

“The Old Is Gone The New Has Come”

Isaiah 43:1-7

Psalm 29

Acts 8:14-17

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

How often do you say, “I don’t do this or that? Or I don’t do my homework until the last minute? Or I don’t do technology volunteering for worship services?”

I’m grateful that Jesus didn’t say, “I don’t do baptism, epiphany, or transfiguration.” Baptism of the Lord matters. The baptism of Jesus urges each of us to consider who Jesus is, as well as his role in fulfilling God’s plan of salvation. It demonstrates his identity and his role as Savior. Epiphany of the Lord matters. It marks the inbreaking of God into human experience. It recognizes the arrival of God’s plan of salvation in the birth of Jesus. Transfiguration of the Lord matters. Jesus’ appearance changed and Peter, James, and John got a glimpse of his full heavenly glory.

Baptism, Epiphany, and Transfiguration shape your belief about Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; the Savior. Baptism, Epiphany, and Transfiguration shape your belief about the church. You are a part of the body of Christ, the Church. You participate with God in God’s mission. Baptism, Epiphany, and Transfiguration shape your belief about the presence and power of God. You see the authority of Christ and the transformation you undergo as a follower of Jesus.

Through the baptism, epiphany, and transfiguration of Jesus, we are commissioned to introduce others to God’s love for them in Jesus Christ. This is the good news of the gospel, Jesus. Leonard Sweet, former Dean of the Theological School at Drew University, says:

One of our students received an appointment from a bishop, and the student did not feel the placement exactly suited his abilities. I overheard him complaining about it to another student, and then the other student said, “You know, you sound like my mother’s housekeeper who says, ‘I don’t do windows.’” That student continued, “You know, the world’s a better place because Michelangelo did not say, ‘I don’t do ceilings.’” Her comment stopped me dead in my tracks. I had to admit she was right. If you and I are going to be faithful to the ministry God is calling us to, then we had better understand that. I reflected on the attitudes of key people throughout the Scriptures and the history of the church. The world’s a better place because a German monk named Martin Luther did not say, “I don’t do doors.” The world’s a better place because an Oxford don named John Wesley didn’t say, “I don’t do preaching in fields.” The world’s a better place because Moses didn’t say, “I don’t do Pharaohs or mass migrations.” The world’s a better place because Rahab didn’t say, “I don’t do spies.” The world’s a better place because Noah didn’t say, “I don’t do arks and animals.” The world’s a better place because Ruth didn’t say, “I don’t do mothers-in-law.” .... The world’s a better place because David didn’t say, “I don’t do giants.” The world’s a better place because Mary didn’t say, “I don’t do virgin births.” The world’s a better place because Paul didn’t say, “I don’t do correspondence.” The world’s a better place because Mary Magdalene didn’t say, “I don’t do feet.” The world’s a better place because Jesus didn’t say, “I don’t do crosses.” And the world will be a better place only if you and I don’t say, “I don’t do ...”<sup>1</sup>

The world becomes a better place when Christians say, “I do serve. I do “Connect Groups.” I do the opportunity to be an elder or deacon. I do... loving God, loving others, and making disciples. I do include and welcome those who are different than me. You are loved by God. You are redeemed by God in and through Jesus Christ. You participate in God’s mission. The baptism of Jesus is your baptism. The epiphany of Jesus is your epiphany. The transfiguration of Jesus is your transfiguration. The “don’t” is gone, the “do” has come. That’s correct, the old is gone and the new has come. Amen!

*This sermon was preached (for the In-Person, Online, and Village TV 6 congregations) on Sunday, 09 January 2022 by the Rev. Dr. Steven M. Marsh in the Sanctuary at Geneva Presbyterian Church in Laguna Woods, California*

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<sup>1</sup>Leonard Sweet, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio. *Leadership*, vol. 15, no. 2.