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The first forty chapters of Isaiah offer words of warning and doom to the people of God who had gone astray and were about to be punished by the Babylonians. Our lesson today from Isaiah (Isaiah 43:1-7) is part of the second part of the Book of Isaiah which is written to people who had already been taken off to Babylon as captives. His message to them here is "do not fear." The people of God are reminded that God created them, redeemed them, and has saved them in the past – so, of course God would save them again. Saving people is what God does.

In the Book of Acts, written by the evangelist Luke, we find the story of the growth and development of the earliest Christian communities living in the wake of the Resurrection of Jesus. In today's lesson (Acts 8:14-17) we're told that the people of Samaria had come to believe in the Good News of Jesus, and had been baptized. However, they had yet to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Two of the apostles travel to Samaria to pray that they would be filled with the Spirit, and indeed they are.

We read a portion of this Gospel lesson (Luke 3:15-17, 21-22) a few weeks ago on the Third Week of Advent. In Advent this passage focused our attention on John the Baptist as the one who prepared the way for the coming of Jesus. Today we read this passage on the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord, and therefore we're obviously to focus our attention on Jesus' baptism.

Call and Response

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, and you are mine.
Do not fear, for I am with you;
For you are precious in my sight.

(Adapted from Isaiah 43)

Discussion and Question

If you were baptized, what was it like? Who was there? Where was it? Did anything particularly memorable happen? Are there pictures? Do you remember it?

Have a conversation about the baptisms in your family. Break out the scrapbooks. If you haven't done so already, figure out the date of your baptism, and mark it in your calendar as something to remember this year.

Prayer

Gracious God, we thank you for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation, through it the children of Israel walked into their freedom, in it Jesus was baptized by John. Help us remember and be grateful for our baptism, for in it you have called us by name, and claimed us as your own. Amen.

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