

12-13-2001

Advent Devotion His Name Shall Be Called “Anointed One”

S. Ray Granade

Ouachita Baptist University, granade@obu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/creative_work

Recommended Citation

Granade, S. Ray, "Advent Devotion His Name Shall Be Called “Anointed One”" (2001). *Creative Works*. 43.
https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/creative_work/43

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Publications at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Creative Works by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact mortensona@obu.edu.

Advent Devotion
December 13, 2001
His Name Shall Be Called "Anointed One"
Isaiah 61:1-3

The Israelites anointed people and things for three specific reasons. Ordinary anointings included personal grooming or a sign of hospitality. Medical anointings symbolically transferred the disease-causing sin onto God or practically salved a wound. Official anointings bestowed divine favor or appointed to a special place or function, as when a prophet, priest, or king was set apart and consecrated. None of these reasons was trivial, none to be taken lightly; each signified a conferring of authority over self and others. The prescribed penalty of excommunication for using holy oil for common anointing revealed the action's potency.

Like the Israelites, we anoint people for ordinary, medical, and official reasons. Unlike the Israelites, we generally anoint without regard for the action's implicitly, or even explicitly, holy function. We pride ourselves in our scientific understanding of the world and the rationality of our assessment of causality for particular events. After all, they are signs that we are in control of ourselves and our world to an extent that, we believe, makes us the envy of others. Isaiah's reminder that Messiah means "Anointed One" might resonate with the people of his day, but what have that and those quaint customs to do with us moderns?

As a child, I suffered the ravages of some diseases against which we now inoculate infants. A case of the measles once kept me in bed in a darkened room without the comfort of my beloved books. For part of the time the books didn't matter; a fever high enough to tell me

its own stories stubbornly refused to abate. With the clarity that illness sometimes induces, I remember one evening in particular. In that era when doctors still made house calls, our family physician advised my parents that they had to cool my body enough to bring the fever down from dangerous heights. Since aspirin and careful hydration proved insufficient, their only option was to give me an alcohol bath. I took their anointing as a matter of course, catching only a hint of the anxiety in the low-pitched dialogue that preceded and surrounded the operation.

About two decades later, I understood the anxiety my parents must have felt on that long-ago night. My own son's illness produced a stubborn fever that ranged high enough to make his voice squeaky. He was our first-born, and we were far from home in an era when doctors did not make house calls. In the night's loneliness we anxiously anointed him not with alcohol, but with water, laving it over his head as he sat in the tub. It was a comfort to have something to do other than sit and watch. Still, I lacked the trust in anointing's efficacy which I had enjoyed when I was recipient rather than administrator. Now I knew the risks.

My thoughts this Advent season are not on the Anointed One as Elijah's prophetic heir, or as the high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, or even as David's royal son. Instead, my thoughts are of the Anointed One who brings good news to the afflicted, binds up the brokenhearted, and comforts those who mourn. My thoughts linger on the Psalmist's lack of fear even in "the valley of the shadow of death" because God has anointed his head with oil. My thoughts are with two sick boys, and two sets of parents who realize with unsettling lucidity that their modern scientific

understanding and rationality provide only the illusion of control. Most of all, my thoughts turn to the One who realizes that those six people, and untold numbers like them, need anointing, and sends a babe in a manger to be at once the Anointed One, the Anointer, and the oil—the balm in Gilead which heals the sin-sick soul.

Ray Granada