

SUNDAY January 11, 2026 "You are My Son"**Isaiah 42: 1-4, 6-7 Acts 10: 34-38 and Matthew 3:13-17**

With the beginning of the year, another season begins as well. The Award season has started- you know what I mean with the Golden Globes, the Grammys, the Academy- Oscars, Country Music, Tonys where each award show has nominations announced a couple of months in advance for people to see what those in the know thought of individual performances. This then leads to a huge gathering of celebrities seated in an auditorium or theatre to recognize those actors/actresses/ singers/ dancers or combination of the above in their different fields of entertainment- movies, television programs, singing, or live theatre. These award shows are broadcast on television by different networks in order to get high viewership because they know people want to know who is the best at what they do, what shows or movies they should see and of course to see what these celebrities are wearing to the shows!

These shows are choreographed musical productions and even eligible for awards themselves! They are filled with mostly scripted statements, music interludes and of course the moments of who is the best in a variety of categories. Often what is stated after the list of nominees is, and the winner goes to-- envelope opens and the name is read to much shock, surprise and loud applause. Cameras are focused on the recipient and they go on stage with an unscripted speech with much emotion and often laughter or tears.

Our story today is about Jesus who is now an adult and ready to begin fulfilling his life's purpose of teaching, preaching, healing and eventually all of this leading to his death and resurrection. But the first step is being recognized for who he is.

Our first reading from the prophet Isaiah 42, speaks about the servant, the chosen One, whom God will send and this servant will bring forth justice to the nations. It is God who created all things and God who has called the people to be filled with right living and to give breath to the people upon it. It is God who gives to the people a covenant promise in that there will be a light to the nations who will open the eyes of the blind, will bring out prisoners from jail and those living in darkness. It is God who will make all things new through the One who is to come. Isaah's prophecy starts to be fulfilled when John the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth begins his ministry of reaching out to others about this same One- the chosen servant of God.

It is John, who has been living in the wilderness as Isaiah prophesied, as the one who cried out, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." It is John who lives simply and yet welcomes crowds of people at the Jordan River where they were made new in baptism as they confessed their sins. It is he, John the Baptist who has also been preparing the people for

the 'one who is to come'. He has stated that yes he baptizes with water, but the one who is more powerful than he is will come. The One called Jesus, John state will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire and that he is not worthy to carry his sandals.

So what occurs? Jesus leaves Galilee to go and see John at the Jordan River. They know each other well as they are cousins through their mothers-- Elizabeth and Mary who were pregnant at the same time. Jesus wants to be baptized by John- but John says no- I need to be baptized by you! .Further discussion occurs but when Jesus answers, "Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness."

But why did Jesus need to be baptized? There are several reasons for this. One is that Jesus needed to be baptized to show his obedience and completing God's plan. Baptism would mark the beginning of a relationship between people and God and in order to show its importance to people, Jesus was baptized.

By being baptized Jesus stood with all those who did and have sinned- even though he was sinless according to 2 Cor. 5:21 "*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*" By doing this Jesus took their burdens upon himself.

John the Baptist then proceeds to baptize Jesus. This marked the official beginning of His public work, a public declaration of His identity as the Messiah. For what occurred as Jesus came up out of the water was significant. The heavens opened up, the Spirit of God descended like a dove with a light upon him. A voice from heaven spoke," This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." In this moment- God the Father/ Creator, Jesus the Son and the Spirit all unite as God- the Trinity- to share with all who were present that this indeed was the Messiah. Jesus is the one who will save the people as the prophets foretold and as John spoke about too.

Jesus' baptism is significant because the water of baptism becomes a means by which we see and experience the outward symbol of new life and cleansing for all people. Baptism is a sacred moment a sacrament which we hold as important in the development of our faith and the hope that we will live as Jesus teaches.

By his being baptized Jesus also began his ministry which of course would lead to his death for all people on the cross. But with this there is also hope renewed and restored because Jesus came to die and rise again with new life.

And this moment when Jesus rise from the water cannot be matched by any Award production when the winner is announced. There is often much hesitation, wardrobe adjustments, glasses being put on to read, tension in the room and then the name is shared.

But with Jesus' baptism, what takes place is profound and filled with awe. This is because Jesus is the Son of God. Yes we are all children- sons and daughters created in God's image; but Jesus born of Mary is The Son of God. By stating from the heavens as Mark tells this story Mark 1:11 and Luke does in Luke 3:22, "You are my Son, the Beloved" God is accepting this action of baptism and telling those present-- I am pleased with Jesus my Son who is your Messiah.

God loves Jesus and he tells everyone listening that Jesus is the one to listen to, to follow, to place their hopes and fears in.. This is Jesus! Jesus' baptism is significant it is important and we need to remember this story. His baptism is an act of humility. He consents to be counted as if he were a sinner, along with everyone else. This act looks to the time when He will die on the cross for the sins of the people of Israel and indeed for the sins of all those who are his.

As we begin 2026 it is an important day to remember our commitment to Christ Jesus and his church. John Wesley wrote the Covenant of faith which he asked for people to share or renew near the beginning of each calendar year. Written in 1747 Wesley believed that by sharing in the words of this covenant put each individual in a right position/ role/ relationship in the New Year with God, as each person offers themselves anew to do the tasks God has in store for each person- no matter how old one is. As we share in this covenant we must remember that it is just that a statement of faith shared with others of this church family but stated openly and freely to God-- yes we all share the words but it your words to God that makes it real. It is your faith that is renewed, it is you who renews your promise from your mouth to God's ears.

From this covenant we also understand that God knows you, and calls you to serve Him through the life and work of this church and through your commitment to one another as brothers and sisters who are faithful to Him. This means that even though there may be differences of opinions and ideas of what it means to live out one's faith, we are one with Christ and one with each other as we share in these words. We are called to give ourselves to God and to trust in His promises as we rely on his grace to guide us always.

As we begin this New Year we also do what Jesus asks us to do and remember him at the table- where the bread is broken and the cup is poured for each one of us. This too is a holy and sacred moment for we are God's children in faith and have hope that He will lead and guide us always. And we move forward in faith and into 2026 we need to remember that Jesus is the One true head of the church and He is Lord of all. We are equal before God and there should not be any hidden agendas, no power tripping or self- proclaimed leaders or bosses in charge. Each one of us has a place at Christ's table. For we are not the ones in the spotlight, receiving

an award. IT is Christ Jesus whom God said “You are my Son”. And we are to listen and follow him.

This is our purpose today- to remember the words of God to Jesus; and to renew our covenant with hope and faith for 2026. God will guide you just as the Spirit moves amongst us now. This is foundational to our faith, but we must believe and follow in faith as we seek to grow in Christian dignity. This is our hope as a church family in Christ. Thanks be to God.

PRAYER

Hear us O God as we prepare to share in this covenant of faith. SILENCE. Amen.