

January 10, 2010
Baptism of Our Lord

"The Holy Spirit Anoints Jesus at His Baptism"

LUKE 3:15-17, 21-22

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. ¹⁶ John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." ²¹ When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

What do the names Tom Tom, Garmin and Magellan have in common? All three are electronic devices or GPS devices that direct you to your destination as you travel in your car. Type in the address and they will show you on a screen where you are going and even speak to you as you drive along, directing you exactly where you want to go.

How many times have you gotten lost this past year or taken the wrong road? I don't mean in your driving, I am referring to how you lived your life for the Lord? We need the Holy Spirit to constantly bring us back to Jesus and show us the blessings we have in him. The baptism of Jesus our Lord is important because the Holy Spirit directs our attention to Jesus our Lord and God as the only One who can save us from the eternal death and destruction. That will keep our faith strong and keep us from getting lost in some remote, empty, dark road where Satan will have his way with us.

We need the Holy Spirit to direct us to Jesus

We can see how much we need the Holy Spirit to direct us to Jesus by looking at the mindset of the crowd that came out to visit John the Baptist along the banks of the Jordan River. The words just read to you tell us: "The people were waiting expectantly and were wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ." Notice it says that they were wondering in their hearts. They were doing some serious looking into their hearts and feelings to try and determine if John the Baptist was the Christ, the promised Savior.

I don't know about you, but when I start relying too much on my feelings and emotions to make decisions, I can easily get off the main road and find myself hopeless stuck in some ditch. Modern advertising appeals to the emotions and feelings to sell the product. Marshall McLuhan once said, "It is all about the medium not the message." We are living in a "follow your heart culture" when it comes to buying products and also connecting spiritually. This even applies to how moral decisions are made. "If it feels good do it."

Oh, how the people were moved and touched by the dynamic preaching and teaching of John the Baptist. They were following their hearts as they wondered if he were the

Christ. They were like some of the people who followed Jesus with their hearts when they thought he could provide them with all the material prosperity they needed during economically troubled times much worse than our times. God's Word has something to tell us about the faulty guidance system we have in our hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" Jesus said in Matthew 15:19, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, theft, false testimony, slander."

Some years ago we received a free book in the mail with the title, "Self Esteem, the New Reformation." This California pastor tells that we should not preach to people about sin, instead we need to encourage them to recognize what a wonderful person they are inside to help them live a new life. He tells a touching children's story about a boy who finds an egg in the woods and places it into a nest of goose eggs so it would hatch. The creature that comes forth from the egg is not a beautiful soft downy gosling or baby goose, but a freakish creature with deformed, claw like feet and strange twisted and pointed beak. It made terrible squawking sounds instead of the soothing peeping sounds of the soft gosling. While the goslings swam in the water, this deformed creature sat on the shore. One day this strange bird, heard the sound of an eagle flying overhead. He stretched his wings and started flapping as he ran across the barnyard. A gust of wind picked him up and a started to soar. He discovered who he was. He was an eagle and all his life he had tried to be a goose. Then the pastor makes the point that church of today needs to help people see who they are so they can soar like an eagle. How different this is from the Holy Spirit who wants to see how far we have fallen short of God's glory so we put our trust in what Jesus has done to save us.

How did John the Baptist deal with the crowds who were following their hearts and wondering whether he was the Messiah? He turns all the attention away from himself and directs their attention to Jesus. "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." The people said, "John, you are our hero. You are our champion." John told them to find their champion, not in him or even in themselves but in Jesus. He tells them he is there to serve Jesus just as a servant takes off the sandals of the master to wash his feet. He told them they would see so much more in Jesus when he would miraculously baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

This past Christmas we gave our youngest son an electronic GPS system that he can use to find his way around Los Angeles and San Diego. Even more important than this is the guidance system Jesus has given to our children and to all of us is the blessed Holy Spirit. Jesus called the Holy Spirit our comforter who teaches all things and brings all things to our memory. It is the job of the Holy Spirit to convict us of our sin and lead us to confess how helpless and lost we are with such simple words as "Lord Jesus, forgive me of all my sin." It is the work of the Holy Spirit to help us see how Jesus loved us and made a full payment for every sin ever committed so we can have peace with God in this life and for all eternity. When we watch Christian people die whom we love, we know the Holy Spirit is there to comfort and encourage them. When we see Christian people we love getting lost, we know the Holy Spirit will be there to direct them back to Jesus.

Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit and with fire because some day he come in judgment to separate the chaff from the wheat. He will come to take us to be with him, just as the

farmer takes the precious wheat and stores it in his barn. John the Baptist tells us that this Jesus who will come as our judge to burn the chaff in unquenchable fire is "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

We can see people all around us who are constantly being misled by their hearts that our corrupted by sin. But we also see ourselves getting off the main path all too often. If the year 2010 is anything like 2009 we know we will have our personal struggles with what goes on inside of us as Paul confessed so freely, "For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate I do." That is why we desperately need the Holy Spirit to direct our eyes to Jesus. Let me read to you a portion of this beautiful prayer Paul prayed for the Christians in Ephesus. "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:16-19)

We have the Holy Spirit to direct us to Jesus

Could anything be more beautiful than the Holy Spirit directing our attention to Jesus at the moment of his baptism? "When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased'" As Jesus was being baptized he was praying. Can't you hear him praying, "Father, help me. Father, help me in this important job you have given to me of rescuing people who are lost. Help me give my life for them to save them." As Jesus steps into the water to be baptized he plunges himself fully into the work of rescuing us.

The Holy Spirit descends on Jesus in the form of dove. Instead of being anointed with oil, Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit. Shortly after this Jesus would stand up before his hometown people and read to them in the synagogue from the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." When he told his hometown people that the Spirit of the Lord had fallen on him, and he was the anointed one predicted by these words of Isaiah, they wanted to immediately stone him to death. How do we know that we should no trust in ourselves but lean totally on Jesus for our salvation? The Holy Spirit comes down on Jesus and says, "Here is the one. Here is where you need to put all of your trust and all of your hope." Trust him for your forgiveness. Trust him to help you in time of temptation. Trust him when it comes to believing everything will work out in your life for his glory and for your good.

In the movie, "The Green Mile" a prisoner on death row has the strange, miraculous ability to heal sickness in his condemned body. The movie portrays him absorbing cancer cells in his body and then dying with it himself. When Jesus stepped into the waters of the Jordan to be baptized and the Holy Spirit came down in the form of a dove, he was announcing to the world that he was ready to take everything you have done wrong upon himself and die in your place so you can be forgiven. There is not another religion in the world that teaches anything like this. Martin Luther called this the "sweet swap." 2 Corinthians

says, "He became sin for us, who knew know sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in him." That's where our Holy Spirit and our heavenly Father direct us to place our trust. He became what I was, that I might become what he is. That's our Jesus and we have the Holy Spirit who directs us to him constantly, 24/7, hour by hour and minute by minute. That's a direction system that will not fail you as you travel down the road of life this coming year. Amen.