

032810 HE CAME TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT

(We call Jesus Savior, Messiah and Lord. That is our faith.

When is it that he truly becomes our Messiah, our Anointed One?)

He came to make things right because we could not. He came from God to end the estrangement between God and us because we could not. God had promised to send Him, to send the One who would lift us out of the pit we had dug for ourselves. He would come to restore, to renew, to recreate, to transform. And, as Isaiah the prophet said, he never turned back. He did not even shield his face. And as Saint Paul said: he emptied himself. He humbled himself. He remained the true Son, the obedient Son of the Father.

He had no last name. He was just Jesus. Or, Jesus of Joseph and Mary. Or, Jesus of Nazareth. He came to have something of a last name although it was really more of a designation or a title than a last name. CHRISTOS, in Greek. IESOUS CHRISTOS. In Hebrew, Yeshua Messiah; Jesus, the Messiah. In English, Jesus, the Anointed One. Christ, Messiah, Anointed One. They all mean the same.

In ancient Israel, olive oil, like today, had a variety of uses. They would even sometimes apply olive oil to their skin to give a glow or sheen to the skin. It made the person look vibrant, alive, healthy, and strong. And so, it became part of the ancient culture. They would formally put olive oil on those whom they wanted to be strong; their leaders, their kings and generals and judges. In the sphere of religion, they would anoint with olive oil their priests and prophets. The anointing was a sign of strength and in a religious context the strength was not mere human strength but the strength of the Spirit of God.

Jesus is the Messiah. At his baptism by John in the Jordan River, the heavens opened and the Spirit of God descended upon him in the form of a dove. That is the actual anointing with the Spirit. From that moment on, whatever Jesus said was filled with the presence of the Spirit. Whatever he did had the transforming power of the Spirit. All his thoughts, all his journeys, all his emotions were filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Remember the woman with the alabaster jar of fine ointment who breaks the jar and pours the ointment on his head? Jesus takes that as a prophetic sign of his impending death. But when is Jesus actually anointed with olive oil?

Saint Luke, of all the evangelists, is the one who gives us the clearest answer to that question and he provides it in the Passion Account which we just heard. His answer however is indirect. After the Passover Supper on that initial Holy Thursday night, Jesus and his apostles go out across the

Kidron Valley from Jerusalem. They go to the foot of the Mount of Olives to one of his favorite places on earth, to the Garden of Gethsemane. That is what Jesus and his apostles always did when they had journeyed up to Jerusalem from the Galilee. They would sleep out under the stars or under the olive trees or other protective shrubbery. There was water there both for drinking and bathing. Now Jesus is there and instead of sleeping he asks his disciples to stay awake and pray with him but they do not fare so well. Luke, the dear and glorious physician, depicts the agony of Jesus as being of such intensity that the beads of perspiration become small drops of blood on his forehead slowly dropping to the ground as he writhes under the stress and weight of the moment.

All of this is happening in Gethsemane. Now it is helpful to know that a Gethsemane is an olive press. Wherever there are olive trees there would be a large olive press. The gathered olives would be dumped into the cavernous hollow of the olive press and large stones would be put on top of the olives. The weight of the stones would slowly crush the olives and there would be a spigot below and a container would be placed there to catch the drops of olive oil as the olives would be crushed and give up their oil. The oil would drip, drip, drip until the container was full and another would be put in place. In this place where the olives were being crushed, Jesus himself is being crushed—under the weight of our sins. And the effect of the crushing weight forms the drops of blood that drip, drip, drip from his forehead. It will be the beginning of the process of his blood being poured out. It will continue to scourging and to Calvary until the blood is all gone. In Luke's theology this moment in Gethsemane is the moment when Jesus truly becomes the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. The drops of blood are the drops of olive oil from his forehead.

He is Jesus, the Messiah, taking on our sins. Isaiah says that Jesus was crushed for our offenses and he never turned back, never shielded his face. He set his face like flint and he emptied himself and humbled himself. And he did all this—for us.