

## **I Have Called You by Name**

Isaiah 43:1-7

The Baptism of Our Lord, January 10, 2009

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Thus says the Lord your God, the One who created you, the One you formed you, "Do not be afraid. I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name. You are mine."

When you cross in the waters I will be with you. When you cross through the waters, they will not overwhelm you. When you go in the fire, it will not scorch you. When you go in the flame it will not burn you.

"I have called you by name. You are mine. I have redeemed you. I have formed you and created you."

There are many ways in which we are told to assess our worth. We are told many times by many people that we are supposed to seek our worth from within us. Look inside of you, we are told. What makes you special is inside of you. What makes you unique is within you.

Many times we are not told what exactly it is within us that we are supposed to hunt down in order to find our worth. I usually get the impression that we are supposed to live up to our potential. As long as we live up to our potential we will find our worth. Therefore be everything that you can be and you will find your worth. This can be done through athletic or academic achievement. This can be done through financial or career achievement. This can be done simply by being a good parent. Achieve these things and you will find your worth we are told.

This can even be taken to the idolatrous limit of being told to believe in ourselves. Believe in yourself, we are told. Believe in yourself and you will succeed. Our failures are blamed on our lack of faith. But then that is the dirty little secret of looking inside of ourselves to find out our worth. The dirty little secret is failure.

What is our worth when we fail? What is our worth when we fail constantly? What is our worth when we fail consistently? What is our worth when we are successful for a little while and then fail miserably at the end? What if we do not live up to our potential? What if we do not achieve everything that we have inside of us to achieve?

Cancer specialists are very aware of this problem. One of the things that some cancer specialists do not like is celebrity victims of cancer. Celebrity victims of cancer pull through and we hail their perseverance. We hail their good attitude in the face of cancer. Well, when you are a celebrity and have plenty of friends and money to begin with, it is easy to persevere. At least it is easier for them to persevere and have a good attitude than for someone who is poor and unknown who also has cancer. How can such a person have a good attitude, when they don't have anyone around to keep them company, to take them to chemotherapy treatments, etc? What cancer specialists don't like is that these unknown cancer victims will read about celebrity cancer victims and come to the conclusion that they should be dealing with their cancer as well as the celebrity is. Since they aren't they conclude that something is especially wrong with them. They should be handling all of this much better.

I use cancer as an example, there are many times when we compare ourselves to the famous and successful and figure that we aren't as good as they are and it does not occur to us that they have resources that we don't have that help them deal with their problems. If we had their advantages, we would be just as well off as they are.

The dirty little secret that all of us know is this: we don't have their advantages. We probably never will.

Worth is not to be found this way. When we seek for our worth in this manner, all we get is disappointment because we never measure up to the successful of the famous.

At risk of comparing you to a commodity, worth is found in what someone else is willing to pay for you. How much an item is worth is determined by how much a person is willing to pay for it. Items from movies sold at Soothby's go for large prices and are worth a lot of money. Items that I wear and sell at a garage sale are not worth as much because people are not as willing to pay for it.

Here is your worth: God's Son is dead on the cross. That is how much you are worth to God. That is how much He is willing to pay for you. He gives His Son in exchange for you. He gives His only Son in your place.

You are precious in My eyes. You are glorified and I love you.

I created you. I formed you. I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine.

Therefore do not be afraid for I am with you. From the east I will bring your seed. From the west, I will gather you. I say to the north, "Give them to Me." I say to the south, "Do not withhold them from Me." Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth.

Everyone who is called by My Name is for My glory.

Are you called by the Name of God? In other words when people refer to you do they refer to you by the Name of God? When God refers to you, does He refer to you by His Name?

"I baptize you in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Those words are spoken over each of us when we are baptized.

For the preacher those words mean that he baptizes in place of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The preacher does it in the stead of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is indication that the Baptism is not the preacher's Baptism, but rather it is God's Baptism.

For the preacher it also means that the Baptism is done with the authority of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Much like someone doing something in the name of the United States government, doing a Baptism in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit means that it is done with their authority. He will back His Baptism with His own promises and Word.

For the person being baptized, for the baptizand, it means something entirely different. In addition to understanding that it is actually God who baptizes the person being baptized is receiving His Name. You are baptized in His Name. Or perhaps better put, you are baptized into His Name.

Baptism creates two spaces. Those who are in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and those who are outside the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You are in His Name. You are called by His Name because you have His Name. You are special. Your value is here.

Dash Parr's mother, in an effort to get him to behave told him, "Everybody's special, Dash." To which Dash replied, "Which means that nobody is." Baptism says that Dash is right. If everyone is special, no one is. To be special is to be different than other people. To be special is to be unique among people in an advantageous way.

What baptism does is locate our specialness in God's attitude toward us and not in ourselves. The advantage of that is that it avoids failure. You see, you stay baptized even if you have failed. Jesus remains dead on the cross even if you fail. By that I mean that the ransom the Father has paid for you is still the life of His Son even if you have failed.

In our failure, Jesus still died for us. In our failure, we are still baptized. The Lord, the Holy One of Israel, still says to you. I have created you. I have formed you. Everyone who is called by My Name is this way. I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine.

Do not be afraid. When you pass through the water, I will be with you. When you pass through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you. When you go in the fire, it will not scorch you. When you go in the flame, it will not burn you. You are precious in My eyes. You are gloried. I Myself love you.

I have given My Son in exchange for you, My only begotten in place of your life. Do not be afraid. I am with you. From the east I will bring you. From the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, "Give them to Me." I will say to the south, "Do not withhold them from Me. Bring Me my sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth. Everyone who is called by My Name is for My glory. I have created Him and formed Him."

And so you are for God's glory. You are all for God's glory. When you leave this place and get in your cars, you are for God's glory. When you go the field or to the office, you are for God's glory. When you get in your car and drive your truck, you are for God's glory. When you make breakfast for the children and tuck them in at night, you are for God's glory. When you take care of each other and of others, you are for God's glory. Whether you are successful or you fail, you are for God's glory. It is true of everyone who is called by His Name.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.