

Text: **Luke 3:15-17, 21-23**

¹⁵ The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. ¹⁶ John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

²¹ When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." (NIV84)

Prayer of the Day:

Father in heaven, at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Keep us who are baptized into Christ faithful in our calling as your children and make us heirs with him of everlasting life; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased. Alleluia. (Mark 1:11b)

Sermon Text:

The Baptism of Jesus. It's a section of Scripture that gets a lot of attention and even more commentary. Tons of ink is spilled as theologians wrestle with everything that this particular account means. I suppose it poses a rather simple question, Why? Why would God devote attention to this event? Why would God desire such an event in the life of Jesus?

It's a fair question. After all in Matthew's parallel account in chapter three of his gospel John argues with Jesus, "*I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?*" (Matthew 3:14)" In effect, John is saying, "No, Jesus! This is not the way it should be." You see John knows what his baptism is for. Mark wrote in verse three of this chapter, John *went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*. Jesus is perfect and therefore doesn't need to be baptized, no repentance, no forgiveness is necessary. It really should be the other way around. So why? Our text today does a wonderful job of clearing it up for us.

First, let's clear the air. Sometimes we can get so enamored with the details that we forget a simple truth. Why does God write anything in His Word? It's not for Him but rather for us, for the reader.

Now back up and notice the intense confusion which is swirling around John the Baptist. People actually believe he might be the Messiah, the Christ. John knows better. It's why he argues with Jesus in Matthew. Jesus is better in absolutely every way. John is simply another sinful human being. Yes, gifted with an amazing task but a sinful human being nonetheless. The people are confused because they believe John, with the large crowds and the powerful and

impressive preaching is what they have been waiting for. Jesus hasn't even begun His public ministry yet. Normal, unassuming, plain, He doesn't really seem to fit the bill.

If we are honest, we do it too. How do we measure spiritual success? Is it with popularity? Then maybe God is football. It fills stadiums and captivates millions of viewers. In fact, every Sunday it puts regular worship numbers to shame. Shouldn't real Christianity look something like that? Is it finances? Why isn't the church rolling in dough? Jeff Bezos is worth 177 Billion. That means nine zeros follow that number. Why does the church always seem to struggle to meet a budget that is barely a fraction of that total? Maybe it's popularity, packed with gimmicks, and chasing the luster of the world around it. If we just had the right program, the right plan, the right pastor then the church would grow to gargantuan sizes.

Ah but then, so often the Church, Christ, His truth is anything but all of that. No, we don't strive to fail but so often, at least in this world the truth is hidden in the mundane, God's power revealed in the plain and unassuming, and God's people struggle that they might learn God's deepest lessons of discipleship in moments of discipline and suffering.

Jesus won't be what was expected, not by the Jewish authorities, not by the world around us, not even by us. So God uncovers Him for us. Reveals Him as He provides us with little epiphanies because we need to be assured of the truth. This is ultimately what Jesus' Baptism is. It is a coronation or to use the Old Testament equivalent, it is an anointing.

Prophets, Priests, and Kings were anointed, publically proclaimed to God's chosen servants for the benefit of His people. So Jesus is publically proclaimed by the Father to be everything that John had foretold. There in the Jordan, as water is applied, the heavens themselves part and God the Father speaks even as the Spirit descends in the form of a dove. The Holy Trinity is on display for all to see. This is the Messiah, the Christ who the people of Israel had yearned for, confused John for.

The father even tells us Jesus has all that we need. *"This is my son, whom I love. With Him, I am well pleased."* These words actually bookend the public ministry of Jesus. We will hear them again at His transfiguration. If God is pleased then He is perfect, righteousness personified for the unrighteous children of God. In Him, all righteousness is fulfilled for us. That righteousness will ascend the banks of the Jordan, that He might also ascend the hill of the cross that His holy, precious blood might pay for all of our sins, all of the times we have mistaken worldly success for spiritual success and the love of the world for the love of our God. In His resurrection, the proof, the seal that the work is acceptable to God and you and I are heirs of heaven.

Perhaps that's where Jesus' baptism connects to our own. No, our own baptisms do not have the visible fanfare that accompanied Jesus', yet the voice of the Father was heard in the Word of Institution, the proclamation spoken by a pastor as water was applied, *"in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."* Yes, the Spirit was there too. No doves, yet He winged faith into our hearts connecting us to Christ and everything He had done for us. Because of God's unfathomable love shown to us in Christ, the words we hear today are spoken to us all. Through faith in Christ, we are all sons of God (cf. Galatians 3:26).

Why is Jesus Baptised? The truth is as astounding as it is beautiful. Jesus is **ANointed FOR YOU! BECAUSE HE WASN'T WHAT WAS EXPECTED. BECAUSE WE NEED TO BE ASSURED OF THE TRUTH.** Yes, because of our Savior, God says to us all *"You are my children, whom I love. With you, I am well pleased."* Amen.