

Sermon Draft for January 11, 2026

Text: Isaiah 42:1–9

Sermon: “The Lord’s Servant”

The Baptism of Our Lord is the first Sunday of the season of Epiphany. We remember and celebrate the Word become flesh in Jesus Christ as he is manifested to the nations. The Baptism of Jesus takes center stage from the Gospel. Our Lord is baptized to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15), the Spirit of God descends like a dove, and the voice of the Father declares, “***This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased***” (3:17). Paul will also remind us of our baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:3–4).

But what does Epiphany in general and the Baptism of our Lord in particular have to do with our Old Testament Reading? It’s hard to keep a secret from you folks. There’s not much mystery. You come to church on this first Sunday of the Epiphany season, the third Sunday after Christmas, and you know we’re going to be talking about Jesus.

That's no secret, no mystery. A man comes down from Galilee to be baptized by John in the Jordan River, and you know the heavens are going to open up, something looking like a dove is going to appear, and a really big voice from above is going to say, "***This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.***" You know that's Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior, and it's the Holy Spirit and God the Father appearing and speaking. No secret, no mystery. Not to us.

But imagine you're just a regular guy in John's crowd. Or, even trickier, imagine you're a man or woman or child of Israel around 700 BC and you hear the prophet Isaiah say, "***Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights***" (v 1a). Who's that? Yeah, yeah, I know; you know. But it wasn't so obvious to them. They had to listen and think and consider. And then, what's this mystery man Isaiah's talking about going to do? I know you know. This servant is the same Son of God who was anointed by the Holy Spirit in the Jordan River. And this Spirit-Anointed Servant brings justice and light.

But let's just pretend we're back there in Isaiah's day, or just a bystander at the Jordan River. Let's pretend we don't know. Who is this mystery man about whom Isaiah speaks? First, this mystery man is the Lord's Servant. That shows how important this Servant is, for the Lord created all things (v 5); The Lord gives his glory to no other (v 8); The Lord declares he is doing a new thing (v 9); He always sets the agenda.

Because the Servant is the Lord's, we take comfort in what is said about him. He's not only the glorious Creator; he's also the I Am who took Israel as his own (v 6a). He's a servant, after all, one who serves. This mystery Servant of the Lord is chosen.

We make bad choices. We serve other gods. Like I said last week we chase after money, power fame and an endless list of things that replace God as number one in our lives. We shirk serving others. As you work together God's Kingdom work will continue here at Peace but did you volunteer to serve in 2026?

Do we use our time to serve and care for one another, do we use our God given talents to give Him glory as we serve and do we give of our firstfruits or what is left at the end of the month.

God doesn't make bad choices. Whomever he chooses he loves, and in him his soul delights. He loved and delighted in the people of Israel (41:8; 45:4), though they failed. He loves and delights in his Son, the Chosen One who didn't fail.

This mysterious chosen Servant is the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. Okay, so you knew that. And the New Testament makes it clear: ***“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”*** (Matthew 12:18–21).

But for Isaiah's hearers, this was the great mystery to be solved: the promise of the Servant is fulfilled in the God-man, Jesus Christ. This Son-Servant is anointed with the Spirit (v 1b). This is unlike the work of the "**empty wind**" of the false gods (41:29). They could do nothing. This is the work of the triune God, seen at our Lord's Baptism (Matthew 3:13–17). The triune God can do amazing things!

So, what does Isaiah's mystery man do? He does two things that go hand in hand: He brings forth justice (v 1c). God deals with this sinful world—not only to punish sin as justly deserved but also to justify sinners, to forgive. He brings forth light (vs 6c–7).

He lets all nations, you and me and everyone, see him as the loving, freeing, saving Lord he is. How does he bring forth justice and light? He does it in humility and love. He does not raise his voice in shouts, quench burning wicks, or break bruised reeds (vs 2–3). That is, he is gentle with us in our weakness.

In the Jordan, he takes the place of sinners. That's why we'll see this same Servant suffering later in Isaiah (52:13–53:12). He will take our sins to the cross. And rather than shouting at us, he lifts his voice to save us in preaching and teaching. This is the glory of God, the Servant suffering and dying for mankind's salvation (v 4). From the cross, God brings forth justice and light.

The “new things” of justice and light in Christ the Servant now declare to you and me (v 9): We are baptized into Christ's death and resurrection (Romans 6:3–5). We are his chosen people, called out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Pet 2:9). We are given the New Testament covenant in his blood (v 6).

We knew this was coming, didn't you? Isaiah, way back in the seventh century BC, looked down the line and saw Christ, the Christ who stepped into the Jordan River to step into our place as a sinner. And we know that Isaiah saw, maybe even more clearly than we do, that Servant of the Lord take those sins of ours to the cross. That's no mystery, the way it was to those Old Testament people of God.

But it's not supposed to be, is it? God wants us to know, to see clearly in the light Christ brings, that we are justified, forgiven, by his dying service.

In Jesus name. Amen