

January 7, 2024  
The Baptism of Our Lord

“Made Common With Christ”

Mark 1:4-11

Generally, people just don't think they have a lot in common with Jesus Christ. Of course not. We've all got a more or less normal mother and father. Jesus' mom was a virgin and His dad, well, Creator of the universe and all—that's beyond unique.

Jesus, no sin. You and I, sin after sin after sin on a nearly minute-to-minute basis. Jesus, perfect faith. Us, doubts upon doubts. Jesus heals the sick and lame, calms storms, feeds 5000 with a boy's lunch and raises the dead. I can't even figure out how to change the voicemail message on my iPhone.

Jesus loves everyone perfectly and humbles Himself to death on the cross, even forgiving those who are having Him murdered. We sometimes struggle to love even the people we like, much less those who do us wrong. And we may humble ourselves to a point, but there's a limit, and it's not really all that low—I mean we have our pride...unlike Jesus.

And look at Jesus' baptism. The heavens opened and the Holy Spirit comes down like a dove. The Father's voice booms, *“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”* I'm sure somebody would have told me if anything like that happened at my baptism back in 1964.

When we look at Jesus He is on a whole different level in every way. Today He rules as King of Kings at the right hand of the Father. And if that's not enough, one day He shall return in the majesty of divine glory to be our judge. It's no wonder that young Martin Luther was so terrified of Christ, thinking Him so far above and beyond us poor, miserable sinners that to come into His presence meant certain condemnation.

That stands true, except for it was the Father's will that Jesus become common with us, and baptism is one of the places He most clearly does so.

We just celebrated the birth of Christ—that He began this work of commonality by being born into humanity, becoming our brother in the flesh. Yet He was without sin and thus, in perfect purity still set apart from you and I. Of course the Father is pleased with His Son—He is holy! In this holiness He becomes the perfect sacrifice for all of mankind's sin—again, set apart from us on the cross—the only human being capable of bearing that unfathomable burden in our place under the Father's wrath.

And then there's the resurrection to eternal life in divine glory. He is the only one who has been there, done that. Way, way unique—definitely a Jesus only thing—according to us!

But not so fast there! Who are we to define how things work in the face of our Creator and God? Who is the one who gets to call the shots? You, or God?

Despite our way of doing things and what seems reasonable to us, God is making Himself common with us in Christ. And I don't mean “common” in the lowly sense. I mean “common” in the sense of shared, mutual, communal. Jesus comes to make us one with the divine despite that fact we, in our brokenness, have nothing in common with Him. That's the Gospel.

That Gospel is clear in Holy Baptism.

After Jesus ascended to heaven and the Holy Spirit came in power upon the apostles, Peter preached a sermon that convicted many of their sin of rejecting and killing God's Messiah. They desperately implore Peter to tell them what they must do to be saved. His answer was simple and straightforward: *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* Jesus had

foreshadowed this washing when He said to Nicodemus, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”*

Baptism takes away your sins, instills the Holy Spirit and in doing so makes you like Jesus, the Holy Son of the Father, and places you inside His eternal kingdom. And according to your eyes it may still not look like you have a lot in common with Jesus. But God dictates a new reality in baptism, and what God dictates is the truth that is solid in His eyes. Because He is, you know, God.

If you look in Matthew’s Gospel John the Baptist questioned the need for Jesus getting baptized. Jesus obviously didn’t need it—no sin to wash away. But Jesus said, *“Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”* Jesus gets baptized because baptism is intricately connected to the righteousness He brings with which to gift us as one of us. He gets baptized so that in baptism we are made common with Him!

And that whole cross and empty tomb that sets Jesus apart? St. Paul is crystal clear that baptism makes us common in Jesus there also! *“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”*

Do you see? In your Holy Baptism the supposed reality before your own eyes that stands fallen short of God’s glory in your miserable sins and willful rebellion is destroyed! God’s gift of Christ is God’s gift of Baptism and does to you what He ordained by His promise and accomplished by His cross! There is no equivocation or doubt. God does it. You receive it!

The day of your baptism and every day you return to that baptism in faith, God is looking down and declaring, *“This is my beloved child in whom I am well pleased.”* The Holy Spirit is upon you fostering faith through forgiveness of sins. Christ is in you and you are in Christ, a human being fully at peace with your Creator and Father.

It is important you know and accept this truth. Satan loves sowing seeds of doubt among God’s people. We fall into a certain sin, yet again, and we wonder if we can really be a disciple of Christ. We catch ourselves having got caught up in the world and forgetting about God for hours, days, even weeks or months and doubt if we’re even a Christian. We even can sit in church and note our own lack of zeal for His worship and maybe think we never were truly His child at all. Satan smiles, because He loves it when we start defining ourselves as lost.

Stop that! Stop and say this simple, simple truth. *“I. Am. Baptized!”*

God did that to you. God washed you—washed you right into Christ’s grave with all those sins and right into His resurrection without them! It is a done deal! It is the reality God declares upon you. Trust it. Live it. Do not doubt it. Do not walk away from it!

Yes, I know that baptism may have been a long time ago. I know most of us probably don’t even remember it. This changes nothing. Again, God’s word is not at all unclear. St. Peter writes to the church at large, multitudes of Christians who were baptized weeks, months and years in the past and he says, *“Baptism...NOW saves you.”*

It works. It does what God says it does because it is all God’s work upon you.

There is no doubt. You know you were baptized. Thus you know you today stand baptized under God. Every morning remember the truth—you stand in Christ in that River Jordan, the Holy Spirit upon you, the Father pleased with your perfect righteousness, His beloved child.

You are made common with what is holy and divine. This is the reality He declares of you in Christ in your Holy Baptism. Each and every day, joyfully walk in it. Amen.