

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, January 5, 2021
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“Das G’fallt Mea”

READING: Matthew 3:13-17 – Then Jesus came to Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

A couple of weeks before Christmas I was tasked with taking one of Becky’s preschoolers shopping for her siblings at Meijer. Her list was simple, and I knew where each of the items was in the store, so in no time at all, we were finished. I called Becky to tell her, and she was surprised we were already done. She said, “Give her a little tour of the store until the rest of us are finished.” Great! How to occupy a four-year-old? We cut through the toy section, turned a corner, and there it was! Three shelves filled with animated Christmas toys: Santas and Snowmen and Christmas trees and squirrels and even a Nutcracker – and every one of them danced and made music! So, my little charge went right to work. At one point she had 6 or 7 of them dancing and singing all at the same time. I had to be super vigilant to keep them from wiggling right off the shelf! She was fascinated, and I must admit that I was well entertained, as well. In fact, there was one toy I rather fancied for myself, but that was not our purpose on that day.

The following week I went to Meijer to buy groceries, but I remembered we needed some more gift tags at church for the gift wrappers working away in my office. So I had reason to go back into the Christmas section, and while I was there, I thought I’d take a peek at those animated toys once more. And, there he was! He was still available, and he was marked 20% off on top of everything. He’s a cool and swinging Santa Claus with sunglasses on his face and a brass trombone on his shoulder. When you press his left foot, he plays a jazzy rendition of “Jingle Bells” followed immediately by a hot take on “O, When the Saints Go Marching In”! So cool! I bought him, and now he’s part of our permanent Christmas collection.

Of course, when Becky saw him, she said, “Why did you buy that thing?” And my answer was swift and to the point, “Das G’fallt Mea” That’s German for “It pleases me!” I like him. I like his music. I like the brass. He pleases me!

Tomorrow is the Day of Epiphany. Christmas will be officially over on the church calendar. We’ll be into the Season of Epiphany, the season that shows Jesus being introduced to his disciples, to the Jewish people, and to the world. What was “hidden” will now be revealed. His ministry will commence, and his journey to the cross will have started. What we

celebrated at Christmas – his Coming – now will take shape and direction. His work of salvation is begun.

But, first, there's the Jordan and John the Baptist and his baptism. John of course tries to deter Jesus, asking rather that Jesus would baptize him. But Jesus says that all righteousness must be fulfilled. What he means is that since he has come to save sinners, he must first give sign of that by receiving John's baptism of repentance. Not that Jesus has sins of which to repent, but rather he shows his willingness to take upon himself all OUR sins. He steps into the water that, symbolically, is made filthy by the sins of all those baptized before him. He's willing to get into OUR mess and to cover OUR sins with HIS righteousness.

And when he does that, when he accepts his calling and his place as our substitute, God the Father appears. He's moved with compassion and a Godly pride by the sight of his perfect Son showing perfect obedience. He proclaims him to be his Son, the beloved of God, and then announces, "With Him I am well pleased." Jesus is the perfect Son who is wholly and completely in tune with the Father's will and determined to achieve the Father's purpose.

So, it begins. That long, winding walk to the cross: First the temptations, then calling disciples, then miracles and parables and sermons, then a whip, a crown, and a cross. It all begins right here, at the Jordan, with his Father's pronouncement, "He pleases Me!" We'll walk along with Jesus, and at each stop we'll proclaim, "He pleases us because he loves us so." God be with you. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):