

***The Baptised Life -
Living As
Prophets, Priests & Royalty***

1 Peter 2: 4-10

PREPARED BY
KEN GEHRELS
PASTOR
CALVIN CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF OTTAWA
ONTARIO, CANADA

The season after Christmas is known in the Church as the season of **Epiphany**. Epiphany is a word that means, *appearing, revealing*.

It is the season when we remember the appearing, the revealing of Jesus among the people through his years of ministry.

That appearing began at His baptism. And this year we've been concentrating on that - on baptism, the baptism of Jesus and the baptism that we receive as followers of Jesus.

Last week we had a peek into the early history of the Church and saw how they made use of sacred oil - pouring it onto newly baptized believers.

We learned that oil was specially prepared in the old testament as a symbol of the sacred presence of the Holy Spirit of God resting on and flowing into the life of the anointed person. In Old Testament times only a very few people were anointed.

The Church, however, anointed **all** baptized believers as a sign of the bible's promise that **all** believers in Jesus receive the Holy Spirit.

I want to build on that today. Do any of you know who would be anointed in Old Testament times?

Kings, for one. Anointing with oil was a visual sign that God called them to royal service. Gave them royal authority. Granted them royal dignity. Kings received the holy oil, and the Holy Spirit.

Who else was anointed? Priests. The ones who stood in the sanctuary and proclaimed the forgiveness of God; the ones who raised their hands conveying God's blessing. God's power was living on and in them. The oil said so.

Anointing - showing the presence of the Holy Spirit. Where else do we read about anointing? Well, there's one more group.

Isaiah 61 tells us, "*the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has **anointed** me....*" In that passage it is a prophet who is talking. Prophets, in the Old Testament, are the third anointed group. Along with the kings. And the priests.

Why do I tell you this?

Why does it matter?

Because you who are baptized Christians,
whether you have been anointed with the outer symbol of oil or not
have the very real **inner** anointing;
- the flowing presence of the Holy Spirit within you.

Every one of you!

And **that**, baptized friends,

means that you then share something very special with all those Old Testament prophets and priests and kings.

Listen to what the New Testament teaches us. John will read:

1 Peter 2:4-10, p.233 (New Testament)

Did you hear it?

Right at the very beginning, the gathered community of baptized believers is called *a holy priesthood*.

And then, towards the end of the passage, a **royal priesthood**.

And then, as if that wasn't enough

the community is called *God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*. That's prophet talk.

Prophet.

And priest.

And royalty.

All Christians,

baptized, anointed with the flowing inner presence of the Spirit,
are all three.

You are, first of all, Royal.

You, baptized believer, have the honour of reclaiming the inherent dignity of humanity that was granted by the Creator to our first parents in the Garden of Eden. He made them in His image, says Genesis 1.

In the image - looking like, reflecting, representing the king.
Given the mandate to steward the earth, to exercise the King's authority.

Of course, tragedy strikes - with the coming of sin, royalty falls.
Instead of ruling creation, we become slaves to it.
Instead of serving the power that is above us, we've tried to create and grasp our own power.
Instead of seeking the fulfilment of creation, we seek to exploit it, to possess it.

We ended up not as free, dignified royalty
But as slaves of the realm of death.

Enter the Epiphany, the appearing and coming of Jesus.

Christ's kingship comes through His being the one and only divine Son of the King of the Universe. He weds that, then, to his humanity. The son of God come to earth is the New Adam. He goes back into Eden, unshackling the royalty and dignity of humanity.

Human life is affirmed.

The role of humanity in this world is affirmed.

Exploring science is affirmed as a royal, dignified and good exercise.

Creating art is affirmed as a valuable, worthy activity of heaven's kings and queens.

The thirst for knowledge in the humanities is right and good and a royal stewardly activity.

Yes, human life - fallen though it is - is redeemed in Jesus.

Affirmed for you to live and explore and fill up, baptized believers.

royal believers!

Hear that, please!

Royal....

....believers!

When you walk out of this building, baptized friend, you'll be shoulder to shoulder with eternal beings who are treasured by their Royal Creator;

Who have great dignity in his eyes.

I hope you see that dignity.

And honour it.

That dignity is what makes some of the abuses of our day so tragic.

How tragic it is when royalty throw away the treasure of chastity and treat their sexuality as a recreational toy or a means for abusive self-gratification, rather than a gift for bonding the covenant of marriage.

How tragic when royal human life is treated an easily disposable commodity, removed from the womb for contraceptive convenience.

How tragic when royal human life is ignored for national economic interests, and allowed to drown under a tidal wave of preventable disease and poverty, ignored because it happens to be in a far-away place, or of a different colour.

And friends, how tragic when royalty beat themselves up because of feelings of guilt or shame or failure that they carry around inside.

And, oh, how so many of us carry those.

And beat ourselves up, silently, inside.

It happens all the time.

It makes Satan smile.

And we, baptized royalty, suffer.

Are there times we fail? Absolutely!

Are there times when we should have done otherwise? Oh, my, yes.

Are there times when what we did was degrading, or just plain wrong? Indeed.

But hear this clearly -

While our actions failed, while we've gone the wrong way, while we've behaved in low or wrong ways - while all of this may be true,

what is **not** true is that this makes us worthless, low, and useless.

It is simply **not** true that baptized believers need to walk around with their shoulders drooped, their chin down, and eyes avoiding contact with others - slaves to despair and sin and death.

Can you believe that, royal baptized believer?

Please.

Do.

Remember what we said here a few weeks ago - baptism points directly to the cross, and to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That sacrifice was made for you, believer.

So chin up!

Shoulders back.

Stand confident before God in the royal confidence that Jesus dispenses.

Claim that.

And reject Satan's guilt trip.

Reject the shame he tries to smother you with.

Reject the echos of regret that he tries to tie you down with.

The Evil One has one single, simple mission on earth.

Remind you of every hint of imperfection in your life. Trying to make it stick to your soul with some sort of diabolical super glue. Trying to make you see that imperfection, rather than the cross. Trying to convince you that your imperfection, which perhaps only you know about, will be your destruction. Like what the residents of a Ukrainian village experienced -

For 43 years Zinaida Bragantsova had been telling people there was a World War II bomb buried under her bed. The story began in 1941 when the Germans advanced toward the Ukrainian city of Berdyansk. One night at the very start of the war, she was sitting by the window and sewing on her machine. Suddenly a noise was heard and a whistling close by. She got up and in the following moment was struck by a blast of wind. When she came to, the sewing machine was gone and there was a hole in the floor as well as in the ceiling.

Zinaida couldn't get any officials to check out her story, so she just moved her bed over the hole and lived with it; for the next 40 years. Finally, the woman's problem was uncovered. As phone cable was being laid in the area, demolition experts were called in to probe for buried explosives. "Where's your bomb, grandma?" asked the smiling army lieutenant sent to talk to Mrs. Bragantsova. "No doubt, under your bed?"

"Under my bed," Mrs. Bragantsova answered dryly.

And sure enough, there they found a 500-pound bomb. After evacuating 2,000 people from surrounding buildings, the bomb squad detonated the bomb. According to the report, "The grandmother, freed of her bomb, will soon receive a new apartment."

Lee Eclov, Lake Forest, Illinois; from Associated Press (November 1984)

What's the bomb under your bed?

Marriage failure?

Trouble at school?

You cheated someone?

An addiction?

Kids that rebel?

Let Jesus detonate it.

I don't mean to minimize or excuse or ignore any of these things.

What I **DO** mean to do is declare that none of those things make you worthless or one ounce less valuable in God's eyes.

None of this has the last word in your life.

Jesus - to whom we are joined by baptism -

HE has the last word!

And He declares you to be of infinite royal worth.

Chin up, baptized believer!

You are liberated by Jesus!

Not only are you royal.

Baptized men and women, boys and girls - you are also priests.

You have a direct connection to the King.

You can reach to heaven.

You can do so for yourself.

You can do it on behalf of others.

Being a priest - could be a bit of stretch in our culture.

Because, well -

if you think through the role of priest in the Bible, what is one of the major things that they do? Offering sacrifices, right?

The priest comes before God with sacrifices for himself and for the people gathered with him. **WE** are called to come with sacrifices to God.

Think of Romans 12:1, which encourages us to present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God.

A huge challenge in our consumer driven, me-centred culture!

Recently the Church in North America lost a very special Royal Priest, Coretta Scott King. A fellow believer, she with her husband Martin understood the royal dignity of humanity that Jesus came to save. And they heard their calling from the Lord to mediate that value into a very racist American society. They **sacrificed** their life as a young pastor family of a small Baptist church in Atlanta to follow that calling.

What do you think the King family would have accomplished if they had made the first question, "*What's in it for me?*"

What dream do you think the Lord would have given this priestly couple if they'd been continually wondering how they could immediately benefit from their role in life?

Martin & Coretta, baptized royal priests - served the Lord as faithfully as they could, faithful in their dignified and valuable sacrifice to their Saviour, Jesus. Faithful to the end, both of them.

You and I are called to such faithful priestly service.

And then a third category - one that I can't escape thinking about when I think about the King family. That is the third anointed Old Testament office that through Jesus has been transmitted to baptized believers in the New Testament age. That is the Holy Spirit empowered office of prophet, empowering old men and women, and their sons & daughters, to dream dreams and see visions - to be prophets.

The prophet hears God and conveys the will of God to the world.

The prophet looks at the world and tries to see events and situations from God's point of view.

Baptized believer - the sacred oil of the Holy Spirit flows inside you. It is the powerful presence that opens your mind when you read the scripture and compare what you read in those holy pages to the situation in the world where you live. And then to speak out.

It is the presence that makes you protest government leaders who suggest that donating 0.25% of a rich countries GDP to foreign aid and development is all that can be sustained.

It is the presence that makes you speak out for the protection of a fragile ecosystem, which we are called by the Creator to care for.

It is the presence that lets people know that there IS a God. And that He LOVES people and wants a relationship with them - personally.

Baptized believer -
royal
priestly
prophetic.

You and me.
We are.

And called to live like it.
For Christ's sake!