

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Sunday, January 8th, 2023, The Baptism of the Lord
Isaiah 42:1-9 Psalm 29 Acts 10:34-43 Matthew 3:13-17

I have called you in righteousness, from Isaiah today, as part of the readings for today with the gospel passage of Jesus' baptism. We often interpret passages like this in Isaiah as referring to Jesus, but that's not the only understanding. one of the other understandings is the servant is the people of Israel.

That makes sense to me, because I said from last week, the gifts of the magi for epiphany are given to us as well, and in previous sermons, said that we are also called beloved by God in our own baptism.

Isaiah continues after *I have called you in righteousness* to, *I have taken you by the hand and kept you. I have given you as a covenant* giving you a covenant a promise. The promise a light to the nations. This promise we are to live out the promise to the blind and prisoners.

The phrase, *to bring out.....from the prison those who sit in darkness*.

This good news, like all God's blessings are to be shared. So, we are to receive and also be instruments of the promise, a light to the nations, the covenant.

There are all kinds of prisons. Bo Lozoff has written a book called; we're All Doing Time. The implication seems to be, we may not be behind bars, but maybe in prisons of our own making, or in psychological or emotional prisons.

The imagery of darkness, of sitting in darkness may be appropriate. Maybe that's what confession is all about. That what we don't like about ourselves we hide for the whole world as much as possible, so confessing it out loud brings it from darkness to light. God honours our desire to keep things we hate about ourselves hidden and will not help us deal with them unless we bring them to light, and then God can help us address them and we can be helped and help others.

But it just may be that the light doesn't change the situation just our understanding of it. This reminds me of a Star Trek the Next Generation episode. It begins with an electrical surge on the Enterprise with adversely affects Captain Picard's electronic heart he had as a transplant years ago. Q the eternal being who can grant wishes appears to Picard and asks about his heart and why the transplant, and Picard tells the story.

When he was at the Academy, he and his buddies were out one evening and during a game of something like pool, one of his buddies accuses his opponent, an alien being, of cheating, and starts a fight. Picard jumps in to help his buddy and is knifed in the back and damages his heart, which is replaced.

Q gives Picard the opportunity to return to that place and time and change the outcome. Picard returns and does not fight. The next scene is the present-day bridge of the Enterprise. Picard enters the bridge but is not wearing the red of captain or senior officer, but yellow. He is the ship's librarian. Not risking and taking chances meant saving his heart, but not being able to lead. Yes, Q gives Picard the chance to change everything back which he does, and Picard's last line goes something like this..... My life is like a ball of twine, and I see loose string hanging down and when I go to remove them, the whole ball of twine falls apart.

This is very Jungian psychology. But there is a shadow side, not every strength and talent we have is also a weakness a downside. The light in the darkness helps us to understand ourselves and each other without necessarily the need for change.

But it is not just about us, ourselves alone, but our relationship with family and community. In other words, just as I've said that Jesus isn't the only one being told that he is beloved, none of us are the only ones beloved.

All of us are beloved, even those we don't think are deserving. God loves us unconditionally, even though it's difficult to fully believe, and we are called to recognize others are loved unconditionally. And we are to strive to live that out in our relationships with others by our thoughts, words, and yes actions.

Amen

The Lord bless you and watch over you,
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you,
the Lord look kindly on you
and give you peace;
and the blessing ...