

## **Weekly Study of Sunday's Message**

**January 4, 2026 "Advent: "The Platform of Jesus. His baptism"**

### **I Intro.**

HAPPY NEW YEAR!! Or at least the 4th day. Can you believe it's already 2026?! We'll all probably still be writing 2025 for the next few weeks. Things will be gearing back up over the next few months. You'll want to keep up with everything that's happening at NCC. Stay connected through our social media to keep up with everything that's going on. Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are fully committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

### **II Sunday.**

Now, let's kill this great moment and mood. It's an election year. YAY— right? I know we're all so excited to hear political propaganda, yes propaganda, for the next 11 months. We're going to get; "*sick and tired*" of hearing all the ads, and seeing all the signs. We're going to get pulled in all sorts of directions this year. We'll see some ads, signs and we're all; "*TAKE THAT!! That's what I'm talking about.*" And we'll see other ads, signs, and we're all; "*That's just garbage, and so not true.*" Because we're going to strongly agree or strongly disagree with what we're hearing and seeing. We're going to get whipped and tossed all over the place. And find ourselves getting pulled to places, battling emotions, and more, because we feel like we're right. And by 'feel like we're right', I mean 'know with certainty'. If we're honest, we're going to end up chasing things that will make us compromise some of our deeper values. Because we want those things we feel 'right' about to get done. And we're going to end up overlooking, not condemning, things because we're so easily swayed by the deep desire to see what we so strongly believe happen. Deep down, it'll affect our walk with Christ. And blur our ability to determine what is Christlike and what 'feels' moral. This went dark really quickly didn't it? **Does all this sound scary— and possible?**

We've got some work to do to help us make it through this new year. We need something to attach ourselves to so we won't be whipped around. One of my favorite words is 'moored'. It's what they do with small boats during storms. Moored means to be anchored to what is solid, protected from drifting, establishing security, by maintaining a connection to something. BUT— if you are moored to the wrong thing, you'll be tethered to something that won't protect you, keep you in place. You also will not experience the freedom IN Christ that he desires for you. We need to be grounded in what it means to be a follower of Jesus. To be grounded well, we're going to look at moments from the beginning of the ministry of Jesus to help us see what was important to him. Because what was important to Jesus, should also be important to us. What was important to Jesus will help form within us what should be important to us. And SHOULD hold us in place through all the storms of 2026. Since it's an election year, we're calling this; "***The platform of Jesus.***"

## **Scripture– the baptism of Jesus.**

This is the opening, introductory, event in the public adult life of Jesus. We've just been through a season of celebrating the announcement of, and the birth of Jesus. Now we jump to his public ministry. His first public act lays the foundation of what his ministry, and work would be about. What was important to Jesus, and why. We'll look at the actual baptism first, then we'll fill in the backstory to give us context.

***Matthew 3:13-17. Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”***

Let's unpack this passage.

**1. Jesus begins his ‘campaign’ with a humble act– in public.** Jesus wanted the crowds to know him. This is more than kissing hands and shaking babies. This is more than just speaking to the crowds. Eating big corndogs, or fried– whatever politicians eat at a state fair. This wasn't performative. It wasn't to win followers or draw a crowd. The ministry of Jesus, the work he was doing, was one of action, not just words. The Pharisees made holiness about appearance rather than substance. Many of the religious elite lived more for public show rather than personal growth. (Not that this applies to anything today). You can always tell whether a politician is actually one of us or not. They are actually humble. Humility was a foundational element in who Jesus was, how he lived, what was important to him. And it is in humility we ground ourselves to live as Jesus did.

**2. Solidarity with the people.** This reference to the baptism of Jesus is one of my favorites. There's a subtle overlooked important nugget of info in this specific account.

**Luke 3:21 When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened.**

Jesus was baptized with lots of other regular everyday people. When we do our baptisms here, the first ones get the cleanest water. And those who come into the water later– well, they get an extra reward in heaven. Jesus, in his first public act, was announcing what his platform would be. He was announcing his solidarity with the everyday person. This was; “*I am one of you.*” So, in addition to this being a humble act in public. It was a leveling (letting go of his ‘rights’) public act of being one of us.

**3. Jesus and his full humanity.** Tell me if you struggle with this. Sometimes it's tough for me to imagine the humanness of Jesus. We love the divine nature of Jesus. The saintly God in flesh. White flowing robe, perfectly quaffed hair, kind of a glow around him. When we do that, we make Jesus distant, unrelatable. In fact, we'll excuse ourselves from being transformed into the likeness of Jesus, because we so accentuate his divinity, it makes him unapproachable. There's no way we can be like him. Next week we'll talk about the temptations of Jesus, I'll share the struggles of a ‘too divine’ Jesus, that challenges the ‘realness’ of him being actually tempted. Not embracing the ‘humanness’ of Jesus, we can also diminish all the work of Jesus– especially the cross.

This baptism is an essential event in the life of Jesus showing us who he is. In his baptism, Jesus was fully showing his human side. “*I don't get the limo, the green room, the fresh cut flowers, the*

*special treatment*". Jesus, in this establishing his 'platform', is full on declaring, by just being baptized along with everyone else, "***I am one of you. I am one WITH you***".

The platform of Jesus is not only about Jesus humbling himself. But his platform also declares solidarity with us— all of us, and each of us. "*I am one of you. I am here to live among you.*" "*I'm not giving instructions from on high. We are in this together.*"

If I could see ANY politician who lived a normal humble life. Thought and lived like one of us. Knew how much groceries were. Pumped their own gas. Got in the same water that I did. I wouldn't care what letter was after their name. I would vote for them. Because I would know that they knew me. This is the whole message and the beauty of God coming in the flesh. And the center of the platform of Jesus. I am not so removed from you. I can't understand what your life is like.

We're going to return to a small phrase in the Matthew passage about his baptism, and unpack it.

**"Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."**

1. Affirming and embracing John's message. Jesus was baptized by John. A confirmation by Jesus agreeing to what John was preaching. Who Jesus called; "*a prophet greater than anyone before him.*" Let's turn to another account of the baptism of Jesus in the context of the teaching of John. John the Baptizer was announcing the coming of the one who would bring salvation to all people. He will remove the things that create disorder in all of creation. The call was to "*produce fruit*". And anything that didn't produce fruit would be cut down and burned. The call was to "*make the pathways straight*". We need to dig into this phrase. Because it sheds light on what Jesus said. This is a different gospel account. Same event. The baptism of Jesus.

**Luke 3:3-14. Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. Isaiah had spoken of John when he said, "He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord's coming! Clear the road for him! The valleys will be filled, and the mountains and hills made level. The curves will be straightened, and the rough places made smooth. And then all people will see the salvation sent from God."**

When the crowds came to John for baptism, he said, "You brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee the coming wrath? Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.'

That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones. Even now the ax of God's judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire."

The crowds asked, "What should we do?"

John replied, "If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry."

Even corrupt tax collectors came to be baptized and asked, "Teacher, what should we do?"

He replied, "Collect no more taxes than the government requires."

"What should we do?" asked some soldiers.

John replied, "Don't extort money or make false accusations. And be content with your pay."

Whew— that's a lot. It sounds VERY political doesn't it? There is a difference between politics and partisanship. Politics are taking care of the affairs of the city. Partisanship is the sides people take in how the city, nation, should be run.

But THIS righteousness is the righteousness Jesus came to fulfill. “*All righteousness*”. This message from John Jesus attached himself to, was John’s platform, Jesus repeats in Luke 4. It’s extra ‘muscular’. And we’ll hit that in two weeks.

We can see a pattern here. We can see, like Mary’s song, and what we’ll see in Jesus at the temple, a very specific explanation of the platform of Jesus. John was saying; “If you don’t produce GOOD fruit, we’re going to remove you.” And the people asked; “**What then do we do?**” “**What IS good fruit?**” Then we see a listing of things John was calling the people to do, that Jesus said he came to fulfill. These were the things important to Jesus, because they were repeated over and over again in the teachings of Jesus. The platform was to fix the things in society that were broken, that were wrong. We all know these things are wrong. We can see and feel them. And John was telling us how to fix them. Jesus was saying in his campaign; “*I approve this message.*”

And if you notice, they are not our definition of personal holiness. John said; “*produce good fruit or else.*” The people asked; “*What is good fruit?*” And John said; “*treat others fairly.*” Now I am NOT saying that personal holiness is not important. How we personally live matters. But John is stating, and Jesus is approving, this is what’s important to Jesus. Each of these warnings are about our relationship to our stuff and others. The practice of radical generosity, our business practices, and don’t say things about others that aren’t true. This was “*all righteousness*” Jesus was talking about.

**And it’s what we want our society to look like. Agree?**

This is pretty simple and straightforward stuff. The platform of Jesus. The VERY FIRST public appearance of Jesus, and it’s this that he’s affirming.

### **III Challenge.**

So, it’s an election year. You’re going to be subjected to some of the worst garbage out there. Lies, lies, and more lies. You’ll get mad, enraged, bothered, bewitched, and bewildered. (One of my favorites. I can be an old head at times). But placing your trust in the platform of Jesus rather than some politician, you will have something real, solid, true, to ground you. To be moored to. To hold you steady, in place when everything around you is trying to toss you about. Jesus clearly stated this was a part of his understanding of ‘*all righteousness*’.

You need this platform of Jesus for your own mental, emotional, and especially spiritual health. Most likely you won’t hear much of this out there. You’ll hear about how bad others are. And how they are the only one that can fix what’s wrong with our country.

But the people around you need a solid real message also. So, when all of the politicians are spewing their— let’s say ‘platform’, the truths Jesus was professing is what we claim. And there’s nothing that can hold you in place. Help you find security and steadiness. An unshakable place to be moored to. Than what Jesus said was important to him. Hold all of this close to you. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you what you need to practice them. To stay steely, and resolutely focused, on the only platform that matters. The platform of Jesus. And maybe our steadiness, proclaiming the voice of truth, hope, trust, truth, can be what keeps others from losing hope this election year. Be humble. You just might be wrong about the specific issues you hold. Be a person ‘of’ the people and ‘for’ the people. You can never go wrong here. Value the things that elevate, honor, and bring dignity to others. THIS is what Jesus showed us in his baptism. THIS is the “*platform of Jesus*”.