

January 9, 2011
The Baptism of our Lord

“Jesus Shows He Is the Christ at His Baptism”

MATTHEW 3:13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵ Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. ¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Permit me to begin this sermon today by asking a series of questions that begin with “Where do you go for help..?” Where do you go for help when you have a problem with your car? (Mechanic) Where do you go for help when you have a problem with your teeth? (Dentist) Where do you go for help when your plumbing doesn’t work right? (Plumber) Now a more difficult question, where do you go for help when your computer starts acting strange and weird? Do you call a friend, try to figure it out on your own, or pay someone to come in and tune it up for you?

Here is the most important question of life. “Where do you I go for help with my problem of sin that will condemn me to an eternity in hell, if I cannot get rid of it?” You know the answer to that question. It is Jesus. It was Jesus who said so simply and clearly, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Today we are going to watch Jesus as he steps into the waters of the Jordan River to be baptized by John. By being baptized Jesus is announcing to the world that he is the Christ or the Messiah. He clearly tells us he is the One to do a good job of removing the serious problems we all have because we have allowed sin to come into our lives. Even the Holy Spirit comes down from heaven to anoint Jesus and let us know he is the Christ. And then the Father speaks from heaven telling us that he is pleased with the work that Jesus was doing to rescue and save us.

When you hire a mechanic to fix your car, or a dentist to fix your teeth, or a plumber to fix your broken faucet, it can cost you a lot of money. Jesus amazing work of rescuing us from our sin cost us nothing. It is totally free. He is the Christ, the one to do the job right for us. It cost him everything but it cost us nothing. Let’s go to the Jordan River this morning and watch as Jesus show us clearly that he is the Christ as he is baptized for us.

He steps into the Jordan to be baptized

There is determination written all over the face of Jesus as he leaves Galilee and walks to the Jordan River where John is baptizing. “Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.” Before this Jesus has done very little to show people that he was the Christ. People came to John to hear God’s Word, receive the forgiveness of sins, and have

their faith strengthened by Baptism. Jesus does not come to the river to have his sins forgiven. He comes to show that he is the one to forgive sins. His baptism demonstrates to the whole world that he is the one to do the job and do it right.

At first John the Baptist did not understand the importance of Jesus' baptism. It says, "But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?'" The word that is translated "deter" is a strong word. John did not want to baptize Jesus. He tried to dissuade him. He stated emphatically that he wanted to be baptized by Jesus because Jesus was far greater than he was. It was John the Baptist who told the people that the one coming after him was so great that he was not even worthy of untie the laces on his sandals.

Jesus gives us the reason why he wanted to be baptized when he said, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus wanted to fulfill all righteousness. He wanted to do everything right that we could never do right on our own. Up to this point, at the age of 30, Jesus has done everything right. He has lived the perfect life in his childhood, his teen years, and now adult years that we could never live. He is about to enter into his public ministry, a ministry that will eventually lead to the cross. He will do everything right. He even wants to step into the waters of the Jordan River to join sinners who need baptism and identify with them. Jesus will eventually become the worst sinner the world has ever known because all the iniquities of the world will be laid on him. 2 Corinthians 5 tells us, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God."

This morning I invite you to watch Jesus as he is baptized by John. Notice how willing he is to take on the job of being your Savior. As he steps into the water and John baptizes him, your Savior is telling you this morning that he has not failed to make a full atonement for every sin that has been committed in your life and mine. How clear the prophet Isaiah predicted the good job Jesus would do for us when he had the Lord God speak these words about Jesus. "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight... In faithfulness he will bring forth justice." Jesus did everything necessary to bring forth justice or righteousness. He did everything necessary for the heavenly Father to carry out the ultimate justice of pronouncing you not guilty by raising Jesus from the dead.

Think of how miserable we would be if we had to be on our own to clean up the messes we make in our lives. Have you ever hurt someone by words that you have spoken or things you have failed to do? It is hard to fix things when we make a mess of them. How many times have you failed your God this past week? There is no way we can make up for even the least little thing we have done wrong. As Jesus steps into the waters of the Jordan River to be baptized, he sends a powerful message that says, "I am going to do this all for you."

The Spirit anoints him

Notice how the Holy Spirit also supports Jesus in the job he was doing to save us. "As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove." It says here that the heaven was opened. I don't know how this happened but it did. In a miraculous way the heavens

open up, almost like an opening in a cloud. This is a miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit to let the world know that the Holy Spirit would support Jesus in the work that he would die.

Already in Isaiah the prophet the Lord Jesus spoke of the support he would receive from the Holy Spirit when he spoke these words, "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor, he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners."

John the Baptist knew Jesus was the Messiah, because he had witnessed the Spirit of God descending on Jesus in the form of a dove. The Lord God had told John, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." John the Baptist said to the people "I have and testify that this is the Son of God."

Oh, how the Holy Spirit loves to direct our attention to Jesus and lead us to confess with John the Baptist that he is our Lord and God. We are told in the book of Corinthians, "No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." Our beloved Holy Spirit was with us this past Christmas season and led us to believe with all our hearts that a tiny baby lying in the manger in Bethlehem is our Lord God. It is the Holy Spirit who leads us to kneel down with the wise men and worship Jesus as our Lord and God. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit in John 15, "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me."

In our second reading for today we heard how Peter talked to some Gentiles about Jesus. He wanted to convince them that Jesus did not just come for the Jewish people, but all the people of the world. Here is what he told these people about Jesus' baptism and the anointing that came from the Holy Spirit. "You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee, after the baptism that John preached- how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power." The Holy Spirit says to us this morning: "Look at Jesus. He is your Lord and God. He is the one to get the job done for you. No one else can save you and rescue you from your sin."

The Father acknowledges him

There is even more evidence that Jesus is the one to save you. Listen to the voice of God the Father speak to the world as Jesus comes up out of the water. "And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'" There are also several times when the Father spoke out loud to Jesus. Here the heavenly Father tells us in the clearest possible words how pleased he is with the life Jesus was living. After Jesus finished his life on this earth, and died on the cross for us, the Father made a very powerful statement that he accepted everything Jesus did by raising Jesus to life again.

Our heavenly Father finds great pleasure in jobs that our done well. We think of how our Father looked at his creation in Genesis and pronounced it good. He rested on seventh day to admire the work of his hands. The Father finds pleasure in taking care of us and working out everything for good. What pleases our heavenly Father the most is the life that Jesus lived here on this earth. No one ever lived such a life before that was totally

free and devoid of any imperfections. As you listen to how please your Father was with the life of Jesus, think of how pleased he is with you this morning because everything Jesus did is now yours through faith. His perfect life and his perfect death and his perfect love have now become yours. He has covered you with his righteousness as we heard in our sermon last week.

Where are you going to go to find help for your problem of sin? Where are you going to go to find the perfection you need to be accepted and loved by God your Heavenly Father? There is only one place to go and that is Jesus. Jesus baptism assures you that you have come to right place to be saved. Amen.