

Text: Acts 10:34-38. Baptism of our Lord. **January 12, 2014.**

Hear this good news: God's peace is yours through the One God anointed: Jesus! Amen.

How do you know when it's the one? Maybe it's something small like shopping for a winter jacket. This one's too bulky and you'll knock stuff over in the store. This one's not warm enough and then what's the point of a jacket, besides warmth? Then, at last, you find the one. Just the right color, just the right size, just the right price. What about something more serious. Say you are looking for a spouse. How do you know when he's the one? This is more serious, a longer term kind of choice. And you know from the beginning that no choice is going to be perfect? Do you look at the face and only consider the face? I'm thankful my wife didn't do that. Did you look for something deeper, like someone who fears God and does what is right? How did you know? What about the most important of all? How do we know Jesus is the one? How do we know? How do we know that Jesus is the Savior and we shouldn't expect someone else? How do we know that Jesus finished God's work and it's not up to us to finish up our share? God said so. I know that's a trite answer, but God himself boomed his own voice from heaven. "This is my Son with whom I am well pleased." God ripped open a hole in heaven so the Holy Spirit could come down and anoint Jesus for his work: to preach good news, to bring us peace, to be our Substitute and save us from every sin. God anointed Jesus. That's how we know Jesus is the One. Jesus is the One!

Peter was a close follower of Jesus. This account takes place after Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven. Peter was the main preacher of God's good news at this time. Notice how preaching is good news. Peter begins this sermon with a radically profound thought. God does not show favoritism. Literally, God does not pay attention to the face. God doesn't care what you look like. God doesn't care if you are rich in money or have nothing. God doesn't care what nation you come from. God doesn't care what gender you are. God does not show favoritism.

And how different that is from us! We do pay attention to the face. Was that really about all you considered when choosing a spouse, all you are considering? We also get jealous when we consider the face. I saw a survey of 6th graders that asked, "Would you rather be smart or pretty?" Everyone answered, "Smart, because if I were pretty, I would be stuck up." What? Where did that come from? Why are pretty and stuck up automatically connected? Are we so jealous of those blessed with good looks that we have to put them down for some imagined snobbery? What about spiritual favoritism? Of course God loves me. I came to church on a cold January day, after the Christmas and Easter people have stopped coming. I'm better than they are. God does not show favoritism, but our sinful minds think he should.

God anointed Jesus not to show favoritism, but to announce good news. Good news. Good news. Good news. The Lord has put away your sin. Even when you show favoritism, God does not. Jesus announces good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you, he is the Messiah, the anointed One, the Lord. That's good news.

Then the angels sang together. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace. The peace signs are coming down from the streetlights. Peace on earth has fallen back to wars and rumors of wars. But Jesus announces good news of peace. Lasting peace. Eternal peace. Everything's going to be ok between you and God. In fact, everything is ok between you and God, right now! That's peace! That's peace for all, without favoritism.

Jesus is Lord of all. Lord of all. That was a simple, yet very significant confession at that time. The Roman rulers required their loyal subjects to say, "Caesar is Lord." Those three words made you a loyal subject and good citizen and probably eligible for certain rights and privileges. To say, "Jesus is Lord," was not just a religious confession, not just one among many. It was treason. It put you in face to face opposition with the ruling government. Saying,

“Jesus is Lord,” was literally sticking your neck out for Jesus. But he’s the One. Jesus is worth sticking your neck out for. Jesus is worth being called a traitor. It’s better to be called a traitor to men than be a traitor to God.

Jesus is the One. God anointed him. We don’t say anointed real often. Well, actually we do. Every time we say, “Christ,” we are saying, “anointed one,” in Greek. Didn’t realize you knew a little Greek, did you? Christ means anointed one. Messiah is the Hebrew word that means anointed one. Anointed means set apart, given authority, chosen for a special task. Now, Jesus’ task was so special his was not merely anointed with oil as kings and priests and prophets in the Old Testament were. No! Jesus’ task was so special he was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. Let me remind you, “God ripped open heaven to send the Holy Spirit down on Jesus at his baptism.” God loudly and proudly declared, “This is my Son! With him I am well pleased.” God was saying, “This man is more than a man. This is the One. This is the One I have chosen to take the place of all sinners, without exception, without favoritism. This is the One. Listen to him. Believe in him. Watch him. Follow him.”

Look at what he did. He went around doing good and healing all who were under the devil’s power. Now we could look at this in a very surface way. Jesus did good. He fed hungry people. He took little children in his arms. Jesus did good. I think everyone would agree. He healed those who were demon possessed, under the devil’s power. But there’s more. God anointed Jesus to do the ultimate good: die on the cross and take away our sins. Jesus did good every day of his life by living perfectly and every day counting that perfection as your very own. That’s a lot better than feeding a body. And he did more than physically heal those who were under the devil’s power. He healed those who spiritually were under the devil’s power. That’s me. That’s you. We were all under the devil’s power at birth. I didn’t want to follow Jesus. I was a rotten, foul sinner. Ask my mother. No, don’t ask her. She has terribly true stories about the sinner standing before you. You were in the same boat. But God baptized you. Jesus rescued you from the devil’s power. God ripped open heaven and poured his Spirit on you. God anointed you with power to leave those sins behind.

It’s only through the lens of baptism that we are acceptable to God. I pray you didn’t misunderstand Peter’s words when he said, “God accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.” Peter is not saying, “Do God and God will accept you.” Just the opposite. Peter is saying, “You can’t do good without Jesus. You can’t fear God properly unless Jesus puts that fear in your heart.” And don’t see fear as only a trembling in your shorts at the anger of God. Fear is the Bible’s way to also include a faithful reverence, a healthy respect, a joyful thanks that Jesus washed away my sins. So when you hear fear, think, “Faith.” God accepts those who have faith in him and do what he declares to be right.

You see, that’s what God anointed you to be and to do. Just as God anointed Jesus to announce good news of peace, to do good and heal those under the power of the devil, so God anointed you at baptism to announce good news of peace, to do good and to heal those under the power of the devil. Maybe you have a neighbor who drinks too much. You can look down on him, play favorites, or you can announce good news that will cause great joy. That good news can change his heart just like it changed yours. God doesn’t show favoritism. God can bring him to fear God and do what is right, just as God did for you. Maybe there’s someone at work you avoid talking to, because it’s always gossip all the time. Maybe you can be the one to whisper, “I’ve got the juiciest news ever. Let me tell you. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord.” The one anointed, anointed to announce good news, anointed to bring peace, anointed to do good, anointed to heal those under the power of the devil. Boy, it’s hard to tell if we are talking about the Christ or about the Christian. That’s because God anointed the Christ so there would be no difference between the Christ and the Christian. Jesus is the one God anointed to rescue the world. You are the one God anointed, not to rescue the world, but to announce good news of rescue, of peace, of great joy. Amen.