

Grace and peace are yours through our Lord Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Henry Kissinger was secretary of state for our country about 50 years ago. The story is told that he was very demanding. When an aide would bring in a report, he would glance at it and say, "That's not good enough!" The aide would sigh and roll his eyes and go back and work some more. Then bring the report back. Another quick glance. "That's not good enough!" Kissinger would say. The aide would throw up his hands, get back to work, and submit the report again. And by the third time, the aide would say, "This is all there is to know on the subject. This has to be good enough." Then Kissinger would say, "Good. Now that I have your best and most comprehensive work, I'll take a look."

"That's not good enough." Those words can haunt us. From the boss, from the teacher, mom and dad. John the Baptizer didn't feel good enough to baptize Jesus. And maybe that's where our focus on the Baptism of our Lord needs to change. Instead of jumping directly to ourselves and saying, "I'm not good enough," we need to look at our Lord and say, "He was good enough. He was perfect." It's the baptism of our Lord today. It's the baptism of the one who was good enough. Our Lord Jesus didn't need baptism for himself, but he humbly was baptized to take our place, so that the one who was good enough takes the place of us who were not good enough. I will never be good enough. But my Lord was good enough.

I know the verses in front of us don't use the word baptism, or specifically the name, "Jesus." But these words are pointing to Jesus all over the place. God wants us to listen. And not just listen a little. That's not good enough! He wants us to pay attention! Give full attention! This is super important. Doesn't matter if you are far away, on a coast, this message is for everyone!

The LORD called me from the womb. When I was inside my mother, he mentioned my name. Do you see why the LORD wants us to give full attention? This is talking about our Lord Jesus and at the same time, talking about us. Before Jesus was in the womb of his mother Mary, the LORD had laid out his mission: to save the entire world from sin. While Jesus was in the womb, the LORD mentioned his name: Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. Immanuel, God with us. The Son of the Most High. Those are names to remember.

God did the same for you! Did he only mention your name after you were born? No! He wanted your name to be remembered, even before that, so he wrote your name on his hand, in his heart, in black and white in the book of life. God did this before you were born. Before you could earn God's love, he gave it to you. Before you could work for God's love, he made his love a free present. Even if no one else remembers you, God remembers you. He called your name in baptism. He mentioned your name in his book of eternal life.

We need to cling to that word, in that book of life. The mouth like a sharpened sword, that's referring to God's Word. God's Word is the sword that wounds and heals. God's Word is the weapon that beats back guilt in our hearts, the devil in our ears, the pressure of peers in our minds. The Bible doesn't seem like much. An old book full of places we haven't heard of and names we can't pronounce. But that's how God has always operated. He hid his glory in human flesh. That Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. John the baptizer couldn't figure out why Jesus wanted to be baptized by him. Jesus' followers couldn't figure out why Jesus didn't rain down thunder on his enemies. Jesus' enemies couldn't figure out why Jesus would stay on the cross, if he really was the Savior. But that's how God operates. He hides his glory.

He displays that glory in unusual places. A few drops of water on a baby's head. A small circle of bread. The words of a weird guy in a white gown, "I forgive you all your sins." Before that, a nation of Israel that was stiff-necked, rebellious, wanted to go back to slavery, despised the miracles God did for them and chased after gods made of wood and stone. And yet, in that nation, God revealed his glory. God revealed his glory by keeping alive the promise of the Savior, the Savior who showed God's glory so that people put their faith in him.

But there's more to this word glory. It can also mean, adorn, crown, even brag. God looks at you, his baptized child, and he brags like a proud father! Look at that one! She's mine! Isn't she perfect! Do you see that guy? I am as pleased with him as I am pleased with my perfect Son, Jesus, the Christ. In fact, I'll let him be called by the name of my perfect Son. He will be called a Christian. I know, sometimes praise from earthly fathers can be hard to come by. But glory, praise, bragging from our heavenly Father, comes easy for God.

Even when we don't feel that way. We can sure relate with the first half of verse four, can't we? Labored in vain. Spent my strength and came up empty, with nothing. Vain. Empty. Nothing. I've tried to talk to my friends about Jesus, but labor in vain. Tried to get my children to baptize our grandchildren. Came up empty. Make God happy? I've got nothing. I'm not good enough. Do you picture God as this heavenly Henry Kissinger, constantly saying, "That's not good enough. You are not good enough"? Say it brother! My gut, my guilt, I'm hearing that all the time. You are not good enough!

Yet, yet, an exclamation to emphasize the unexpected! Yet, in spite of my sin, yet, even when I come up empty, nothing. Yet! A just verdict for me rests with the LORD. Our Lord Jesus was good enough. He was perfect. God said it so clearly at our Lord's baptism, "With him I am well pleased!" And God said it just as clearly at your baptism, "With you I am well-pleased." How can this be? Jesus was good enough and he took your place. Jesus was perfect and that perfection stands on your account with God! Signed in blood from the cross, sealed with an empty tomb, delivered in that most wonderful water, to wash away sin, to say, "Guilt, be gone!" to cleanse our guts from that nagging sensation, "I'm not good enough!" Well you know what? God says, "You are good enough." Your reward is with me in heaven. Not a reward you earned, but a reward I give, fully, freely, forever.

Kind of cool to think about my reward. Usually a reward is what you work for. Catch and turn in the bad guy, get a reward. But this reward is given, without your work. This reward is your free present in baptism. And how about turning this around and looking from the LORD's perspective. What was his reward at your baptism? You! What did Jesus get by leaving heaven to come to earth? You! Why did Jesus go through the effort to live a perfect life, fulfill all righteousness? He wanted you! Can you picture Jesus on the Uncle Sam poster? He wanted you, not to suffer and fight and die for him. But he wanted you, so he could suffer and fight and die for you? Where was Jesus' focus on the cross? You! Who was Jesus doing that for? You! You are the reward. You are good enough! You are the reward Jesus wanted. You are good enough. You are the reward Jesus got. You are good enough!

Jesus started with a group of people. The nation of Israel, the people of Jacob. He gathered those people to him. He was honored by those people as he turned the Nile River to blood, brought frogs and flies and hail and boils, bringing down the false gods of other nations. God looked at that nation of Israel and loved them. God chose them to be the nation to keep alive his greatest promise: the promise of a Savior.

But God also looked and he said to our Lord Jesus, "That's not good enough. It is too small a thing that you should just be my servant to raise up only the tribes of Jacob." Too small. Just. Only. It's not good enough. The word for small, means insignificant. It's usually a negative word, demeaning. Like, "It's beneath you, Jesus my servant, to just be for one people, to only come for one nation. That's not good enough!

I want you to be a light for all the nations! A light for all the nations! Nations is a word that usually means heathen nations, nations and people who don't believe in the true God, the LORD. I appoint you a light for the nations, so that my salvation will be known to the end of the earth. God wants all people to be saved. God has always wanted all people to be saved. Some people? Not good enough! Some nations? Not good enough! Just the "good" people? Not good enough! All nations.

Salvation! The Hebrew word is, "Jeshua. Jeshua." Can you hear the name Jesus there? Jesus means salvation, because he will save his people from their sins. He has saved all people from their sins. It's totally good and right to connect this verse of the Bible with another, a verse spoken by Jeshua himself. "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." We sometimes call those words of Jesus, "The Great Commission," Jesus sending us to all the nations. We can call this verse, from Isaiah, "The Great Commission of the Old Testament." A light for all nations, salvation, Jesus, will be known to the ends of the earth.

How is that going to happen? Well, just as Jesus gave the great commission to all his followers, so in some sense, these verses in Isaiah are spoken to all God's servants. But man, the ends of the earth! How is that possible? One person at a time. One person at a time. There are about two billion Christians in the world and about 8 billion people in the world total. Just think, if each Christian brought salvation to just one person, and the Holy Spirit used the sharpened sword of his Word to work faith in that salvation, there would be four billion Christians in the world. And then if those four billion Christians each brought salvation to just one more person and the Spirit used the sharpened sword of his Word to work faith, then those four billion would be 8 billion. Each servant tells one. Each servant tells one again. That's all it would take. Let's not be content with 2 billion. That's not good enough. God wants his salvation to be known to the end of the earth. Let's not stop with 4 billion. That's not good enough. But you? You are good enough, to be his servant, to spread that salvation, one person at a time. Y