

First Sunday after the Epiphany

Sermon Road Map

Pastor Roger W. Huffman

Titus 3:4-7

January 13, 2019

History is His story designed to change your story.

Did it every bother you that we refer to accounts in the Bible as Bible Stories?

- concern - the dismissive: *Oh, that's just a story.*
- History is stories or accounts of events that really happened
- Here Paul spotlights 2 events in history: God's appearing - your baptism

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- ❖ God's epiphanies = His history of saving humans.
 - Appearances to: hiding Adam and Eve, Noah, Moses & Israel, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, Isaiah, Daniel, ...
 - ***But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared,...*** CSB
 - ♦ Appeared in Bethlehem & the Temple
 - ♦ Appeared on the world stage at Jesus' Baptism, introduced by God
 - Made clear: God is Triune, Jesus/Son came to rescue us
 - The Living God is real - shows up in history to save people
- ❖ He appeared to change our status
 - ***At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.*** Titus 3:3 NIV
 - ♦ Paul the former Pharisee included himself. Recall your childhood, foolishness of youth, current struggles & immaturity...
 - He came to rescue us from this pathetic and self-wounding condition and status: ***he saved us... so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs...***
 - ♦ *justified*: declared innocent - status before God
 - ♦ *heir* - legal standing - status with God
 - ♦ God appeared to change our status from ***condemned*** to ***not guilty***, from ***captive*** to ***free*** - new status with him, thus new status with ourselves.
 - ♦ This status is not just costume and make-up - make-believe!
- ❖ He appeared in your life to give you a new you.
 - His appearing at Jesus' Baptism - 2000 years ago in history/reality
 - His appearance at your Baptism is in your history/life-time/reality

- ***But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, he saved us - ... - through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*** CSB
 - ♦ God's washing gives us a *new origin* and *makes us new*.
 - ♦ His work for us is both in history and in our history - our life - in us!
 - ♦ We are made new. Our old self is history - destined for the junk heap!
 - ♦ Just as God appeared at Jesus' water baptism to declare him to be the Son of God, our Savior, God appeared at our water baptism to declare our new birth from above - remade in God's image - our New Self.
 - ♦ Paul uses *loutron* for *washing* both here and in Ephesians 5:26
 - *Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the **washing** with water through the word...* Eph. 5:25,26
 - The only washing with water Jesus gives us is water baptism.
 - Its power is the Spirit-inhabited-word. It washes & makes **a new you**.
- ❖ Let God's work shape your identity and dreams.
 - Who are you? Do you let your baptism identify you - define you?
 - God put his name on you - claiming you as his heir - declared innocent.
 - ♦ The hymn: *God's Own Child I Gladly Say It* models this
 - God gave you a new origin and made you new. Claim it! That's who I am.
 - ♦ Look in the mirror and see this. Not your blemishes, aging, etc.
 - ♦ Let it define the whole you - your existence and life.
 - Let the sure hope of eternal life shape daily purpose, goals, dreams.
 - ♦ Choose a New Year's resolution rooted in unchanging eternity.
 - Contrast: a common deception that short-circuits God's work among us
 - ♦ *Since I can't do anything to save myself and God did and does it all, I just sit around waiting to die - doing what seems right to me.* = adrift
 - As if God only cares about your eternity - not you and your now.
 - *I'm saved, so I don't need church or growth.* Impoverishes. No fruit!
 - That misses the context. Note the first words of our text: ***But when...***
 - ⁸ ***This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.*** Titus 3 NIV

It insults God and diminishes his gospel to act as if God **only** baptizes you to deal with the eternal destination of children.

History is His story designed to change your story.

Claim your new status, identity, and destiny. It will change your story and the story of others as you point them to God's appearing to save us from ourselves.