench...”. That’s us, ready to break in our guilt; feeling far too often, like our life is just about to be snuffed out forever. Yet verse three continues, “He will faithfully bring forth justice.”

➔ Verse four says, “He will not grow faint or be discouraged...”. Yes, no matter what it takes, this Servant, as Isaiah 53 tells us, is prepared even to be wounded, crushed, and given into death, so that you and I can be declared “not guilty” and fully reconciled with God.

III. What a reason for it all!

✘ Still, why does God reveal this special announcement to us here in His Word? Why does He stand on the street corner throughout the entire world and yell out for everyone to hear, “Extra! Extra! Read all about it”?

➔ The answer is in the first word of verse one. “Behold”, “Look at this”, “Pay attention to what I’m revealing to you here.” God wants us all to see, recognize and know His Servant, who is His Son.

✘ Why? because Jesus is the only One who can actually offer His perfect “righteousness” to us. He is the covenant; the One that all humankind must look to in faith in order to have forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven. He said, “No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn. 14:6).

➔ So, the Father knows the truth, but each and every one of us has to honestly ask, “Am I ... Am I truly and fully putting my hope in Him?”

➔ He is the only Servant and Savior that is entirely and truly inclusive. As verse four says, He “establishes justice in (all) the earth.” And as verse six says, He does it for all the people and for all the nations.

✘ That includes not only you and me here in this room, but all of your neighbors and relatives and friends; every one of your co-workers and school classmates?

➔ Are they putting their hope in Jesus? Do they even know of this great news; of this unbeatable gift that God has sent for their salvation?

Conclusion

✘ If not, then you know what that means, don’t you? It is our joyful task from God to be the “newsboy/girl” on the street corners for those around us. This epiphany; this life-altering revelation that now defines every ounce of our very being and every moment of our existence;

this is what we need to shout out for all to hear: “Extra! Extra! Read all about it! God’s Son has come and He died for you and for all, so that we might have eternal life.”

➔ “You can’t beat this gift!” So, share the “Ah Hah!” Amen.