

Sermon Notes – January 8, 2023
The Holy Gospel of St. Matthew 3: 13-17
Peace Lutheran Church
“Jesus Becomes a Servant of God”

Jesus stood in the Jordan, dripping wet, the dove alighting on Him. And there is no indication that the nations were trembling. But that did not mean nothing had changed. Though we usually imagine God speaking in a booming voice, a Charlton Heston voice, resonant and deep, that voice is more often heard in movies than in scripture. God’s voice can be a sweet whisper, a gentle breath, as quiet as the still small voice that reached Elijah hiding in his cave so long ago.

At the Jordan, the voice that came from heaven proclaimed, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3: 17). The term *beloved* is usually reserved for those who are especially dear and loved - like your spouse or child. In this simple phrase, God’s heart is laid bare. Jesus is God’s precious one. Anyone who loves so deeply is vulnerable to great pain and loss. As we know, God still offers this Treasured One on our behalf. The cost of Jesus’ advent and the events that are about to unfold is well known. The death of God’s Beloved will surely strike deep into the heart of the divine. Nonetheless, God proclaims that Jesus’ life - which challenges anything that opposes the Father’s love, even at the cost of life itself - is a life well pleasing to Him.

In Holy Baptism, you were given a new name. You were and forever are God’s beloved. In a world where you are called many things that tear you down rather than build you up, our Father comes into the waters of your baptism, speaking your name, and says, “You are my child, I am well pleased with you.” As it was for Jesus, this doesn’t mean that you won’t wander in your own wilderness, face temptations, and receive ridicule for bringing justice, peace, and love!

What this does mean is that the God, who created the heavens and spread out the earth, the God who gives each of us breath, the

God who frees us from the dungeons and prisons we and the world place us in, is with us! Even when we grow weary or faint, Our Father is there. Even when the waters of our baptism seem dry, God is there. Even when the world around us seems hopeless, God is there

Whenever Martin Luther found himself ready to give up, whenever worry for his own life and the life of the church he loved overwhelmed him, it is said that he would touch his forehead and say to himself: "Remember Martin, you have been baptized." Here on the other side of Christmas, from the holiday to the everyday, the world we continue to hope for and the one we live in: touch your forehead and remember that you too have been baptized. You are God's beloved, no matter what. Amen.