

And peace be to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. You may be seated. So today again, we have another reading from Isaiah. Last week we had the reading that we could see connected with Jesus baptism where it says, "My servant in whom I am pleased and the spirit rests upon him." So in this section of Isaiah, we have this description of what's going to happen in the baptism. And here we have this description of the Lord coming from the womb having been called by name in his mother's womb and his mouth is like a sharp sword. The shadow of his hand hit him. So here we have again, a prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, the servant of God. In fact, this section of Isaiah is the suffering servant. And from this place on all the way through into the 50s and 60s of Isaiah, we hear about who Christ is and what he has done. This is where we get the phrase by his stripes. We are healed and a lot of different descriptions of who Jesus is and what he's going to do. Isaiah is often called the fifth gospel because there is so much of Jesus Christ in Isaiah, prophecy of Jesus Christ, you can't help but connect him and connect his words to what's going on in the life of Christ.

So here, last week we talked about the baptism of Christ. And we talked before about when the coming of the wise men where Jesus went down into Egypt so that he would fulfill the prophecy out of Egypt, I've called my son. But why is he doing all of this? As we said before, Jesus is literally and spiritually walking over the footsteps of Israel, erasing their failures to live up to the promise of being a light to the nations. See, we learned from here that God thinks it's too small of a thing just to redeem Judah in Israel. He's going to make his servant redeem all of the world. It's too small of a thing just to focus upon the Israelites. And it always has been. God never intended the Israelites to be an insular people that only looked to themselves and only thought of God's promises for them. They were always meant to be a witness to the world of how glorious their God is and how much he loves them and how much he does for them so that they might draw people to his word. And we see that happening. It happens occasionally in the Old Testament. In fact, when we look at Jesus' genealogy, we can see specific names of individuals that are brought into, grafted into the family.

They got Rahab who saved the spies as they were entering into Jericho, the prostitute, non-Jewish obviously, and brought into the family that way, grafted in. You've got Ruth who is a moabite who's grafted in. You've got Bathsheba who did not exactly come into the family the best way, but still was grafted into the family of God. You've got all these women who were not Jews to begin with, but were brought in, grafted into the family. And it was always meant to be that way. And now the servant of God, the suffering servant of God is going to do what Israel failed to do, draw people to the one true God. And so he walks literally and spiritually over the footsteps, erasing their failure in Egypt, erasing their failure in

the wanderings of the wilderness, erasing their failures in witnessing in the promised land. And then we learned last week about his baptism where he walks into the Jordan River and he walks in our place, erasing our sin, in essence, taking the waters of the Jordan and connecting them to the waters of our own baptism, where we are washed, where our sinful nature is drowned, and then that sinful nature is picked up by Christ through the waters of the Jordan and placed upon himself so that he carries the burden of sin of all of us upon the cross.

He walks over our failures with his perfect life and obedience. And here in Isaiah, we hear even more, it did not begin with his stepping into the Jordan River, but it began at his very conception where he rests in the place that we rested to begin our life in the womb of his mother, sanctifying all wombs and sanctifying life. This is why we are so strongly pro-life, or at least a part of it, is that God created us and our life begins at conception just like the son of man, God himself. His life, his human life began at his conception. And the womb of Mary carried the holiness of God, replacing the sin of all of humanity that we have inherited from Adam and Eve, the original sin. He goes to the place where it all starts and he walks over it and replaces it with his righteousness and his holiness that we receive in our baptisms as a gift.

And so here we hear again about the servant who is walking in our place. He was hidden in the time of Isaiah, but he is revealed today to us. So we hear a lot about Jesus and about God, but it's also about the Holy Spirit. This epiphany season is about discovering who God is and how he works his salvation for us. And we know what the Father is there for. His will is being done through his son, Jesus Christ. And we know that the Holy Spirit works behind the scenes, but we don't hear about him a lot. In fact, when Paul is greeting the Corinthians, he spends the first two verses introducing himself. And then in the third verse, he says, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." But where's the Spirit? Where is the Spirit in all of this? Why does he not greet us in the name of the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is there and active, but he's not emphasized. The Holy Spirit's job is always to work in the background. And so we see the Holy Spirit in us and in the people of Corinth because the name of Christ has been placed upon them and because the name is placed upon them, they are filled and enriched with all speech and all knowledge. Their testimony about Christ is confirmed. They are not lacking any spiritual gift.

See, that's the work of the Holy Spirit to give us knowledge and wisdom about the Father and the Son through the scriptures. See, the word goes forth as the Son of God and as the word written down in our scriptures, but that word is always connected with the Holy Spirit or rather the Holy Spirit is always connected with the word and the word goes forth and the Holy Spirit then works underneath and

around and through and in that word, in and through and around us. So that when we talk about the Holy Spirit, what we're really talking about is our life in Christ, in the world. That we are called to be motivated and moved by the blessings of God to proclaim his glory. As Andrew did, when he heard about the word.

Here's John the Baptist right after. John doesn't really talk a whole lot about the baptism. We learned about that in Matthew last week. John just says he was baptized, but now we hear what happens after his baptism. And the gospel of the writer of John says about John the Baptist ... Just get that clear. John, the baptist declares behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He points to Christ. He says he didn't know who this was. He didn't fully understand who Jesus was, which seems a little odd since he was a cousin of Jesus and Jesus was there at his birth and he left in his mother's womb when Jesus appeared in Mary, in her womb. Again, another reason why we think life is holy and precious from the very beginning of conception. John in the womb recognized Christ in the womb. So then we have life sanctified from the very beginning. But you would think that John would know what's going on, but he still struggles with it. He's still an Old Testament prophet. He doesn't have the full picture. He finally gets it and understands it when the Holy Spirit comes because he'd been told when the spirit comes and rests upon that person, that is the one who is the lamb of God. That is the one who is Messiah.

Even John, the Baptist needed the Holy Spirit to clarify and make clear what was going on and who Christ really and truly was. And then he could point to him and declare this is the lamb of God. And then his disciples went after Jesus. And what did they do when they heard? They went to Jesus and they're curious about what's going on and Jesus says, come and invites them. And in inviting them, he gives them his spirit. And what's the first thing they do? They go and tell somebody else. Andrew goes to his brother Peter and declares, "We have found the Messiah, the Christ." And so that tells us what it is that we are called to do. What happens when we hear the word of God and are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

We also are called to bear witness to be the action of the Holy Spirit in the world. We greet each other in the name of Jesus Christ and we thank God for the love of the Father that is given to us through Christ, but we are moved and motivated and strengthened and nourished by the Holy Spirit. But not just so that we might be satisfied in ourselves. Well, I'm saved, so at least that's over. No. We are called to bear witness to the love of God because our testimony has been confirmed by the Spirit. We are filled with all speech and knowledge. We're to use our tongue and our brains and our minds and our spirits and our feet and our hands to serve God by serving our neighbor. That is where the Holy Spirit shows up. That is where he is at work. We see the Holy Spirit when we see each other, when we serve each

other and when we share the love of God with those around us, because as Isaiah said, it's too small of a thing for God simply to focus upon Israel. His chosen. It's too small of a thing for God to focus upon faith Lutheran and only faith Lutheran. He calls us to go forth and to proclaim the message of God.

But our testimony is not like others. We don't testify about, look, follow God because look how good my life is. And I follow God and you too can have a good life if you follow God and you can be like me. That's not our witness. Our witness is not about us. Our witness begins with, "I, a poor miserable sinner." We make it clear we have fallen short. Just like the Israelites did, we have sinned in thought, word indeed. We have failed to live up to the promises of God, but our witnesses this, I have failed as you have, but I know the Messiah has come. Look, there he is. He has forgiven me. He has washed me and cleansed me and he wants to do the same for you because it's too little of a thing to simply focus upon his people and only his people.

He wants to focus on, and wants us to focus on all nations and all people so that every thought and every word that comes out of our mouth should be informed by God's word and the power of the spirit so that we might share the love of God and show we have found the Messiah, the savior of our sins, the forgiveness and life everlasting that is a gift given to us, that we received in the waters of our baptism and you too can receive. And we can trust that God will bless this and we don't need to be afraid because he promises he will sustain us to the very end. Again, that's the working of the spirit that no matter what chaos is around, no matter what struggles we face on a day-to-day basis, we know that he will sustain us to the end, whether that's the end of our individual life or the end of all things when he comes again, it doesn't really matter. He's going to sustain us. He's going to keep us guiltless to the day of our Lord Jesus Christ because God is faithful and we were called by him. So let us be faithful to him. Let us serve him, not because we need to prove our worth, but because he has proved his worth to us and he has given us all things.

Don't be afraid. Rejoice in the Lord always. Trust that the one upon whom the dove descended will baptize with the Holy Spirit and he has baptized us and we are filled with the Holy Spirit confirmed in our testimony because it's not our testimony, it's his. That is what we are called. All life is sacred from the womb to the tomb. We remember those who are not yet born and we pray that the God would protect them. We do that in our prayers every week, but we also ought to be praying for the souls that are out there, that are grown, but don't know the peace of God. So let us be the working of the Holy Spirit in this world because of how much he has done for us. Because it was not too small of a thing to save you or to save me. It's not too small of a thing to save them either. If they mock us, if they

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laugh at us, if they don't want to listen to us, do not be afraid. He will sustain you to the very end. May his grace and his mercy and his peace be and abide with you always. Now and forevermore under life everlasting, amen.