

Good Shepherd, January 2024

Mark 1:4-11

March 9, 1946, was the greatest day of my life. I was living in Milwaukee at the time. I was three months old when I was carried to Grace Lutheran Church in downtown Milwaukee. It was my baptism day. My parents, Ed and Marcella Meier were there; my sponsors Wayne Paul and Sally Tweedale were also there along with the pastor, William Sauer. I don't know if I cried when the water was sprinkled on my head. But this I do know, when the water was applied to my head in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, my sins were forgiven, faith was begun in me, and I was welcomed into God's family. Although I didn't realize it then, that was the greatest day of my life!

Every baptism is special, and miraculous! This morning may the Holy Spirit help us see -

What is so special about Jesus' and our Baptism?

John got his nickname "The Baptist" because baptizing was what he did. John baptized at the Jordan River. It was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation.

But that isn't all that John did; he also pointed to the One who makes baptisms count. John's message was this: One, more powerful than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of His sandals! I baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

John was a messenger of God. He proclaimed, Look! The Lamb of God! What John did affected those who came to him. But what Jesus would do, affected the world.

Jesus came to the Jordan River to be baptized. Why? Jesus had no sin. He was the Son of God! He didn't need Baptism!

Jesus was baptized to be "ordained" into His public ministry which was about to begin. God the Father approved of Jesus' ministry saying: You are My Son, whom I love. I am well pleased with You.

The Holy Spirit was also present in the form like that of a dove, empowering Jesus to carry out His work.

And Jesus was also there; He was the Son of God, who

- *as a Prophet would proclaim the gospel message;*
- *as a Priest would sacrifice Himself for the sins of the world;*
- *as the King would win the victory over Satan, sin, and hell.*

Jesus was about to announce to the world that He was the Savior of the world! He had important work to do!

What does John's baptizing and Jesus' baptism mean for us? Let me ask you:

- *How well have you carried out your responsibility as a Christian husband, wife, or a single person?*
- *How well have you carried out your responsibility as a Christian parent, child, employee, a council member or a student?*
- *Have you loved God with all your heart, gladly heard His Word, and patiently endured tribulation?*
- *Have you been disobedient, selfish, quarrelsome, lazy, and unforgiving?*
- *Have you lied, stolen, hated or gossiped?*
- *Have you drunk too much, taken drugs you shouldn't have, or allowed indecent thoughts to set up camp in your mind?*

We are failures, aren't we? We need help! We need to confess our sins to God!

A Christian's life is to be one of repentance: acknowledging sin, being sorry for sin, and turning from sin because of what Jesus did for us. John's baptism did that. There was forgiveness for

sins and a pointing to Jesus as the One who would back up that forgiveness with His life!

At His baptism, Jesus began His ministry: teaching, healing the sick, raising the dead, and keeping God's law perfectly for us. Throughout that ministry, the Father would say: You are My Son, whom I love; I am very pleased with You.

At the end of His ministry, Jesus went to the cross to pay for sins: mine, yours and everyone else's. Because of the evil we have done and the good we failed to do, Jesus was stricken, smitten, and afflicted by His Father.

Imagine Jesus on the cross. Darkness covered the earth. In the awfulness of hell's punishment, Jesus cried out, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? After Jesus had paid for sin, He said, It is finished and Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit. Why did Jesus go through this agony? So that we would not suffer as He did, so we could be a part of His family forever!

The Father accepted the sacrifice of His Son and showed the world that salvation was a done deal by raising Jesus from the dead. You can almost hear the Father saying on Easter You are My Son, whom I love; I am pleased with You.

Because of the work of Jesus, God forgave the sins of all people. In baptism, all the blessings that Jesus won for us with His perfect life and His innocent sufferings and death were given to us. At that time, the Holy Spirit planted faith in us and began to live in us. So, be careful with your faith! Hold onto Jesus, our Savior!

Our sinful nature will try to take our hand of faith off the cross of Christ. You are a baptized child of God! You were baptized! That means something! Begin each day in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, just as the pastor spoke those

same words at your baptism! No matter what Satan whispers in your ear, you are a forgiven child of God and an heir of eternal life!

We will continue to sin. Satan will remind us of our sins. The blessings of baptism are ours because of Jesus. Knowing that we are a child of God can give us comfort in every problem of life.

Jesus cares! Your baptism proves it! **Jesus loves you, this you know, for your baptism tells you so!**

Baptism is a little water and God's powerful Word. A miracle takes place every time someone is baptized. At your baptism you received forgiveness of sins, faith, and salvation. That makes your baptism day the greatest day of your life!

So bring the babies. Let the adult converts come. Come to the waters that wash away sin. Go in peace, and whenever you see the baptismal font, let it remind you how much God loves you!

1091