

Ps 87:1,3  
 Hy 1A  
 Ps 139:4,5,13  
 Ps 37:9,10  
 Ps 25:2; Hy 36:1,2  
 Exodus 30:22-33  
 Luke 3:21,22; 4:1-21  
 1 John 2:18-29  
 LD 12

Yarrow, January 17, 2010

Beloved Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Jesus once asked His disciples who they thought He was. Peter answered for them all, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16). It’s an intriguing answer. We are so used to the term “Christ” that we see it simply as another name for the Saviour. But to Peter’s mind the term was not just another name. The word ‘Christ’ is the common Greek word for ‘an anointed one’ – Messiah. Peter, then, says of Jesus that He is the anointed one, and by so saying explains what to his mind Jesus *is*. And yes, that makes his answer intriguing. What does Peter mean by calling Jesus a ‘Christ’, an ‘anointed one’, Messiah? What *is* that??

We need an answer to that question. After all, the people of our community know us by the same name; we’re known as ‘Christians’. What’s that term ‘Christians’ really mean? *What are we?*

I summarise the sermon with this theme:

## **ANOINTING EQUIPS US FOR OUR TASK IN GOD’S WORLD.**

1. Anointing in the Old Testament
2. The anointing of Jesus
3. The anointing of God’s people in the New Testament

### ***1. Anointing in the Old Testament***

Peter called Jesus “the anointed one”, “Christ”. Peter knew his Old Testament. It stands to reason, then, that in Peter’s mind the term ‘anointed one’ received its loading from the Old Testament practice of anointing. That practice has its roots in Exodus 30.

We read the passage. The first so many verses give us the recipe for the anointing oil (vss 23-25), the next number of verses relate what Moses had to do with this anointing oil (vss 26-33). The recipe itself does not need our attention today. What is important for us, though, is what Moses was told to do with this anointing oil. Says the passage: with it Moses had to anoint the tabernacle of meeting and its furniture, as well as anoint Aaron and his sons the priests.

Why? Why did the tabernacle have to be anointed, and Aaron and his sons also? In finding an answer to that question, we need some understanding of the situation in which the instruction was given.

The people of Israel, we are to know, were camped at this point in time at the foot of Mt Sinai. Holy God had come to them in chap 19 in His splendour and majesty, and established with this nation of sinners His covenant of grace (Ex 20). Part and parcel of this covenant God established with Israel was the fact that He wanted to live amongst them; holy God and sinful man should be *together*. Hence the instructions of chaps 25-31; God told Moses to build a tabernacle, told him how to build this tabernacle, what it had to be made of, what furniture had to go inside, what had to be done in the tabernacle day after day, etc.

It's material, congregation, with which we're familiar. The tabernacle itself was to include a Most Holy Place behind the curtain; that's where God was enthroned on the mercy seat of the ark. In the Holy Place on this side of the curtain stood the incense altar, the lampstand and the table for the showbread. In the courtyard outside the tent was the altar of burnt offering and the laver where the sacrifices were washed before being offered.

The whole setup proclaimed the gospel. At the foot of the mountain were thousands of tents of the Israelites, and God's wish from on top of the mountain was that He would have a tent in the midst of this camp of sinners where He would have a place to live amongst them. Immanuel: God *with* His people. Yet the only way holy God on top of the mountain could dwell in the camp of sinful people at the foot of the mountain was that the sins that stood between the people and Himself were taken away. That's why the altar of burnt offering was placed strategically *between* God and the people; the daily sacrifices of that altar spelled out how God could live amongst sinners. For the message of the altar was that sins were washed away through the blood of Another; God, therefore, would see the people as free of sin and therefore be able to live with them and they with Him.

Still, there was a problem with the whole thing. The *purpose* of the tabernacle is clear; it's to spell out *that* God lives with His own, to spell out *how it's possible* for God to live with His own. But tell me, congregation, can a construction made with sinful hands, made from materials of a fallen creation, be home for *God*? Can furniture made with sinful hands, made from materials of a fallen world, serve to proclaim the gospel of *God's redemption*? We understand: that cannot be. For God is too holy to have in His presence anything that reminds of sin. Similarly, the gospel is too rich for earthly bits and pieces to convey it. There, congregation, is the material of Ex 30. This place and its furniture, and the priests who labour there too, need to be *set apart*, need to be *sanctified*, need to be *equipped* so as to be made able to carry out the honourable function for which it's all intended. How is the tabernacle and its furniture and its priests to be set apart for God, equipped to be the house of God? See there what the anointing commanded in Ex 30 is all about.

That's what happened. When the tabernacle was completed, Moses made it his business to anoint the tabernacle, the ark, the altar of incense, the lampstand, the altar of burnt offering, etc (Lev 8:10f; cf Ex 40:9-16). And when the priests were to be ordained to their office, Moses anointed them with the holy oil (Lev 8:12).

So we know, congregation, what the purpose of the anointing was. But to get to the bottom of it we also need to appreciate what the oil of anointing symbolized. This anointing oil turns out to be a symbol of the *Holy Spirit*.<sup>1</sup> I know: that's not said in so many words in God's revelation to Israel at Mt Sinai. But in His later revelation God did make that clear. For example, many years later the Lord told Samuel to *anoint* Saul as king in Israel (I Sam 10:1)<sup>2</sup>. And behold the result: at his anointing the Spirit of God came upon Saul (vs 10). The same is true of David; when David was anointed "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward" (I Sam 16:13). And the prophets make clear that where the Spirit is poured out a renewal occurs so that the decay resulting from the fall into sin is taken away and replaced with renewal and life.

The anointing in the tabernacle, then, symbolized that the Holy Spirit was now present in the tabernacle and so dominated that building and its furniture and people that each could carry out the

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<sup>1</sup> See B vanZuijlekom, *God Komt tot Zijn Volk* (Uitgave Bond van Mannenverenigingen op Geref. Grondslag, 1986), pg 103; I deWolff, *De Geschiedenis der Godsopenbaring*, II (Enschede: Boersma, n.d.), 329. See also FB Meyer, *A Devotional Commentary on Exodus*, Vol 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1952), 137.

<sup>2</sup> The oil used in Saul's anointing was not, says Goslinga, the oil of Ex 30. Cf his *I Samuel* (Kampen, Kok, 1968), pg 220. Of David, however, it is said in Ps 89:20 that he was anointed with "My holy oil." Given that I Sam 16:13 is not specific about which oil was used (though it was the special anointing oil), we may do well to consider Saul also anointed with God's holy oil.

task in God's kingdom to which each was called. Hearts by nature dead in sin were renewed so that Aaron and his sons could live in God's presence and serve Him at the altar. Materials gleaned from a fallen, sinful world were so sanctified by the Spirit that this tabernacle could be a fitting place for God to dwell. The anointing with oil symbolized the mighty working of the Holy Spirit.

That, of course, also explains why the tabernacle and its furniture were anointed once only, and not a second time. For what the Holy Spirit has sanctified and renewed for God's service needs not be renewed and sanctified time and again.

## 2. *The Anointing of Jesus*

Peter, now, says of Jesus that He is "the Christ", is "the anointed One." We understand it now: Peter is saying of Jesus of Nazareth that the Holy Spirit has come upon Him, has sanctified Him, has set Him apart for His special task and equipped Him. Peter is saying that ultimately the same thing has happened to Jesus as happened in the tabernacle at Mt Sinai. Jesus: in His human nature He tasted all the consequences of the fall into sin. Yet with His anointing, He was enabled, equipped to carry out the task God set for Him in His kingdom.

Of course, for us the question then is: when did the Holy Spirit come upon Jesus, when was He anointed? Our Lord's Day directs our attention to Jesus' baptism in the Jordan, Luke 3 – an event of which Peter surely was familiar. True, at Jesus' baptism nobody came on God's command with a horn of oil to anoint Jesus with that anointing oil. But God Himself was there, and He poured out on His beloved Son the Holy Spirit Himself. Jesus did not receive the *symbol*, the oil; Jesus received the *real thing*, received what the oil symbolized. So Jesus was set apart, ordained by God the Father to do the specific task God laid upon Him. More, through that anointing with the Holy Spirit Jesus of Nazareth was *equipped* to carry out the task received.

That Jesus indeed was equipped to do the work given to do is precisely what Luke writes. After Jesus' anointing in the Jordan, Luke interrupts his account with inserting Jesus' genealogy (Lu 4:23-38). But after the genealogy, Luke picks up the story again in chap 4:1, and what's he say? This: "then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." That's to say: the Spirit who had come upon Jesus at His baptism now *dominates* Jesus, *directs* Jesus. Jesus has a task to perform, and the Spirit *enables* Jesus, *equips* Jesus to carry out that task. So He's driven into the desert, there to fight against sin and the devil. And see, He *can* do the task God gave; in the desert He resists sin and the devil, does not give in to temptation.

Then we read in 4:14 that the same Holy Spirit with whom God had anointed Jesus directed the Lord back to Galilee. And what task does He enable Jesus to perform there? Vs 15: "He taught in their synagogues." Vs 16ff gives an example. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, Jesus comes to Nazareth, goes to the synagogue, and is asked to read the Scriptures and speak. He finds the portion of Scripture which says –vs 18– "the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me." And of that text Jesus says, vs 21: "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." In other words: Jesus tells the people of Nazareth that the Holy Spirit has come upon *Him*, tells them that He's been *anointed* – here's a reference to His baptism. And what's the work to which He was anointed? Vs 18:

"To preach the gospel to the poor;  
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives  
And recovery of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;  
To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."

Do you hear it, congregation? Here is His work as *Prophet*; He must preach the gospel, must proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Here is His work as *Priest*; He must heal the brokenhearted,

must atone for the sins that stand between sinners and God. Here is His work as *King*; He must battle with sin and Satan in order to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ensnared by the bonds of sin. Prophet, priest, king: the three terms are fitting handles to lay hold of all that this anointed One is given to do.

And what happened? Precisely that! Under the direction of the Holy Spirit Jesus of Nazareth laboured for three years to carry out the task given to Him, and He performed it with perfection. The result is that sinners through the ages can know the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption, sinners throughout the ages are redeemed by the one sacrifice of this anointed Jesus on the cross, sinners throughout the ages are governed by the ascended King and always defended and preserved in the salvation He obtained for us. Anointed He was, and therefore in the power of the Spirit enabled to carry out His God-given task in this sin-filled world. See there what Peter at heart was saying when he said of Jesus that He was “the Christ”.

### ***3. The Anointing of God’s People in the New Testament***

This anointing, brothers and sisters, is promised to you and to me also. In the covenant God established with us, not the Father and the Son alone come with riches promises, but the Holy Spirit does too. Listen to the Form for Baptism:

“When we are baptized into the Name of the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit assures us by this sacrament that *He will dwell in us* and *make us living members of Christ...*”

That’s to say: at our baptism already you and I were promised the anointing of the Holy Spirit! That’s the identical promise of which Peter spoke on Pentecost day, when he said to the crowds before him that “the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39). And it’s precisely this promise that was fulfilled when these very same person repented of their sins and came to faith in Jesus Christ; they were anointed with the Holy Spirit. That is why Paul could say to the saints of Corinth that “you are temples of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19), and again: “He who ... has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts...” (2 Corinthians 1:21f). That is equally why Paul could elsewhere write that the Spirit of God dwelt in them (Romans 8:9,11). And John could say to his addressees that “you have an anointing from the Holy One...” and “the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you” (1 John 2:20,27). Yes, and that is why in Antioch “the disciples were ... called Christians” (Acts 11:26) – “anointed ones”. For the Holy Spirit, promised in God’s covenant of grace and foreshadowed in the anointing oil of the tabernacle, is poured out on all God’s own –that’s the gospel of Pentecost– and equips these children of God for the task God gives them in His kingdom.

Then it’s true: so much sin remains in us, and the effects of our fall into sin are so evident still. But the anointing of the Holy Spirit sets us apart –despite the sins that remain– so that by God’s judgment we’re acceptable homes for the Lord God, and that anointing equips us too to carry out the task that comes with being temples of the Lord.

What that task it? This: God’s act of making us temples of God in the Spirit gives to us the task, the responsibility, to *be* temples of God, dwelling places of God in the Spirit. The Old Testament tabernacle, dwelling place of God in Israel, was itself not a living thing; it could not defile itself. But the priests who laboured in the tabernacle could defile both themselves and that tabernacle. How? By embracing sin in their lives and by tolerating sin in the tabernacle. Hence the instruction of God to the priests to ensure that they kept themselves far from sin and whatever reeked of sin. You, brothers and sisters, are temples of the Holy Spirit, and therefore need to *be* temples of the Spirit. Concretely: keep yourselves from sin. That’s exactly the apostle’s point in 1 Corinthians 3: “you are the temple of God and ... the Spirit of God dwells in you.” Then Paul adds these words: “If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are”

(vs 17). Let's be clear on it: to give oneself to sin while God has anointed you with His Holy Spirit is to invite God's condemnation. He tolerates sin in His temples today no more than He tolerated sin in His temples in the Old Testament; recall how God struck dead the two sons of Aaron because they offered unholy fire to God in the tabernacle, recall too how God struck King Uzziah with leprosy because he transgressed God's commands in the temple. It is so instructive that right after God the Spirit made His homes in His own, Ananias and Sapphira fell dead because they lied to the Holy Spirit.

What, then, since God dwells within, what shall come out of my mouth? God has said: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). Well now, if God dwells within, shall I permit foul language to come out of me? If God dwells within, shall I permit my mouth to speak words that show that I'm excited about idols – be it idols of money or sport or recreation? If I share Christ's anointing so that the Spirit of God dwells in me, shall my mouth not speak the things of the Spirit? In the words of the Lord's Day: "as prophet [I] confess His Name."

Again: if God dwells within, what is it that I'll give my eyes to behold? What shall I give my hands to do? Where shall I have my feet take me? If God dwells within, shall I permit my eyes to behold evil? If God dwells within, shall I let my hands do what God says is sin? If I am a temple of the Holy Spirit, shall I let my feet carry me to a place where the Spirit of God is absent? We understand the answer is No. Since I share the anointing of Christ, since the Spirit of God has made His home in me, I shall "present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to Him." In denial of Self I shall give myself to the Lord's service with all I have.

Once more: if God dwells within, how shall I respond to sin around me and to Satan's attacks against me? Shall I cave in to the pressures of my peers and give myself to sin? Shall I offer Satan no resistance, let sin dominate me? We know: if God dwells within, that won't do! If God dwells within, I'll "fight with a free and good conscience against sin and the devil in this life."

Can we do it? Truth be said: we find it so hard to *be* the Christian God wants us to be.... To guard the tongue always, to keep our eyes and hands from evil, to resist every temptation: we find it hard, tiring, frustrating.... And we think: I mustn't have enough of the Holy Spirit..., I'm not good enough a Christian.... And we say: no, we can't do it....

But that's not true, beloved! You and I *can* fight against sin and Satan. Jesus the Christ was anointed with the Spirit and in that strength resisted the devil, overcame the devil, defeated sin and Satan. The same Spirit has made His holy home in your heart and mine. Will He not equip you and me to *be* temples acceptable to God?!

Let there be no mistake, brothers and sisters: once the Old Testament tabernacle was anointed, it *was* anointed. This anointing did not come in degrees, as if the one item in the tabernacle was better anointed than others. So too today. The Spirit is poured out in fullness. The apostle says that "you *have* an anointing from the Holy One" and "the anointing which you have received from Him *abides* in you" (1 John 2:20,27). Here is not language of partial anointing, or of anointing that needs to be 'done' again. Rather, congregation, the very fact that you have been anointed guarantees that you *are equipped for the task God has given*. This is the promise: by the power of the Spirit you have received, you are enabled to confess His name, you are made able to present yourself as a sacrifice of thankfulness to Him, you are made able to fight against sin and the devil in this life (cf Rom 6). This is something you may *believe* and work with. I know: we have only a small beginning of the obedience God requires. But do not, beloved, do not let your failures get you down. Rather, take to heart the promise of Pentecost and fight on!! Let it be fixed in your mind: you *are* a temple of the Spirit of Jesus Christ –that's the gospel– and He strengthens you to *be* a temple acceptable to Him.

Do you *believe* all this? Do you *accept* the wealth God has promised you in your baptism? The question is important because not every one in the congregation *works* with the reality of Pentecost. And therefore is not driven by the Spirit promised at baptism either.

Who, then, is a Christian? Those who are *anointed* by the Holy Spirit. And that anointing cannot be hidden; an anointed one, a *Christian*, is Prophet, Priest and King *in deed*.