

First Sunday after the Epiphany—Baptism of Our Lord
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Baptism

Prophecies are interesting, and I want to talk about prophecy and reality. Some 700 years before Jesus, Isaiah wrote: “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.” Today Matthew tells us “... a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” We have a prophecy, and an account of the fulfillment of that prophecy.

Do you wonder about modern prophetic voices? Are Jules Verne, George Orwell, Greta Thunberg, modern day prophets? Well, Greta—the teen climate change activist, may be more like Jeremiah who told everybody that destruction was coming, and they did not want to hear it. Sometimes, I think that prophets are the last ones to realize, that they are in fact, prophets. It makes me wonder what prophecies I am rejecting in my life, that I need to turn and pay attention to. Are there prophets among us—maybe even in this church, maybe even our children? Prophecy, especially divine prophecy, is no accident. I think there are too many predictions that are based in reality to be just coincidence or happenstance.

When I thought about John the Baptist in the Gospel, I realized that although he knew of Isaiah’s prophecy, having Jesus come to him to be Baptized was not how he imagined the prophecy working out—he imagined it differently. All this thinking about prophecy, made me think of two of my favorite modern prophets—Hanna and Barbera, the creators of “The Jetsons.” The cartoon “The Jetsons” was set in 2062, 100 years in the future from its 1962 creation. And remember, in 1962, over half the TVs were still in black and white, and “The Jetsons” was the first show that ABC broadcast in color.

Just for fun, I looked up “The Jetsons” to see how many of Hanna and Barbera’s “prophecies” of life in 2062 have made their way into our lives so far, 58 years into their 100-year prediction. We indeed have moving sidewalks, and digital diaries like the one Judy kept—Facebook keeps tabs on what I am up to most days. While Rosie the robot had more personality than a Roomba, we have robots that clean for us, and something more Rosie like is in fact in the works that will pick up the kids toys before it vacuums. George Jetson spent his time at work pushing buttons, much like we do today. At one point in the cartoon series, his button display turns into a flat screen console, just like we have experienced with the dawn of the touch screen. Right here in my pocket, I can FaceTime—video call people— that seems amazing. I am still waiting for the app Jane had that will make me look pretty and professional on a video call, even when I am at home in my PJs and bunny slippers. Here is a question, how many YouTube videos have you seen of a dog on a treadmill like Astro? One other thing I think we can all identify with from “The Jetsons” is when George and Astro lose control and get swept up by the treadmill, and George loops through the machinery over and over. Our lives are fast paced, and I sometimes I find myself unable to keep up, and am swept into the machinery of our chaotic world. While I am not yelling, “Jane, stop this crazy thing!” I do find myself praying, “God, stop this crazy world!” Calling for help is a human thing. Even Jesus asked in the garden of Gethsemane if the cup could pass him by. That plea reveals Jesus’ humanity to me, and helps me identify with Him, and know that through Him, I am also a child of God—Baptized and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

I don’t know about you but, I am just now coming to terms with the idea that this is the year 2020. The time the Jetsons lived is not so far away, and many of us should live to see 2062. Thirty plus years ago, I was thinking about the year 2020—my birth year ends in “0,” and I held expectations for this year and this decade—a future full of wonder. Maybe flying cars would be rolling off the assembly lines, perhaps we would have a cure for cancer, and problems like fresh water and world hunger would have been

solved. I wonder where we will be 100 years from now—where will Holy Cross be? Part of the answer to that is in our hands! It is funny how we rarely imagine a future of war, dread, and despair, and I think the reason for that is because we are people who have hope. We do not want to hear predictions with negative outcomes, we want to hang onto hope. Perhaps the most interesting observation was that the Jetsons did not spend time staring at screens like we do, but engaged with one another—Judy and Elroy were always out with their friends. We can only hope that the more things change, the more we might return to an era where personal, face-to-face engagement rules the day—just like it did in the Gospel. We can impact what is predicted, because what we do in this world, matters.

The Gospel story is rooted in the future—our future—the future of all humankind really. John is Jesus’ cousin. John thinks that Jesus is the Messiah, but even John questions how the story is unfolding. In the Gospel, John is doing exactly what he was intended to do. He is crying out that the Messiah is coming, and to prepare ourselves. John is Baptizing sinners. People are putting their past behind them, eager to follow a Messiah who will “...bring forth justice...” John did not expect to Baptize Jesus—God’s chosen who delights the Father. But predictions do not always turn out the way we imagine. John does not feel worthy to Baptize Jesus, and only when he is reminded of the need to fulfill the scripture, does he comply.

I can only imagine how uncomfortable John felt, knowing that he had been Baptizing sinners from all walks of life, and then here is Jesus presenting Himself as any sinner to be washed clean. In being Baptized by John, Jesus identified with sinners—with us—and we with Him. He showed us that he was fully human. The dove descending and the voice proclaiming Jesus as God’s Son, gives proof that Jesus was also fully divine. In that moment, Jesus moved from being a King to God’s Son. Jesus was Baptized into the community of all humanity. This morning Skyler, will be Baptized into our community—all of us sisters and brothers through Jesus. This Gospel is headline news, the lead story of all time—Jesus Baptized with us, makes all of us children of God, brothers and sisters through Him. We are marked as Christ’s own forever—and our hope is in the promise of eternal life. This was a lot to think about, prophesy, divinity, hope, redemption, Baptism and belonging—it is a big, amazing story, and we are part of it, we are living it. How it was foretold, and how it played out in the Gospel, and in our lives, keeps hope in the world. And, I hope I did not give you an earworm, “Meet George Jetson...”

Do you suppose God told a prophet, we all need to stop fighting, and recognize each other as one human family—loved equally by God? I imagine God saying, “Now stop fighting. Don’t make me come down there!” We kids do not always listen very well. God did come down here, and God saved us by becoming just like us. We may not know exactly how the future will play out, but we know from Paul’s letter that God shows no partiality, and anyone who fears—that is respects God—and does what is right and acceptable will have eternal life. “What is right and acceptable to God?” Loving one another, and seeing each other as one body, in Christ. Or, as Mother Teresa put it, “No color, no religion, no nationality should come between us, we are all children of God.” The former things have come to pass, and it is our time and our turn to proclaim the good news in our voices, and in our actions. As we celebrate the Baptism of Skyler, one thing is certain about our future: if we live into our Baptismal vows, love God and each other as Jesus loved us, we will live forever in God’s Kingdom, a place beyond imagination. And, there is hope in that. Amen.

Isaiah 42:1-9, Acts 10:34-43, Matthew 3:13-17, Psalm 29 • <https://techcrunch.com/2012/01/01/its-2012-already-so-where-are-all-the-jetsons-flying-cars/>