

**Sermon      The Baptism of Our Lord      January 10, 2021**

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

We have now burst headlong into the second part of the Christmas season – *Epiphany*. Epiphany is much about light. The Christmas star revealed its light to the Magi, lending them awareness and direction. Today in Jesus' baptism, the light of God found in Jesus is revealed to our eyes of faith. He is the Morning Star who shines on us the infinite love and mercy of God and directs us in the way of truth and righteousness.

Baptism is an important event. The Bible is a book of baptisms. It begins with a baptism as the Spirit of God hovered over the primordial waters of creation and from it called forth all that is. That same earth was baptized again in the cataclysmic flood. Israel underwent a baptism as they crossed the Red Sea. Jonah had his whale-sized baptism. On Pentecost the disciples were baptized with the Holy Spirit in power. As it began, so this world will also end with a baptism, only this time the active element will be fire. The old will pass away under its heat and as with a forest a new world will emerge from the ashes. When there is a baptism, important things happen. Things change for the better.

Now let's focus on that day when Jesus visited John at the Jordan river. By this time, countless thousands had responded to the powerful preaching of John and had undergone his baptism. Jesus also went down to the river. There were so many people gathered at the river getting baptized it may have been a bit like taking a number and waiting to be served at the Oakmont bakery! Despite John's prolific production numbers, Jesus' baptism, at its very core, was different than the rest. His baptism stood out from the crowd.

***And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." Mark 1:10-11***

We never see this sort of thing happening at baptisms today. It didn't back then either. In fact, it only happened once in all of history. But what a big one-time event this was! Here we see a picture of the Trinity with the Son in the water, the Father speaking from heaven, and the Holy Spirit descending upon and into Jesus. That's about as plain and simple of an illustration as you can get. It's pretty awesome.

But as wondrous as the truths about the divine nature are that we are taught by this picture, it's the words spoken by our Father that are the kicker. He says,

***"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." Mark 1:11***

From the time of Abraham to this point in Bible history, God only address two other people as his son. The first was Israel as we see in Exodus chapter 4;

**Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” Exodus 4:22-23**

The other person God addresses as his son is King David. David writes in the second Psalm;

**The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.” Psalm 2:7**

In Jesus’ baptism, Psalm 2:7 is quoted over Jesus clearly revealing his identity as Son of God.

But there is yet someone else who God calls his son;

**For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. Romans 8:14**

In our baptism we, too, receive the Holy Spirit and become sons of God. Our identity is now fused with Jesus’.

Since in baptism we are clothed with Christ, God can speak the rest of those words he spoke over Jesus at the Jordan, “... with you I am well pleased.” God is pleased with you. He really is. Is it because we are such good and worthy people? No. If that were the requirement, we would never find God’s favor. God is pleased with us because his very nature is one of love and mercy. He illustrated how much he loves all of us by being born of Mary, living a typical human life with all its joys and sorrows, being crucified in our place, and bringing an end to our death. This is the very heart and nature of God. We need have no doubt as to whether or not God is pleased with us. This is the good news of God’s infinite love for each of us.

God is pleased with me. God is pleased with you. God is pleased with every one of his people. This is the heavenly state we are given to live in. When we take displeasure in a brother or sister and then respond with harsh words, negative criticism (often behind their backs), and hurtful actions, the light of God has left our hearts and we have receded back into the very darkness Jesus has rescued us from. Let there be no mistake about this. A further proof of this truth is found in Jesus’ directive for us to even love our enemies. However, when we walk in his light, we will enjoy its warmth ourselves and bring it to others who need it as much or more than we do.

God bless you as we walk in the light of his love together as his children in whom he is well pleased! Amen

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