

I don't know about you, but when I was growing up, almost every class I was in had that kid...that kid who not only was always in trouble, but who also seemed to have a life's mission of bringing everyone else down with him. I'm reminded of this regularly because my youngest son, Joseph, whom I'm pretty sure is going to be a judge one day because he lives with a great burden for justice, often comes home from school and gives Martha and me a "report" about how some of his classmates behaved that day or week. And sometimes, that report includes how so-and-so deviously drew a fellow classmate into the darkness of disobedience, and they both suffered the consequences at the hands of their teacher.

Now, I'd love to tell you that those kinds of influences end when we leave school, but you and I know they don't. In fact, for the follower of Jesus, there is someone infinitely more crafty, more evil, and more relentless than the most wayward third grader. And he is hell bent on drawing all of us into disobedience, to sabotage our ministry and stop us from living out the purpose for which God created us. Peter tells us who that is and what he's after:

**[1 PETER 5:8b] Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**

This morning we begin a new series called "Life Drifts", and we're going to spend the next four weeks in Luke 3-4 learning about the tactics of our enemy, the devil. You see, Satan knows each of us are susceptible to temptation and sin. He knows we have desires that are misaligned with the will of God, and he appeals to those desires constantly in an effort to pull us away from how God would have us faithfully live our lives. Thankfully, though, we are not defenseless against his schemes. We're also going to look at how to withstand those attacks through the gracious resources given to us by God, and the example of Jesus, who shows us not only how to resist those temptations, but also how to thrive in the ministry and life. Because **for us to go where Jesus went, we must undergo what Jesus underwent.**

There's an important verse at the end of Luke 3. **[LUKE 3:23a]** <sup>23</sup> **Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age.** While it sounds like a simple, and almost informational verse, it's actually a hinge moment in Jesus' life. It's a moment bracketed by two significant and formative events: his baptism in the Jordan and his temptation in the wilderness. Those two events prepared him greatly for ministry and for living out the purpose God called him to. And it's two experiences all of us must go through to be effective for God.

This morning we're going to focus on Jesus' baptism. Now, the question has been asked for centuries; why did Jesus need to be baptized? He had no need of repentance. If you have wondered that, you'd be in good company, because even John the Baptist wasn't sure. When Jesus came to the Jordan, John argued that Jesus should be baptizing him, not the other way around. But Matthew's gospel records Jesus' response, and it helps us understand the importance of his baptism and the encouragement it can give us in light of what we are going to discuss over the next few weeks.

**[MATTHEW 3:15]** <sup>15</sup> **But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."**

**Jesus' baptism identifies him as the Messiah.** His baptism began his ministry. It was a ceremony that consecrated or dedicated him to the mission the Father has sent him to fulfill, and it activated all the Old Testament promises of salvation. All of what was written about the Messiah in the Old Testament pointed to this time and this man. His baptism declares the Trinity, authenticating Jesus as God's Son, and also demonstrating the Father and the Holy Spirit and their role in salvation.

When we read the word "righteousness", our minds may quickly go to a set of rules to be followed. But understand, biblical righteousness is more than that. Biblical righteousness is about fulfilling the demands of a relationship. As the Messiah, Jesus would fulfill all righteousness by completely fulfilling the demands of a right relationship with God. He would live intimately connected with God, perfectly obedient, without sin, and ultimately die a sinner's death on the Cross. The act of immersion baptism was a picture, a symbolic anticipation, of his death, burial, and resurrection, the means by which he would fulfill all righteousness.

**Jesus' baptism identifies him with the sinners he came to save.** If Jesus were to provide righteousness for sinners, He must be identified with sinners. We are incapable of fulfilling the demands of a right relationship with God, so Jesus did it for us. We are made right with God because Jesus made us right with God. He fulfilled all righteousness on our behalf and, in so doing, made us beneficiaries of the same gracious spiritual resources God gave to Jesus at his baptism, which we are about to discuss.

**[LUKE 3:21-22] <sup>21</sup> Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, <sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."**

It is at Jesus' baptism where he was given everything he needed to resist the devil and fulfill his calling. The things given to Jesus at his baptism are also given to each of us when we trust in Christ for our salvation. God's grace provides the three irreducible minimums, three spiritual resources, all of us must have to resist temptation and thrive in the ministry and live out our God-given purpose.

**God enables us with his presence and power.**

If there is one thing made clear at Jesus' baptism, it's that he's not alone. He has the intimate Fellowship of the Trinity. He has the presence of his Father, whom we will see stay connected to throughout his ministry, and the Holy Spirit resting upon him. He also doesn't have to go it alone. The Holy Spirit is more than just a presence, He is a source of divine equipping who empowers Jesus to accomplish what God is calling him to. The Holy Spirit will sustain Jesus in times of trial and want. And the Holy Spirit will propel his ministry, ultimately raising Jesus from the dead.

Jesus is also given one more thing to enable him: the audible words of God. God only speaks eleven words in English, but it is new revelation from God, and a reminder that Jesus has also been equipped and empowered with the written Word of God. As we'll see, God's Word will prove indispensable when resisting the temptation of the devil.

We too are given God's presence and power. In fact, there is a constant refrain throughout Scripture that God gives to all who call him Lord and seek to do his will. "I will be with you." Jesus continues that promise as he looks forward to the day of Pentecost.

**[ACTS 1:8] <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."**

Like Jesus, we are never alone. We have been given the fullness of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Our bodies are called his temple, and he permanently dwells in everyone who has trusted in Christ.

Like Jesus, we don't have to go it alone. With the indwelling of the Holy Spirit comes power. You have been supernaturally supercharged to accomplish what God has called you to. You are not called to accomplish anything on your own, and you'd have lousy results if you tried. The Holy Spirit gifts us for our work of ministry, counsels us in how to live our lives, and comforts and sustains us in times of difficulty.

Like Jesus, we are equipped with the Word of God. Jesus said, "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth." The Spirit empowers us to understand, discern, and apply God's Word. It is indispensable for resisting the devil and thriving in our ministry.

The Spirit of God resides in you and works through you. Because of his presence and power, you lack nothing to accomplish what God has called you to.

**God affirms us in his approval.**

At his baptism, Jesus hears three things that all children need to hear from their father. "You belong to me." "You are loved by me." "You are pleasing to me." Jesus is given his identity as God's Son. He is told that he is cared for and loved. And he is told that he matters.

Robert Lewis talks about the importance of Jesus' baptism. In fact, he poses the question of what Jesus would pick as the most significant event of his life. Here's what he said:

**"I fully believe he would point to his baptism. Not his role in creation. Not the feeding of the 5,000 or the resurrection of Lazarus. Not even his own resurrection. His baptism...At one of the most critical moments in His life, Jesus needed to hear a word of affirmation from his Father, a hearty word of praise that would buttress His confidence and bolster his courage." -Robert Lewis, "Raising a Modern Day Knight"**

As a father and as a son, I can imagine Jesus stood a little taller that day and was ready to storm the gates of hell. These life-giving words of a father to his son likely acted as the encouraging and emboldening thrust to the launch of Jesus' ministry, and propelled him throughout. Like Jesus, we too are called sons and daughters of God, and our identity is in him.

**[ROMANS 8:14-16] <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of**

**adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.**

When we put our faith in Jesus, we are indwelt with his Spirit and become adopted sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father. We have no reason to fear him, as if he is a capricious Father who is constantly on the verge of disapproval. Some of you grew up with that and have a suspicion that God is about to get mad at you. But for followers of Jesus, that’s not a concern. Remember, we are approved because Jesus is approved. He satisfied the Father and made us right with him. That means we’re secure. It means we’re part of the family of God, and rather than cowering in fear, we get to approach God and call him by the endearing and intimate name of Abba, Father.

You may have heard Vice President Mike Pence, a follower of Jesus, was mocked because he said God spoke to him. He was accused of having a mental illness because he thinks he hears the voice of God. But let me tell you that it is normative for a follower of Jesus to hear the God’s voice. It’s probably not audible like Jesus heard, and it’s not necessarily automatic. It likely requires some learning, and while we don’t have time to go into it today, it would be a good idea for us to spend some time on a Sunday morning talking about how we do that. But know, from these verses, that the Spirit is a witness to us. The Spirit of God, who lives within you, gives constant testimony that you are now, and forever will be, a fully loved and fully accepted child of God.

If you ever find yourself doubting who you are to God, doubting your identity, perhaps because you never received any affirmation when you were growing up, or perhaps because you are in a challenging season spiritually, I encourage you to stop, drop, and follow the example of our Savior. Luke is the only Gospel writer who mentions that Jesus was praying when the Father and Spirit broke into creation. Prayer is a spiritual act of dependence and intimacy, and Jesus’ life and ministry are steeped in it. Our lives can and should be too, and those prayers can include asking God who you are to him. And after you ask, get quiet and listen for the still, small voice of God, to break into your life and testify who you are to him. “You belong to me, you are loved by me, you are pleasing to me.” Like Jesus, we can confidently know that we are children of God.

### **God sends us on his mission.**

As encouraging as it was for Jesus to hear his Father call him his Son, and as empowering as it was when the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, both instances also communicate the purpose for which Jesus came.” His identity as the Son of God and his anointing by the Holy Spirit are clues about his mission. The Hebrew word for Messiah means “anointed one” or “chosen one. Hundreds of years before this moment, God spoke these words through the prophet Isaiah:

**[ISAIAH 42:1] Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.**

Guess who he’s talking about. The anointing of Jesus by the Holy Spirit was a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy that identified and commissioned him in his role as the Messiah. A title can be a name that clearly communicates purpose. We know what a teacher, doctor, salesman, or president are called to do. For the Messiah, it’s as if the Old Testament prophecies were a job

description for the Savior of the world. It is a role Jesus accepted in eternity past, and his baptism is the moment where his work began.

You too have been chosen, the Holy Spirit has come upon you and lives in you, and you have been given a holy assignment by God. We see that in Acts 1:8, and many of you know the Great Commission. But there is a moment in Jesus' high priestly prayer that I believe reflects the magnificence of what has happened at his baptism and clearly communicates God's calling on our lives.

**[JOHN 17:18-21] <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. <sup>20</sup> "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.**

Just as Jesus was set apart, consecrated, for the mission God called him to, even to the point of death on a cross, we are also set apart for the Gospel. The work of redemption the Father sent Jesus to accomplish has been passed on from Jesus to us. While we are not the Messiah, who is exclusively responsible for salvation, our mission is to make him known, both on our own and as a unified body of believers, and invite others into the same work.

At Fellowship, we do that by discovering and living out our God-given purpose. Today starts week 4 of our *Repurposed* Training Experience, and I'm hearing great things from those who are participating. And while there is a lot of introspection, and everyone will finish with two words that encapsulate why God made them, this is not an exercise in self-indulgence. The reason for living out our God-given purpose is to make known the God who gave that purpose. We are to live out our God-given purpose to glorify God and be a blessing to the world. When we do that, we'll be used by God to draw people to himself. And when they come, we are to pass on the faith and activate them into the same work.

What an incredible moment Jesus baptism was. An incredible blessing to him, as he was given the three irreducible minimums of ministry. And what an incredible blessing to us that we also receive as children of God. And how important they were to Jesus, and are to us, as we strive to remain faithful and useful to God, because the very next event Luke records in Jesus life is this:

**[LUKE 4:1-2a] And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness <sup>2</sup> for forty days, being tempted by the devil.**

And that's where we are going to pick it up next week. Over the next three Sundays, we'll learn how Jesus goes into the wilderness, in the power of the Spirit, and deals with the temptation of the devil. After his baptism, he is as prepared as can be. He has been given the presence and power of God. He has been affirmed and approved by his loving Father. He has been anointed and commissioned by the Spirit for his mission as the Messiah.

As for those of us who are followers of Jesus, we too have been given these same spiritual resources for when we find ourselves tempted in the wilderness. You are empowered by God,

you are affirmed by God, and you are sent by God. Now come back over the next three weeks and learn how Jesus uses each of those when our enemy comes to destroy and blow us off course.

**MICHAEL GAYLES**

I want to close by inviting our elders and their wives up to the platform and ending this morning's service with another ceremony of consecration. As most of you know by now, we believe the Holy Spirit has appointed Michael Gayles as the next elder in our church. Over the last three weeks, we have given you all the opportunity to engage our leadership with any concerns you have over Michael being in this role, and I can tell you that the only feedback we have received has been positive and affirming.

So today we have the privilege of doing something that does not happen often but is a vital practice of the church because, without leadership, there is no church. We are going to participate in the laying on of hands by our elders to affirm the choice of Michael to join the elder board and dedicate him to the work God has called him to.

Michael, as you stand before this congregation, let me remind you of the awesome responsibility you are taking on to lead, oversee, and shepherd God's people here at Fellowship Dallas. But let me also remind you that you have been given all you need to effectively fulfill the duties and responsibilities of this role. You have been appointed by his Spirit, who lives within you, and empowers you to faithfully lead in this church. You are a beloved child of God who is pleasing to his Heavenly Father. And you have been called for such a time as this, to this good and important work of being an elder in this church, and lead out in the mission God has given us.