

Bible Study for Sunday, Sunday Jan 13

Our texts for this Sunday are:

- Isaiah 43:1-7
- Luke 3:15-17 & 21-22

Opening Question:

How do/would you answer the question, “Who are you?” And why would you give that answer?

Read: Isaiah 43:1-7

What is odd in this passage? What do you like/dislike?

In this passage, God never promises that the people will be protected from harm. In fact, God seems to guarantee that His people will face difficulties!

What clues (specifically in verse 2) seem to indicate that God’s people will certainly face challenges?

Does God guarantee that God’s people will come through the adversities untouched? Does he even promise that they will survive?

What things are promised? Even though illnesses and tragedies can take away our health, our possessions, and our loved ones, what can they not destroy?

This prophecy was written to God’s people in a different time and place, but might it still speak to God’s people today in the midst of our world’s tragic events?

Read Luke 3:15-17 & 21-22

John the Baptist is quick to clarify his identity. The people had misidentified him as the Messiah, the longed-for king and Son of God who would transform their lives and their world. No, says John, I only have water – a mere symbol for cleansing – while the Messiah who is to come will be manifest by Spirit and fire.

The scene in verses 21-22 at the Jordan River is the first manifestation of the three-in-one persons of the Godhead: God the Father’s voice spoke from heaven, God the Son was baptized, and God the Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove. It is here that we see (publically) Jesus’ true identity revealed as God’s claimed and beloved Son.

When God says of Jesus, “You are my Son, the beloved....” What does this say to you about who Jesus is? What difference does that make?

When we are baptized, God names us as “beloved” and claims us as God’s very own. What does this say about our true identity, who we *really* are? What difference does this make?

Look over the promises that are made during the Affirmation of Baptism (listed below the Scripture here). How can/does/should following Jesus shape your own life?

Some refer to the Christian life as “walking wet”? To what do you think that “wet” refers? What do you think the expression means?

Many of us think of ourselves as able, autonomous persons capable of making sound, independent decisions. Yet biblically we are a people totally claimed by God. To what degree does that conflict affect your spiritual life and your behavior in society? How do you deal with the conflict?

What impact do you think some of the following have on how we understand our identity: race, gender/orientation, friends/social groups, extracurricular activities/sports, careers/professions?

Do the “labels” we wear or the ones others put on us truly define who we are? Why/why not?

Isaiah 43:1-7

43 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.

²When 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.

³For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.
I give Egypt as your ransom,
Ethiopia^[a] and Seba in exchange for you.

⁴Because 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.

⁵ Do not fear, for I am with you;
I will bring your offspring from the east,
and from the west I will gather you;
⁶ 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—
⁷ everyone who is called by my name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made."

Luke 3:15-17 & 21-22

¹⁵ As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah,^[a] ¹⁶ 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^[b] the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ 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."

²¹ Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²² 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;^[a] with you I am well pleased."[[]

Affirmation of Baptism:

You have made public profession of your faith.

Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in Holy Baptism:

- to live among God's faithful people,
- to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper,
- to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,
- to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,
- and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?