

## Jesus Christ Takes Office!

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22 January 12, 2019 Pastor Robert Hein

Dear Friends in Christ,

This past week we witnessed a major changing of the guard in Wisconsin politics as Tony Evers took over as our new governor, following 8 years led by Scott Walker. Now Tony Evers was actually elected governor back in November, but he didn't actually take office until this past Monday. In a special ceremony Tony Evers publicly professed his willingness to serve and uphold the laws and constitution of the state, and then he was installed into public office. This grand event clearly identified private citizen Tony Evers now to be Governor Tony Evers.

We witnessed a similar event in our Gospel reading today as Jesus was baptized and anointed at the Jordan River. These two momentous events marked the beginning of Jesus' public ministry and clearly identified Jesus to be the Christ, the promised Messiah, the chosen servant of God.

Jesus lived on this earth for thirty three years, but the first 30 years were pretty quiet. At that time, you weren't considered mature enough to serve as a public prophet until you were 30, and so Jesus' public ministry began at age 30. We give governors a 4 year term. Well Jesus' public ministry lasted 3 years, from age 30-33, and yet, in that short time he accomplished everything required of him to complete his Father's plan of salvation.

When you look up at that picture on the screen, keep in mind there were two separate, yet significant events taking place that day. First Jesus was baptized. Then he was anointed. Let's review the significance of both of these key events, for Jesus, and for the people he came to save, on that glorious day when Jesus Christ took office! \*

Luke tells us, "**When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too.**" Although Jesus was baptized along with everyone else, the purpose of his baptism was actually quite different than anyone else. I know why you and I need to be baptized. We are born sinful. We are born spiritually dead. We are born spiritual orphans. We all need to have our sins washed away. We all need rebirth and adoption into God's family of believers. We need to be covered with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We need the

Holy Spirit to make our bodies his very own temple. That's why we treasure baptism so highly ourselves and make it a priority to share this precious means of grace with our children.

But why did Jesus need to be baptized? After all, he had no sins to wash away. He already was God's Son. He had his own glorious robe of righteousness surrounding him.

John the Baptist puzzled over Jesus' request as well. He said to Jesus, **"I need to be baptized by you, and do you, come to me?"** But then Jesus replied, **'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.'** Then John consented."

### **Matthew 3:15**

When Tony Evers was sworn into office he declared his willingness to carry out all the duties and responsibilities assigned to him as governor of the state of Wisconsin. When Jesus chose to be baptized, he made a powerful statement as well. With this humble act of obedience, Jesus clearly identified himself with the sinners he came to save. He demonstrated his complete willingness to assume all the duties and responsibilities assigned to him by his Father in heaven, to fulfill all the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah, to do everything required as our substitute to pay for our sins, conquer death and crush the power of the devil. Yes, Jesus was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. Jesus' ministry would one day lead him to the cross, but it all started right here with his baptism. This was Jesus Christ reporting for duty.

What an amazing act of love and service on Jesus' part. Remember that when you are going through tough times. Remember that when God seems distant from you. Jesus is on your side. Jesus is always working his gracious plan for you. Jesus is always seeking your best interest. He is always for you, and never against you. Stepping up for duty at his baptism makes this crystal clear.

Jesus' humble act of obedience was then followed by glorious word of commendation from his Father in heaven. Jesus had just made a bold statement. He made it clear he was willing to do whatever his Father asked of him, whatever it took to redeem us from our sins and restore us to a right standing with God.

Then the Father anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power. Now this glorious anointing also requires some explanation. Back in the Old Testament God would set someone aside to serve as a prophet priest or king by anointing him with oil or perfume. Here you see a picture of Samuel anointing Saul to be the first king of Israel. This special act made it clear that this person was God's anointed, the one he personally chose to fulfill an important office.

Jesus however, was not anointed with oil. Rather Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove and his Father spoke an approving word from heaven. He said, **“This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well-pleased.”** Matthew 3:17

The Father's word of approval brings us great comfort. How do we know for sure that our heavenly Father accepts Jesus' work on our behalf? How do we know that the door to heaven stands wide open, that nothing stands in the way between us and God? We know because the Father placed a powerful stamp of approval upon Jesus' work at his anointing. With this ringing endorsement, the Father made it clear he was well pleased with the perfect life Jesus had led up to his point, and he was well pleased with the public ministry Jesus was about to complete for our benefit.

You know it's interesting, three years later, at the end of Jesus' public ministry, at his Transfiguration, the Father made a similar statement. Once again heaven opened and God the Father proudly declared, **“This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”** Matthew 17:5

The Spirit's appearance and the Father's word of approval offered John the Baptist clear confirmation of his true identity as the Messiah as well. John said, **“I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. 33 And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One.”** John 1: 32-34

Now that Tony Evers has been installed as governor, he is eager to carry out his agenda. During his campaign he said he wants to devote more funds to transportation and schools, expand Medicaid and lower insurance costs. How will he do? How much of his agenda will he accomplish over the next 4 years? Only time will tell, but politicians often have varying degrees of success. Some promises are kept; others are left unfilled.

So what about Jesus? As he entered his public ministry, what was his agenda? What did he hope to accomplish, and how well did he do?

Throughout his public minister Christ carried out three distinct roles; **prophet, priest, and king**. To more fully appreciate all that Jesus accomplished for our benefit, let's review Jesus' threefold office.

A **prophet** is someone who preaches God's Word. In the Old Testament God revealed his truth and his promises of the Savior through prophets like Moses and Isaiah and Jeremiah. But all that those prophets could do was point ahead to the coming Savior. They could only offer previews of a coming attraction. But Jesus is the prophet. He is true God from all eternity. He can point to himself as the way, the truth and the life. Jesus came from God, and he reveals God's truth to us in a visible, personal way. You want to know the truth about God? You want to know how to enjoy life with God? You want to know how to enter heaven to live with God forever when you die? Listen to Jesus! He is the prophet!

During his three year earthly ministry Jesus went from town to town preaching the good news of the kingdom. Today, he speaks to us through his Word. During this season of Epiphany we are following Jesus wherever he goes, witnessing his miracles, cherishing his promises and listening intently to his life giving word. Do any of you own a "red letter" version of the Bible? Why are some of those words written in red letters? Why? Because Jesus spoke them personally. Now all of the Bible is God's Word, but when you read those words in red, you are listening to Jesus the prophet speak to you just as people heard him 2,000 years ago when he walked the face of this earth. What a privilege it is then to study God's Word at home and together here in church to receive

the blessings and guidance and strength which Christ the prophet brings to our hearts and lives. Is there any other pursuit or priority more worthy of our attention?

The second role Jesus carried out was that of a **priest**. Back in the Old Testament priests served as mediators between the people and God. We read in Hebrews 5:1, **“Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.”**

Priests had a lot of blood on their hands as they offered up innocent lambs as a substitute for guilty people. All of those sacrifices pointed ahead to the perfect sacrifice which Christ, our great high priest, would offer for us upon the cross. Amazingly, Jesus was the priest who offered the sacrifice and also the innocent lamb who actually was the sacrifice. Yes, Jesus is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He sacrificed himself once for all. Therefore no further sacrifice for sin is ever required.

And Jesus also serves as a mediator between sinful people and our holy God. Because Jesus intercedes for us, we know our prayers are heard by our Father in heaven and are acceptable to him. Because of Jesus, we know we have a bright future and a glorious eternity awaiting us in heaven. Because of Jesus we know when our last day comes, we will receive a Father’s welcome when he brings us home to glory. The writer to the Hebrews tells us, **Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. 16 Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”** Hebrews 4:14-16

Finally, Jesus’s agenda called for him to serve as our victorious king. Back in the Old Testament, kings ruled and kings fought battles to defend their people from enemy attack. This kingly role Jesus also carried out splendidly for our saving benefit. Right after Jesus was baptized, he headed out to the desert to take on the devil in battle. Satan threw everything he could at Jesus, trying to tempt him to sin, but he failed miserably. Jesus defeated our enemy the devil for us, and used God’s mighty word to drive him away.

Then on the cross of Calvary Jesus crushed the devil's power completely and set us free from his oppressive hold over us. Satan doesn't own us now, and he can't claim us when we die. We belong to Christ the King. Christ our king rules in our hearts right now and he will bring us safely to his heavenly kingdom when we die.

I don't know how well Tony Evers will be able to accomplish his agenda as governor. Only time will tell. But we do know how well Jesus the Christ carried out his agenda; perfectly, flawlessly, miraculously, for our benefit. It's all recorded for us right here in God's holy Word, the Bible. Come along with Jesus then on this amazing Epiphany journey in the weeks to come as we watch Jesus carry out his public ministry, proclaim his life giving truth, and then walk the road to the cross to complete his saving mission. Once again, we will discover that Jesus has done all things well; and that his victory spells victory for you and me and for all who put their trust in him. Let us join with the Father then to sing Jesus' eternal praises as we joyfully proclaim – "Well done, good and faithful chosen servant of God!" Amen.