

Sermon for The Baptism of our Lord

Date: January 10, 2021

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

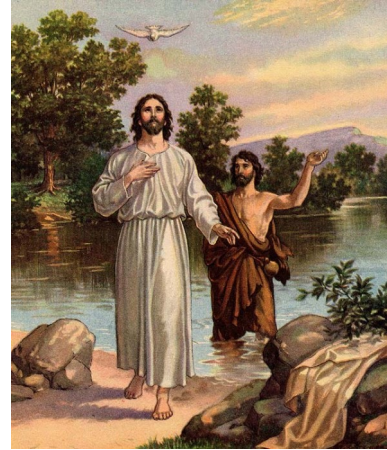
Old Testament: Genesis 1:1-5

Epistle Reading: Romans 6:1-11

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:4-11

Sermon Text: Mark 1:4-11

Sermon Title: Mark My Words



Hymns:

LSB 601 – All Who Believe and are Baptized

LSB 398 – Hail to the Lord's Anointed (v,4-5)

LSB 544 – O Love, How Deep

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

Songs:

All Who Are Thirsty

Grace Like Rain

My Savior My God

The River

Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: Mark 1:4–11

John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opening 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."

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

St. Mark is a man of few words. He wrote the shortest of the four Gospels. That doesn't mean he has little to say. When he speaks, his words are loaded. They are dense and packed tight with meaning. He wants to make you think, to ponder each word.

That's what we see in the Gospel reading today. Mark tells us of Jesus' baptism using only three short verses. That might lead some to believe it must not be very important. It is. Mark is telling us these things because it is important. He puts it right at the beginning of his Gospel. It's the first thing he wants you to know about Jesus.

Mark writes, "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee..."¹ Jesus came. Few words, but with much meaning. They tell us Jesus was there intentionally. He didn't just happen to walk by, see some commotion going on by the Jordan, and wander over to see what was happening. Jesus came, and for this very reason He came. The journey was not short, nor was it easy. He left mother and family behind. He came to begin His work of salvation; to deliver all people from the bondage of sin. Jesus came on purpose, to this place, for this moment. Jesus came to be baptized. Because that is what He wanted. Because we were on His mind. He came, willingly, purposefully, intentionally. That is Gospel² good news for us.

Mark continues, "... and [He] was baptized by John in the Jordan."³ Mark makes it sound like Jesus was baptized just like everyone else. No difference, but it was not the same. Mark tells us everyone was baptized by John as they were "confessing their sins."⁴

Jesus did not have any sins to confess. He did not inherit sin, nor commit any sins. In fact, He should have been repulsed by crowd! Talk about a cesspool! The people there were filled with sin. You name the sin: idolatry, adultery, immorality, murder, theft, hate, prejudice, lying, selfishness, pride, greed, – and Jesus jumps right in with them. To be counted among them. To be counted among us.

The Father in heaven should have been disgusted with such a display. The Holy Spirit should have been repulsed by these things. Yet that's not what happened. The

1 Mark 1:9

2 'Gospel' is a Greek word that means, "Good News."

3 Mark 1:10

4 Mark 1:4

First and Third Persons of the Holy Trinity are over-joyed that the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God, is there among us.

Mark records the “the Spirit descended on [Jesus] like a dove.⁵” Mark also records the Father’s own words. “You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.⁶” This is exactly right, and exactly what Jesus was sent to do; came to do. This is the will of God, for Jesus to stand and be counted with sinners. More than that, for Jesus to take our place.

Mark records, “when Jesus came up out of the water, immediately... the heavens were torn open.⁷” That’s quite an unusual word to use there. Now remember, Mark, the man of few words, chooses his words carefully. Here he uses a word which he uses only one other time in his entire Gospel. That word ‘torn’ is the same word he uses to describe what happens right after Jesus died on the cross.

There Mark reports, “the curtain of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.⁸” By using that word only twice he connects the two events. Mark connects the beginning of his Gospel with the end. He connects Jesus’ baptism with His crucifixion. He does that so we may know that as Jesus takes our sins on Himself in His baptism, He is carrying them to the cross, so that the division that separated us and God, that closed Heaven to us, is removed. With our sin on Jesus, and with His death for our sin, Heaven is torn open for us. The curtain is torn open for us. We are right with God. Our sins are forgiven. They are gone.⁹

It is no wonder the Father is pleased! It is no wonder the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus like a dove. In, with, and under the baptized body of Jesus, the world is being re-created.

Listen to the Word of God, spoken from the very throne, as John records them in the Revelation of John.

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away... Behold, I am making all things new.¹⁰”

5 Mark 1:10

6 Mark 1:11

7 Mark 1:10

8 Mark 15:38

9 Psalm 103:12 – As far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us.

10 Revelation 21:3-5

In the record of Creation it is written, the Holy Spirit hovered over the water¹¹ in the first creation. Now Mark shows us the Holy Spirit is again over the water. That is not serendipitous chance. It is no coincidence.

Just as in the beginning the Word of God spoke and brought life and light, so now the Word of God made flesh bring life and light to all. In Him is a new beginning, another Genesis. In Him everything is again “very good,¹²” because He is taking away the sin of the world. All of this He now gives to you.

Did you hear what Mark recorded? It is what John the Baptist said right before he baptized Jesus: “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.¹³” Do not let the few words obscure their importance. They tell us that just as Jesus came to the Jordan to be baptized, so He comes here, where His Word is combined with water, to Baptize you. The hands may be mine, or that of another equally humble and unworthy pastor, but it is your Savior Jesus who Baptizes you. He is still in the water with you, for you, saving you.

He is not ashamed to be seen and counted with you. He washes your sins off of you, and gives you the Holy Spirit, making you something new. “Behold I am making all things new.” The Holy Spirit descends on children of God, which by virtue of your Holy Baptism is what you are, a child of God.¹⁴

Through those ‘torn open’ heavens, the Father looks on you and sees not the sinner, but the forgiven, and dearly loved child, with whom He is well-pleased. Not because of anything you have done or will do, but because of what Jesus did for you. Because Jesus in the water means the water is for you:

... a life giving water, rich in grace,
and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

We are a new creation. By water and the spirit, the old
has gone, the new has come.¹⁶

Such an honor we do not deserve.

The Father should look down from Heaven and say , “Go clean yourself up.” The problem is not only couldn’t we do that, we wouldn’t. On our own, we cannot see who we are; we cannot see Jesus for who He is. So we either think: “My sin is

11 Genesis 1:2

12 Genesis 1:31

13 Mark 1:8

14 John 1:12

15 Luther’s Small Catechism

16 2 Corinthians 5:17-18

not so bad so of course I'll be saved!" or we think "My sin is so bad I'll never be saved." Today, God sets the record straight.

Yes your sins are great, they are plentiful and they are serious. Deadly serious. Eternal death serious. That's why God sent His Son to deal with them. No angel, no man could have done this. Only Jesus can come to to fix this. Only Jesus can take them off of you and put them on Himself. Only Jesus can die for them in your place, so that you may live. Just as He lives.¹⁷

That new life is not just any ol' life, but a new life. His life. A Christ life. You are forgiven. Your salvation is secure. Jesus' death and resurrection is your death and resurrection, and there nothing you can add it. St. Paul records:

We were buried with Him by Baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.¹⁸

There is nothing you can do to add to that. In Christ that is who you are.

As we come here, confessing our sins and receiving our Savior's forgiveness, we do not eat locusts and wild honey. We eat the true Body and true Blood of your risen Savior, given and shed for you. Living for others as Christ lived for you. Such an honor we do not deserve, but what a privilege. To serve, to speak, to live as the new creation you are as a Baptized child of God.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**



¹⁷ Romans 6:5

¹⁸ Romans 6:4