

Bible Study for Sunday, Jan 12, 2025

Our texts for this Sunday are:

- Luke 3:15-17 & 21-22
- Isaiah 43:1-7

Opening Question: What does baptism mean to you?

Read Luke 3:15-17 & 21-22 ¹⁵As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." ²¹Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²²and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

What questions do you have for this passage?

Here are the words that the pastor says at the beginning of a Baptism here at Shepherd: *It is through Baptism that we become adopted into the family of God and become members of the Christian church. Our Lord Jesus commanded His followers to, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Through this sacrament God gives us the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the power of the devil, and the promise of eternal life. Jesus said, "Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved." In the waters of baptism we are drowned to sin and raised to a new life as we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the waters and the words of baptism we have a sign that we belong to Christ and have become a part of the Church.*

Do you have any questions about these words and what they actually represent?

How might John's *baptism of repentance* differ from being baptized "*in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit?*" (other words said at a baptism). What action is John asking for in his kind of baptism? What is God asking for in God's baptism?

I wonder if in John's baptism change is being asked for (repentance), and in God's baptism claiming happens without any action needed from us. Thoughts on that? Why might this be important?

When we are baptized, God names us as "beloved" and claims us as God's very own. What does this say about our true identity, who we *really* are? What difference does this make? Who is Baptism for?

So...knowing that we are claimed in our Baptism and called beloved (even outside of our Baptism), how does vs 17 sit with you? What might it mean for you and how you live your life as a claimed Christ follower?

What might it mean to be baptized with FIRE? The Greek actually says in verse 16 "*he will baptize you in a holy spirit/wind/breath and fire.*" The word for fire is *puri*. We get our word purify from it. What do you think that would look like? Is that something that you would willingly sign up for?

What does separating the wheat from chaff mean? Sister Tashina talked about this recently in a sermon. When winnowing grain, farmers wanted to remove all chaff (outside shell) from wheat. In the literal meaning, *chaff* is the husk around a seed, which one does not eat and is useless to the farmer. In order to eat/use the wheat, one must remove the chaff. How might Jesus remove/burn the chaff in our lives? Why might that need to happen?

Read: Isaiah 43:1-7 But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.³ For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.⁴ Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.⁵ Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; ⁶ I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth—⁷ everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

What is odd in this passage? What do you like/dislike?

In this passage, God never promises that the people will be protected from harm. In fact, God seems to guarantee that His people will face difficulties! What clues (specifically in verse 2) seem to indicate that God's people will certainly face challenges?

Does God guarantee that God's people will come through the adversities untouched? Does He even promise that they will survive? Could that be what "chaff burning" is like?

What things are promised? Even though illnesses and tragedies can take away our health, our possessions, and our loved ones, what can they not destroy?

This prophecy was written to God's people in a different time and place, but might it still speak to God's people today in the midst of our world's tragic events? Where is the hope in this passage?