

January 9, 2022
The Baptism of Jesus

"When Jesus Met With Us"

ST. LUKE 3:21-22

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
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Dear Friends in Christ,

Gene Veith wrote:

It should not be possible for Christians to be disillusioned... When a human being disappoints us, when someone we admire turns out to be a hypocrite, when the Church itself proves corrupt, we should not be too surprised. This is our sinful condition. Christians know that there are no good people, that we are all lost, wallowing in our sins and capable of the most horrible actions, if not for the actions of a Savior. (Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Loving God With All Your Mind*, Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway Books, revised 2003, p.49).

Those are truly hard words for most: "Christians know that there are no good people, that all are lost...". They're hard words, but they are very Scriptural. As David said, "God looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all fallen away; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one." (Ps.53:2-3).

Indeed, we should not be, but often are, disillusioned. Expecting more out of people than people can give. Forgetting that maybe, sometimes, we don't do much better. Maybe worse. Maybe not wanting to forgive. Forgetting some of the nasty, vicious thoughts we often have about others, and that tendency to verbalize and exaggerate them.

Today we are attending the Baptism of Jesus. We're to consider . . .

WHEN JESUS MET WITH US

I. "The People."

"Now when all the people were baptized..." (Vs. 21a). All the people. The ones referred to earlier in this chapter of Luke. These words: "...he (John the Baptist) went into all the region around the Jordan (to all the people), proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." (Lk. 3:3).

But the application was not only for the people of the past. It's for the people of the present. Us. We always come back to that - the need of forgiveness - over and over again. And that's because we end up committing most of the same sins over and over again.

I understand, everybody has their perspective when it comes to the issue of sin, the death it brings and its damning effect. Everybody's a theologian and everybody has their perspective. But the perspective we want is God's. And His is not a perspective. It is the truth about every one of us.

As the Scriptures teach, "We were by nature children of wrath..." (Eph. 2:3). And Paul says, "...just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned..." (Rom. 4:12). Though most hate to hear it, and few, today, are willing to confess it, the confession is honest: "I a poor, miserable sinner." The truth of that hasn't changed with time. Look at our thinking. Look at this world.

And, brothers and sisters, we don't measure sin by the way we see it. The issue isn't how this world sees or understands sin. The issue is, of course, how God sees sin. And the answer to that takes on extreme and frightening proportions when facing the grave. Paul writes, "The wages of sin is death...", physical and eternal. A fellow by the name of Michael P. Barrett observed: "Human reason is never the measure of sin's severity." (Faith For The Family, Feb. 1977, p. 17). Of course, it isn't. And, like or not, every time we experience a loved one or friend go through the process of dying and death - every time we face a frightful tomorrow - every time we find ourselves in line to comfort a person who has lost a loved one - we can only conclude: something terrible has happened and something is terribly wrong.

II. "Jesus Was Baptized Too"

But listen, our text says, "Now when all the people were baptized and Jesus had also been baptized." And, of course, the "Why?". Why was the sinless Son of God baptized into John's baptism - a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins? St. Matthew's account of Christ's baptism gives further insight. There was that moment when John tried to stop Jesus from being baptized. But Jesus said, "'Let it be so now, it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.'" (Matt. 3:15). Jesus is going to correct the terrible things that happen, the things that are terribly wrong!

For many going through some sort of trouble that is tearing into their lives the meaning of this doesn't register well. After all the question is, "What's God going to do about what's going on now?" What about now?" But, you see, all the bad stuff that's "going on now" is the direct result of man's disobedience to God - man's unrighteousness - which has brought every conflict, fear, failure, pain, sorrow, suffering and death into every life.

I know you've heard this before, but, please hear Luther on this:

Why does He (Jesus) come and seek Baptism, as there is no sin and uncleanness in Him which Baptism would remove? ...John here is getting a sinner who in His own person has no sin, and yet is the greatest sinner, that has and bears the sin of the whole world. For this reason He permits Himself to be baptized and confesses with this action that He is a sinner. However, not for Himself, but for us. For He here takes my place and (your) place and stands in our stead who are sinners...he must become a sinner for all; He assumes the form of our sinful flesh.

Please remember: The One Who bore the pain and death and hell for every sin of every sinner is keenly aware of the guilt and sorrow and pain we carry. What He said to the exiled church of the Old Testament through Jeremiah, He says to us who are also exiled in this world of sin and death:

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart." (Jer. 29:11-13).

And remember this, as Paul and Barnabas clearly stated: "...through many tribulations we must to enter the kingdom of God..." (Acts 14:22b). The people of God go through tribulations as a result of belonging to Christ, because the world hates Him. But, look, we never go through them alone. Never. As the Holy Spirit assures us through David:

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous (that's us, through faith in Christ), and his ears are attentive to their cry...The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Ps. 34:15 & 18).

Please consider those statements once again. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous. He observes us. Watches us with the deepest interest and care. His ears are attentive to (our)cry. Like a Mother constantly tuned to the cries of her helpless child, so God is tuned to our crying. The Lord is close to the broken hearted, to those broken by sin and guilt and their consequences. (He) saves those who are crushed in spirit. Saves. Salvages. Lifts us from eternal loss to unending victory!

III. "Well Pleased."

And with that comes this word from our text: "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.'" (vs. 22). We dare not miss the Father's words: "...with you I am well pleased." Since the Son's mission was to do everything necessary to secure the forgiveness of every sin and eternal life, and since the Father is pleased with this, then the Father is pleased with us through faith in what Jesus has done for us.

As someone said, "The truth about man is that he needs to be loved the most when he deserves it the least. Only God can fulfill this incredible need. Only God can provide a love so deep (that) saves from the depths." (author unknown). And that's the love we see at the Jordan as Jesus is Baptized for us. And it's the same love that came to each of us at our Baptisms. Jesus met with us at our baptisms and, as Scriptures say: "...for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:26-27).

As has been stated many times, in our Baptisms in Christ - our Baptisms with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit - we were dressed in Christ's sinless life, dressed in His righteousness. God makes us His own. He meets with us in the Word and Sacrament - and says to each: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite." (Is. 57:15). And that's what happened when Jesus met with us.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott