

My most recent epiphany is how upbeat Epiphany is. The readings for this week are uplifting and here they are. “To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.” Karl Barth

For comments and discussion, please contact me at the e-mail address below.

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FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

The Baptism of our Lord

Year A

Isaiah 42:1-9

We are still in second Isaiah. The anonymous author is trying to pump up the Jews in Babylon that their history has not ended and a great future lies before them. This is called the “First Servant Song”. So who is this servant? Cyrus who will liberate them, a new hero who will rise up from their ranks or the people of Israel themselves?

Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
He will not grow faint or be crushed
until he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.
 Thus says God, the LORD,
who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people upon it

and spirit to those who walk in it:
I am the LORD, I have called you in
righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations,
to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.
I am the LORD, that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to idols.
See, the former things have come to pass,
and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth,
I tell you of them.

1. What is the job or mission of the servant? _____
2. What do you think the reference to a bruised reed and dimly burning wick are all about?

3. What do you think “opening the eyes of the blind and freeing the prisoners is all about?”

4. So, who is the servant? (Hint: “I have taken you by the hand and kept you.”) _____

Psalm 29

A Psalm of David called a "Hymn to the God of the Storm"

Picture yourself with David standing at the mouth of a cave in the Judean hills watching a thunder storm.

The wind bowing trees over and driving the rain horizontally, the rolling growl of thunder interspersed with the sharp crack of a nearby lightning strikes one of which splits a tree and David almost beside himself with delight and awe.

1. Ascribe to the LORD, you gods, *
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
2. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his Name; *
worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.
3. The voice of the LORD is upon the waters;
the God of glory thunders; *
the LORD is upon the mighty waters.
4. The voice of the LORD is a powerful voice; *
the voice of the LORD is a voice of splendor.
5. The voice of the LORD breaks the cedar trees;
*
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon;
6. He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, *
and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.
7. The voice of the LORD splits the flames of fire;
the voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; *
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
8. The voice of the LORD makes the oak trees
writhe *
and strips the forests bare.
9. And in the temple of the LORD *
all are crying, "Glory!"
10. The LORD sits enthroned above the flood; *
the LORD sits enthroned as King for evermore.
11. The LORD shall give strength to his people; *
the LORD shall give his people the blessing of
peace.

Note: The wilderness of Kadish is the furthest the tribes of Israel got from Canaan Land when they were wandering in the wilderness.

Mt Hermon is a 9000+ foot high mountain in the north. It has a ski resort on the top.

Acts 10:34-43

Peter has had a troubling vision on the roof of Simon the Tanner's house in Joppa (See vs. 9-19) and is then summoned to the house of the Centurion Cornelius. Cornelius' story indicates to Peter that Jesus did not just die for the "chosen people" but for all humanity.

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ--he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

1. What does God show? _____

2. And who is acceptable? _____

Matthew 3:13-17

John may have belonged to a strict community called the Essenes. Jesus may have even followed John there. Here Jesus recognizing John as being older and a prophet in his own right, submits to John's baptism.

Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

1. So did a bird land on Jesus shoulder? _____

a. What does scripture say? _____

2. Did something profoundly moving happen? _____

a. So moving, perhaps troubling, that Jesus had to go away for "40 days" to figure it all out.