

Baptized Into Christ

Bible Verses Referenced: Mark 1:7-11, Acts 19, Psalm 2, 2 Samuel 7, Galatians 5:22-23

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we bless you and we thank you for the gift of a new year, 2024, but also the gift of new life that comes in your Son, Jesus Christ, and in His name. And as we're celebrating the baptism of new children coming into this world and baptizing them into your church and into the life of your Son, Jesus, we pray that You would help all of us to become mindful of our status in Him as Christ's own.

And so we bless you and thank You for all of Your good gifts. May the preaching of Your Word be Your Word for the sake of Jesus in His name we pray. Amen. Please be seated. I'm sorry for the audio issues related to the gospel, but I'm going to be preaching from that gospel passage. And so I want to just reread one of the lines or a couple of the lines from that so that they're mindful before us.

This is about John the Baptist, and John the Baptist is preaching and he says, "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 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." I want to reflect with you today about three things, really. The baptism of John, which is different than the baptism of Jesus.

Jesus' baptism, the one that he personally received, and then, by extension, our baptism. So, for those who need a roadmap, that's where we're going. First of all, the baptism of John. In our epistle reading, there was the story of the apostle Paul. This is taking place after Jesus died on the cross, after he rose from the dead, and ascended to the heaven. And Paul is going about on his missionary journeys around the Mediterranean.

And he comes across in the city of Ephesus 12 people who describe themselves as followers of John the Baptist. And Paul asks them, "By what baptism were you baptized?" And they say, "We were baptized in John's baptism." And Paul explains, "Well, that's not good enough.

It's not enough for you to have just been baptized with John's baptism, because John's baptism is only a baptism for repentance." Now, if you want to understand what John's baptism is about, there it is in a word. It's about repentance. What does that mean? Well, repentance has to do with turning. All of us have probably had the experience of being out of sorts with another person, right?

And when you get that way, you kind of symbolically and maybe even literally turn your back to them. And you may see them coming from the distance, and you turn the other way, and you go the other way. When you're being reconciled with a person, you are literally and relationally turning back to them and wanting to be connected to them and in their life.

And so what John the Baptist is saying, and what he was preaching, is that God is coming into this world in the person of Jesus, in the incarnation, and He's coming as the Messiah. And so, turn, because God wants to be reconciled with you. He wants to be in a good relationship with you. And so John was calling people to turn towards the Lord and to orient their lives to Him.

So that was what His baptism was about. Well, what was Jesus' baptism about? Well, as Jesus is fulfilling all righteousness, He begins His earthly ministry with being baptized by John in the River Jordan. And so, on one level, Jesus is going through all the process of Israel and being baptized for repentance.

Now, we all know about Jesus that he was sinless, so why would he need to repent? And John actually points that out in another gospel passage. Why do you need to be baptized? I need to be

baptized by you, John says. And Jesus is fulfilling all righteousness is what he teaches John. C.S. Lewis, I think, has a great way of thinking about that.

Well, everybody needs to repent, right? Everybody needs to repent and turn back to the Lord. But the problem with repentance is the worse you are, I don't know if that's good grammar, my wife's shaking her head out there. The more worse you are, the badder you are, the not-so-good you are, but the more evil you are, let's put it that way, the less likely you are to repent.

And so, the better of a person that you are, the more likely you are to turn to the Lord. But the less like that you need to repent of things. And so, the only person who could ever repent perfectly would be a perfect person. But they wouldn't need to repent. Well, that's Jesus.

He is the perfect person who has come to do what we as human beings cannot do in our own strength and in our own power. And so He is coming as our representative head and to be humanity and to do what humanity can't do for us. And that's the incredible gift of Jesus in His coming.

And so, Jesus, when He is baptized, there's a couple of things that happen. There's a voice that speaks from the heavenly realms. We know this to be the voice of God the Father. "This is my Son, my beloved." And what is that all about? Well, you go back to the Old Testament and you hear the phrase "Son of God" was given to King David, actually.

Anybody that was called a Son of God was Messianic. They were called to be the King of Israel. David, the Davidic covenant was one of God saying, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you." You can look at Psalm 2 or 2 Samuel 7.

So, when God says to Jesus, "You are my Son, my beloved," what He is saying to Jesus is, "You are my king." And everybody that's witnessing that moment knows that the one being baptized in that case is not just a regular human being, but that is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. That is the Messiah that is being baptized.

When you hear the voice of God saying, "This is my Son." Now, another thing that happens to Jesus is there is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, describes the Holy Spirit visibly manifest like a dove, alighting on Jesus and filling Him with the Holy Spirit of God. And so, fascinating on the baptism of Jesus, you have the interaction of the triune God.

The Father's voice, the Son is there, and then the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It's a manifestation of the Trinity right there at Jesus' baptism. And so, Jesus will come forth as the anointed one. In fact, that's what the name "Christ" means. It means "Messiah." In Greek, we use the word "Christ".

In Hebrew, we use the word "Meshua" or "Messiah." But basically, what both of those words means are anointing, that these are the people that have been divinely anointed by the Holy Spirit of the living God. Now, let's think about our own baptism. We are called Christians, which means that we are little anointed ones.

And we are baptized into the triune God. We are baptized into the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. But we are baptized into Jesus Christ. And so everything that is given to Him, one, the status that He's given, and two, the ontological reality of the Holy Spirit. I know that's a big theological word, I'll get to it. But all of that is given to us in our baptism.

One of the things we're about to baptize three little ones, and they're being so good, I probably should wrap this up. But these three little ones are going to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and then I will go back to them and listen for this. But I will make a sign of the cross on their foreheads.

And I will say to them, "You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism and marked as Christ's own forever." Now, that has the two things that I just mentioned are really important for our baptism. One is that we receive a status change.

Just as Jesus was called the Son, the beloved, God has transferred us from the dominion of darkness and evil and sin, and under Satan's control, and under the power of all forms of evil, and transferred us into the status of glorious children of God.

One of the most powerful reasons why we're using water as the sign of baptism is because just like the Israelites went from the bondage of Pharaoh through the Red Sea waters into salvation and deliverance to be called the sons of daughters of God. They went from slavery to sonship. That is happening for us.

And so, as you hear those words, "This is my Son, my beloved, with whom I'm well pleased of Jesus." Well, that status has been given to you and to me who have been baptized in His name. Now, we all make resolutions for 2024, right? I know some of you are like, well, I'm going to come to church. I've made that one. I'm going to be coming to church every Sunday.

But the other ones, you know like I'm going to exercise more, I'm going to eat right, or whatever, I'm going to cut down on these bad habits. Well, one of the things that can really help you with actually accomplishing becoming the better person that you're wanting to be, is to understand your status change, to know that Jesus has called you to be His own, and that you're not a failure, you're not judged, you're not condemned, but you are a beloved child of God.

When you really get that and you really understand that, that changes everything, not only about the way that you think of yourself and the way that you carry yourself, but it changes the way that other people relate to you because you're not going to take anything from other people. Why? Because you're a child of God. It only matters what the Lord thinks about you, and God loves me.

I kind of reminded of the young kid that was adopted on the playground and she was being teased by other kids because she was adopted. And one of the things that she said to the other kids was, "Well, my parents chose me, yours got stuck with you." That's what a status change can do for you. But the other thing that the Lord does, and we'll end with this, is He doesn't just change our status, but He actually changes us ontologically.

And I know that's a big word, but what it means is He's changing the core of our being. He's changing literally who we are by the gift of the Holy Spirit and transfiguring us with the glory of God from the inside out. It's one of the most powerful things about baptism, but being sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism means that we are filled with all the fullness of God.

And so, one of our other assignments, if you will take it for 2024, is to fan and to flame the gift that has been given to you in your baptism. To take what has been deposited in your life as the Holy Spirit, and get in touch with that. Find God's presence within your heart and allow the Holy Spirit of God to do what it wants to do.

Sanctification is the process of being more, become more Christ-like from within. You have been given this incredible gift of the Holy Spirit in your baptism to help that happen in your life. But there's a cooperative aspect to it. You have to fan that flame. You have to pay attention to it. You have to find that still small voice. You have to listen and feel it and hear it and discover that.

And when you do, when you find the Holy Spirit working in your heart and in your life, you will bear fruit in your life. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control will start to spring forth like the fruit of trees in your life. And you will also begin to manifest the gifts of the Holy Spirit in your life.

And God will use you in powerful ways in this year if you will fan into flame the gift that is given to you in your baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit of God. So there you go. You've got some things to work on this year. I hope that we'll get to it as a congregation, and it's very exciting to be able to participate in this baptism with these young people, which we're going to do right now.