

Sermon for The Baptism of Our Lord

Date: January 13, 2018

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Isaiah 43:1-7

Epistle Reading: Romans 6:1-11

Gospel Reading: Luke 3:15-22

Sermon Text: Matthew 3:13-17

Sermon Title: Why was Jesus Baptized?

Introit: Psalm 2:7-11,12c; Antiphon Isaiah 42:1a

Hymns:

LSB 590 – Baptized Into your Name Most Holy

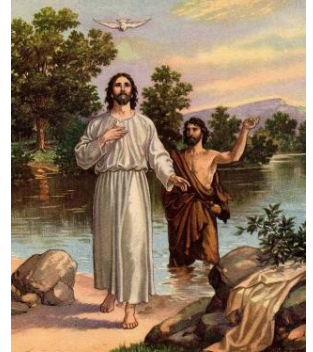
LSB 605 – Father Welcomes All His Children

LSB 601 – All Who Believe and Are Baptized

LSB 594 – God's Own Child I'll Gladly Say It

Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184



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Text: Matthew 3:13-17

Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John, but John tried to stop him and said, “I need to be baptized by you. Why are you coming to me?”

Jesus answered him, “This is the way it has to be now. This is the proper way to do everything that God requires of us.”

Then John gave in to him. After Jesus was baptized, he immediately came up from the water. Suddenly, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down as a dove to him.

Then a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love. My Son with whom I am pleased.”

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

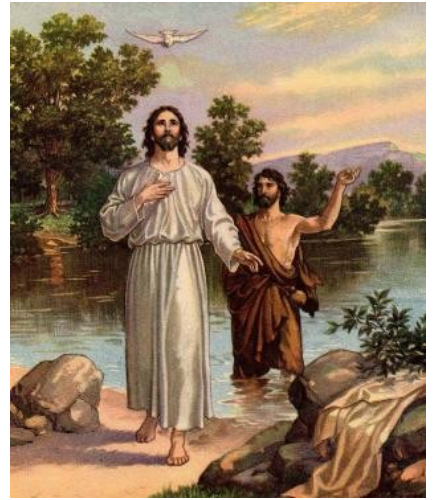
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Grace, peace, and mercy be yours in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

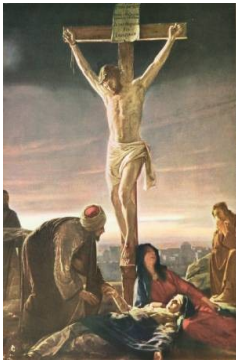
Here's a question for you. Why was Jesus baptized? Did He have sins that needed washed away? Was He baptized so that He would have membership in the Church (or Temple in His day)? Was He baptized only as a symbol to show His faithfulness? These are the questions we are going to answer today as we focus our attention on Jesus' baptism.

There are three events in Jesus' ministry that are most important. The first is His birth which we have just celebrated. We just had a big birthday party for Jesus all over the world, celebrating the fact that the promised Messiah, promised for thousands of years,¹ had finally come. The second is His death on the cross and His resurrection. Without these two events we have no reason to believe, or have faith, in anything.²



The third is His baptism. Because without His baptism we would have no baptism, and then no life in the Holy Spirit. Jesus' baptism is one of the most important and critical events in His life. Though I would guess that most of you probably had not thought of it that way. In fact I would bet most of you have, if you've thought on it at all, wondered why Jesus had to be baptized in the first place.

Well if you've ever asked these kinds questions don't feel too bad, you're not alone. John the Baptist, a man chosen by God to prepare the way for the Holy Messiah of God, was also confused on this point. When Jesus came to the Jordan river to be baptized, John tried to stop Him saying, "I need to be baptized by you. Why are you coming to me?"³ If John was confused you certainly have a right to be. Let's see if we can clear up the confusion.



Let's start by asking an easier question. Why was Jesus crucified? He was crucified to pay for our mess, our sin. You all know that. On the cross He paid our debt. On the cross He suffered the pain of Hell so that you would never need to know what that is like. He was baptized for the same reason.

Jesus, who was sinless became sin so that we could be sinless.⁴ At His conception Jesus, who is Lord of all, stepped down from His royal throne of glory into the staining mire of a sin filled world. More than that He became

1 Genesis 3:15

2 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

3 Matthew 3:14

sin. He was baptized, and in that baptism joined us, or maybe better we join Him, through that baptism.

In holy baptism you are washed clean. You are made perfect just like Jesus is perfect. So are you sinless? Do you live a perfect life? Are you living the wonders of Heaven's perfection right now? No. We are *Simul justus et peccator*. That's a Latin phrase used often in theological discussions. It means: simultaneously saint and sinner. At our baptism we are made perfect like Jesus, yet at the same time we remain sin soiled.



Jesus, perfection incarnate, perfection in human form, was baptized. Now we who are baptized are joined with Him, to Him, and we are cleansed and made holy like Him. We who are baptized into Christ Jesus have been clothed in Christ.⁵ We are drowned in holy baptism and raised up again into holy life.



(These are ancient Baptism pools I saw when I visited Israel.)

I think it is unfortunate that we in the Lutheran church so rarely practice full-immersion baptism anymore. Now the amount of water doesn't matter, and our baptisms here are fully real, empowered and infused by and with God's Holy Word. However there is a powerful visual lesson that is taught as a person is put under the water and lifted back out. The symbols of drowning our old sinful self, the image of being washed clean, the image of new birth and new life are all such powerful lessons that we miss in our traditions. Which is why many Lutheran churches have begun to install baptistries to accommodate full immersion baptisms of adults and children.

Jesus, when He was baptized, was confirmed to be, as we are, a child of the Most High God. The Holy Spirit came upon Him in the form of a dove and the Father spoke, "This is my

4 2 Corinthians 5:21

5 Galatians 3:27

Son, whom I love-my Son with whom I am pleased.⁶” These same things happen at your baptism. Through baptism you receive the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, and the free gift of faith. Through baptism you receive the Father’s approval as His own child. This is why we sing:

Father welcomes all His children,
To His fam’ly through His Son.
Father giving His salvation,
Life forever has been won.⁷

Jesus’ baptism has become the source of power in our baptism. God, as He has revealed Himself to us in three person, is present at Jesus’ baptism the same way He is present at your baptism. As we are baptized we become like Jesus, and we are given the right to be called children of God.⁸ In that light the water that flowed over Jesus from the Jordan river also flows through this baptismal font right here in this church. The same cleansing water that flowed over Jesus flows over you. The same powerful perfection that He was, you also become. This happens because we are baptized into His name⁹ according to His command.¹⁰

All that Jesus brought to the water of baptism is now there for you. While you bring nothing to the baptismal waters, you take from it everything that Jesus brought. All the glory and majesty of Heaven are yours because these waters have become a cleansing flood through the power of Jesus. This includes: His righteousness, innocence, blessedness, and holiness that is given to us by His Word in the water of our baptism. Our baptism in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit.¹¹

It is for that reason we have the right to boldly confess that these waters, joined with God’s Holy Word, are nothing less than the water of eternal life. By the power of the Holy Spirit, this is not a mere symbol, or imitation of Jesus’ work. In holy baptism you are stained with the stain of perfection, and provided with life and renewal by the Holy Spirit who now lives and dwells in you.¹² The old Adam in us, the old sinful self, has been forced aside. We are a new creation.¹³

Why was Jesus baptized? Did He need to be? No. Jesus did not need anything from baptism. He was baptized for the same reason He died on the cross. For the most important reason He can think of, you. We share in that baptism. We stand with Him in those waters. We

6 Matthew 3:17

7 LSB 605 *Refrain*

8 John 1:9-13

9 Acts 2:38

10 Matthew 28:19

11 Titus 3:5

12 1 Corinthians 6:19

13 2 Corinthians 5:17

are washed clean and are now like Him in the eyes of our Heavenly Father. A Father who says to us, just as He said to Jesus, “This is my child in whom I am well pleased.”

Now we are *simul justus et peccator*. simultaneously saint and sinner. We now, as baptized children of God, need to regularly rid ourselves of the old Adam.

The old Adam in us should, by daily apology and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires and again a new person daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.¹⁴

Jesus was baptized for us and with us, so that we could be like and with Him. We can now stand before all who would accuse us and proclaim boldly, “I am a child of the Most High God. I am perfect in His sight.”

Our:

Father welcomes all His children,
To His fam'ly through His Son.
Father giving His salvation,
Life forever has been won.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

