

1st Sunday after Epiphany
January 8, 2023
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
Acts 10:34-38

Jesus Appears as the Anointed One

Dear Friends in Christ,

The theme for our worship the next weeks is “Jesus Appears.” Does that seem a bit strange after celebrating Christmas? Jesus just appeared to us by his birth in Bethlehem. We rejoiced with the angels and shepherds. We pondered with Mary. The Son of God was born and was given the name, Jesus. And now in the season of Epiphany we are looking at Jesus appearing to us again? Yes!

When Christ was born, the hope of all the ages appeared. God began to fulfill all his promises to save sinners. But Jesus was just a baby in a manger. Then some wise men visit with gifts and Joseph whisks Jesus and his mother to Egypt for safety. Next, we hear of Jesus is when he is twelve years old at the temple in Jerusalem. That is about all the Scriptures reveal to us about the first 30 years of the life of Jesus Christ. Birth, flight to Egypt and visit to the temple. That’s about it. What was Jesus doing during the 18 or so years after visiting the temple when he was 12?

I very much doubt that he was sitting in his parents’ basement playing video games. He would have been learning a trade, perhaps carpentry like Joseph. He would have been learning God’s Word, learning to read and speak Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament. Jesus would have attended synagogue nearly every Saturday and the great religious festivals in Jerusalem every year. But it seems that most have forgotten who he is. The shepherds who visited him in the manger surely lost track of their Savior once he fled to Egypt and returned. The wise men returned to their countries. On the other hand, to answer a popular Christmas song, Mary knew that Jesus is the Anointed One. And if they were still living, Joseph and Elizabeth and Zechariah knew. But not many others. Jesus had appeared at Christmas and now, thirty years later, it was time for him to appear publicly to many. This is what the season of Epiphany is about. Jesus appears to begin his public ministry. Today’s lesson from Acts shows us that Jesus appears as the Anointed One.

Acts 10:34-38 (EHV)

Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.”

Anointed by the Holy Spirit

Jesus publicly appeared as the Anointed One “beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached.” As we heard in the Gospel lesson, Jesus himself went out to where John was preaching and baptizing, and Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River. When someone is baptized today, water is applied in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The person receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit, faith and forgiveness. When Jesus was baptized, water was applied but he did not need the gift of forgiveness for he had no sin to forgive. He did not need the gift of faith for he already trusted his Father in heaven perfectly and his Father’s voice from heaven confirmed this. He did not need the gift of the Holy Spirit

for the Father, Son and Spirit have been united as one God from eternity. But the Holy Spirit came upon him in the form of a dove.

Thus, Jesus was anointed, not with olive oil as the prophets, priests and kings of old, but with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is publicly set apart for a special purpose by this anointing. John would later point to this event as the proof that Jesus is the Christ promised by God. Peter points to the baptism of Jesus as the event in which Jesus is shown to be the Anointed One, the Christ. The time for Jesus to be unknown and under the radar are done. Jesus is no longer concealing his true identity and purpose. Jesus publicly appears as the Christ at his baptism.

What has the Anointed One been anointed to do? Jesus tells us himself when he preaches in the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth. He tells the people that he is the one to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy: "He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18). Christ certainly accomplished this part of his mission. He preached and taught in cities, villages, in boats, on the road and all throughout Judea, Samaria and Galilee. He preached to and taught the rich and poor, the healthy and the sick, the sinners who longer for a Savior and the sinners who didn't think they needed a Savior. Christ pointed all to his Father in heaven and to himself as the One, sent from the Father full of grace and truth. He preached to many poor sinners and the Holy Spirit brought many to believe that Jesus is the Anointed One.

About three years after he was anointed by the Holy Spirit at the Jordan, Jesus was anointed in a very different way which showed another of his missions as the Anointed One. He went to the home of Simon, not the disciple. A woman poured a very expensive jar of perfume on his head. She literally anointed him with perfume. Of course, some complained about the waste of valuable perfume. But Jesus told his disciples that "she did it to prepare me for burial." This woman had been given faith to believe that Jesus is the one to suffer and die to save her. Jesus came for this very purpose, to die to free all people from power of the devil, to pay the price owed for every sin.

This woman anointed Jesus before he died. Other women were too late. They wanted to anoint Jesus' body with the appropriate perfumes and spices after he died. But by the time they arrived on Sunday morning, Jesus had already risen from the dead. This final planned anointing was not necessary for Jesus was alive and will be forever.

Jesus appeared as the Anointed One publicly from his baptism to his crucifixion to his resurrection. These are the events Peter recollects for the household of Cornelius in Acts 10. These are the events by which the Anointed One obtained eternal salvation for us and for all people.

For All People

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him."

This is a big turning point for Peter and in the book of Acts. Does God want the Gentiles, those who are not descendants of Abraham, to be saved? The answer is a resounding, "Yes!" But Peter had to be convinced that the Anointed One came to save all people and not just the Jews. The Lord convinced Peter by giving him a vision of all kinds of animals and telling Peter to eat from all these kinds of

animals. Jews who obeyed God's commands about what foods were clean to eat and not clean to eat would not eat pork or shellfish among other things. We call it eating kosher today. God teaches Peter in the vision that since Jesus has come, all foods are clean and more importantly, God wants all people to be his people. No one is outside the reach of the cleansing blood of Christ. Therefore, Peter should go to the house of a Gentile named Cornelius and bring them the good news of Christ.

This was a big deal for Peter because he had been raised with the idea that it was a sin to eat with or associate with a Gentile. The Lord did want his people to remain his people and not be corrupted by the immorality of the pagan world but that did not mean isolating oneself from those in the world. Peter gets it now and you can tell by all the ways he says that Christ came for all people:

God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation

The good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil

There may have been times in our lives when we showed favoritism with the good news of Jesus. Maybe we kept our faith in Jesus hidden from certain people in our lives because of how they might react. Maybe we only invite a certain type of person to church because we think they are most likely to be a church type person, whatever that means. Maybe we make it clear by body language or words from our mouth or words on a screen that we are not interested in associating with anyone who has different beliefs and practices.

On the one hand, we do want to guard our faith carefully. We don't want to put ourselves in situations where we will fall into sin or fall away from faith in Christ. On the other hand, we must remember that we are also among those who were under the power of the devil until Christ delivered us from sin and Satan. We too enemies of God until Christ achieved peace with God on our behalf through his sacrifice on the cross. And most of us in this world are not physical descendants of Abraham but are among those to who God showed favor by accepting people from every nation into his kingdom.

May the Lord help us to see and talk to and maybe eat with and maybe invite to church the people he puts in our lives who need to know the peace Jesus won for them. Lord, give us the courage, confidence and compassion to step into the life of someone who is under the power of sin and the devil and bring them the good news of Christ. For Jesus appeared as the Anointed One to save us and all people.

Amen.