

Growth Group Questions

First Sunday after Epiphany, January 14, 2024

Introduction

This weekend's Gospel lesson is Mark's "short" account of Jesus' baptism. As we think of his we naturally think of our own. Go around the room to share your baptism stories – when, where, who, etc.

Into the Word – Isaiah 49:1-6

1. In the Epiphany season, we see God "reveal" Jesus to the world more and more as we walk with him. Our Epiphany theme this year, *From Jordan's Shores to Mountain's Glory*, reflects our annual walk with Jesus in his life, but God started revealing him long before that. These verses from Isaiah picture what Jesus himself might say as he considers his work of salvation. Make the connection to Jesus in these phrases:
 - He made my mouth like a sharpened sword / a polished arrow
 - You are my servant...in whom I will display my splendor.
 - "I have labored in vain...for nothing at all."
 - "My reward is with my God."
 - "A light for the Gentiles ...to the ends of the earth."
2. Jesus calls himself a hidden sword and a concealed arrow. In what way was Jesus the "weapon of God" and how is it true that he was hidden from plain sight?
3. Twice in these verses the speaker mentions his time in the womb. What did God do for him at that time and why is that significant to debates about life and abortion?

Into the Word – Romans 6:1-11

4. Paul had been speaking about salvation by grace alone, apart from works. In verse one he answers a question sometimes leveled against Lutherans: "If you Lutherans believe you're saved by grace alone, why not just keep on sinning?" What is Paul's answer?
5. I consider these some of the most important in Scripture regarding baptism because they explain the "mechanism" of baptism, or *how* it is that God works in baptism. Walk through verses 3-5 to explain just how it is that God brings forgiveness through baptism.
6. In the sermon I call baptism the "wet word", noting it does nothing more or less than the bare Word of God. How do some make more of baptism than they should? How do some make less of it?
7. Paul's main point here is to speak to baptism's effect on the way we live our lives. In what sense has a part of us died and in what sense are we in faith alive for the first time?

Into the Word – Mark 1:4-11

8. Mark doesn't give us many details about Jesus' baptism. To fill out the details look at Matthew 3:13-17, Luke 3:21-23, & John 1:32-33.
9. For whose righteousness was it necessary for Jesus to be baptized?
10. What do the Father's words about Jesus at his baptism and his transfiguration (Matthew 17:5) reveal about him? Why is that so important to us?

Closing Prayer: Jesus, you have fulfilled all righteousness for us with your perfect life and paid for all sin with your innocent death. Fill my heart with praise for your love and mercy. Amen.