

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday, Jan 8, 2023. Baptism of our Lord Sunday

Text: Matthew 3:13-17

I remember as a kid my dad would say something like "Do as I say, not as I do!"

But when I read about Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan River, I hear Jesus saying to us "Do as I say, and as I do."

Why do we baptize in the church? Because Jesus commanded it. We baptize in the church because Jesus commanded it in the great commission in Matthew 28. "Go therefore to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them everything I have commanded you."

So why would Jesus get baptized by John with a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins? Especially if the Bible says he knew no sin. Even John protested baptizing Jesus... saying I'm not worthy to even untie the thong of your sandal. But Jesus says we must go through with this to fulfill all righteousness.

So, what is being revealed in this first Sunday in Epiphany is that we have a God who isn't afraid to stoop down to our level in every way. Jesus was a true servant leader. He wasn't afraid to fully enter into humanity. He demonstrated love by washing the disciple's feet taking on the role of a household slave in John 13. Jesus' baptism is a foreshadowing of what he will do for the world on the cross.

Jesus gets baptized because he desired solidarity with us sinners in every way. He wants to be like us in every way. So, he joins the sinful multitude in the waters of the Jordan.

Jesus' baptism was affirmed by God the Father in Heaven.

As Jesus emerged from the waters, the heavens opened up and the Holy Spirit upon Jesus like a dove and saying this is my Son, the beloved with whom I am well pleased. At the age of 30, Jesus' public ministry is affirmed. It involves identifying with us humans.

What does your baptism mean to you? Your baptismal identity is something you grow into every day as Christians. It's a marathon, not a sprint, filled with many ups and downs. Luther once said in the Large Catechism, "In baptism, therefore, every Christian has enough to study and to practice all their life."

What are the benefits of baptism? Luther continues, “Baptism promises victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God’s Grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with gifts of the Spirit.”

He says, “We must draw strength and comfort from our baptism and when our sins or conscience oppress us.” When you mess up, make mistakes, sin consciously or unconsciously, repent and say, “But I am baptized!”

Being baptized means every day is a new day.

Luther “no greater jewel therefore can adorn our body and soul than baptism.”

But baptism must be grasped in faith and lived into.

Therefore, let everybody regard baptism as the daily garment which we are to wear all the time.

Finally, Luther said that Baptism is like a ship. At some point, we will slip and fall out of the ship. We will wander and stray from the faith. Our sins will overwhelm us.

If you do fall out, and you will, you should immediately head for the ship and cling to it till you can climb aboard again. And sail on it like before.

Clinging to our Baptism is a life of daily repentance. The promise of Forgiveness was given in baptism. And the gift of Forgiveness remains day by day as long as we live.

Let us reclaim our baptismal identity and when things go sideways in our lives let us remind ourselves and each other that we are baptized. God’s grace is sufficient for us.