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## Baptism of Our Lord • Isaiah 42:1–7 • January 12, 2014

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Manteufel: Baptism of Our Lord • Isaiah 42:1–7

It can be exciting to meet a famous personality. In this Scripture text, God, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, introduces someone whom he wants his people to meet. Behold! Look! He calls out in the original Hebrew. See the one portrayed here! Isaiah's hearers could only see him afar off through prophecy. But there would be people of a later time who could rejoice in knowing him intimately. Do you count yourself among them?

### **Suggested outline**

#### **Look Who Has Come!**

I. Here is the Servant of God, in whom he delights (v. 1).

This is the great envoy and official minister of God, approved and upheld by God in all the work he is sent to do. Isaiah says that this Servant will bear the iniquities of sinners and justify them (Is 53:5, 6, 11). He will bring and establish justice (*mishpat*, vv. 1, 4), the total redemptive order of God's rule. "He shall make the right and good and holy will of God everywhere prevail, so that all nations find their sure ground of confidence in Him."<sup>1</sup> He will bring reconciliation with God, renewal, and deliverance from the moral, physical, and social evils of a fallen world (v. 7; Is 61:1; 35:7)—at first in part and in hope, and then with total victory in the grand consummation. Matthew 12:15–21 quotes the words of Isaiah 42 and declares that they are fulfilled in the messianic work of Jesus.

God is heartily delighted (v. 1) with him who does this, for the Maker of heaven and earth (v. 5) longs and plans for the restoration of the ruined world and its inhabitants. He wants sinners to be saved, receive his mercies, and glorify him forever (Ez 18:23;

Jn 3:1; Ps 113:1–2; 50:15). Therefore, when Jesus began to perform the Servant's work, the Father's voice was heard from heaven: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

"I will put my Spirit upon him," to work with him in the actions of his mission as the Servant. This has happened in the work of Jesus the Messiah (Lk 3:22; Mt 1:28; Heb 9:14; Mt 3:11; Jn 16:7–15; 1 Cor 12:3).

II. He is sent to bless and restore those who have faith in him (v. 3).

God the Father says, "Behold my Servant!" and wants people to know him as Redeemer. He sends his Servant and his Spirit to continually create and build up such faith. The bruised reed and smoldering wick of weak and feeble faith are strengthened and made firmer. Christ will not crush or condemn or abandon one who looks to him for help. A contrite heart will always find a forgiving, helping Savior. The Servant worked lovingly and knowingly with weak faith (Mt 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; Lk 18:1ff.). Walter A. Maier told of a young man who had lost his faith and had spent Christmas Eve gambling, drinking, and carousing, ending by feeling ashamed of himself. He was awakened in the morning by carolers outside his window singing of the newborn Redeemer's forgiving, rebuilding love. He was filled with repentance and eventually became a notable Christian businessman. Maier urged his listeners to take the message of the Christmas carols to heart and say: "Those songs sing Christ's love for me!"

III. He is appointed to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles (v. 6).

The covenant which Christ confirms and mediates is the new covenant (Jer 31:33–34), which has been made the basis of life with God in Christ's church, the new Israel (Heb 8:8–12). It promises that God will be our God, that all his people will truly know him, and that he will forgive our sins and write his law on our hearts. By the baptism which Christ instituted, we enter into and live in the covenant of Christ, as the Collect for the Day says. Through the baptismal covenant, we are united with Christ and receive his blessings (Rom 6:1–6; Ti 3:4–7). In that covenant we are redemptively conformed to him: As the Father delights in him (v. 1), so he delights in us and accepts us for his sake (Ti 3:4–7; Eph 1:6–7). As he is the chosen one (v. 1), so through baptismal faith we recognize that we are elected in him (Eph 1:3–4). As the Spirit is upon him and works with him (v. 1), so the Spirit is given to us for our life in Christ (Acts 2:38).

The Servant is appointed to be a light for the nations (v. 6), and for centuries people have found light and grace in him for the darkness of their sin and misery. Illustration: A man who had been a professed atheist all his life was found dead in his room. But clenched in his hand was a note with words which showed that at the end of life he had met the Servant and come into his light:

I've tried in vain a thousand ways  
My fears to quell, my hopes to raise;  
But what I need, the Bible says,  
Is ever, only Jesus.

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My soul is night, my heart is steel—  
I cannot see, I cannot feel;  
For light, for life, I must appeal  
In simple faith to Jesus.

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**Endnote**

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