

January 12, 2025  
Baptism of Our Lord

“In the Jordan in Christ”

Luke 3:15-22

On Christmas Day I preached about how Christ became us in our humanity so that we as humans would become Him; join in His divine glory. Christ is indeed our brother in the flesh.

And yet, I think most of us hear this telling of the Baptism of our Lord and we think of it as a “Jesus-only thing,” very removed from ourselves. Jesus is holy and perfect, not like us. Only for Jesus would the heavens be rent asunder, the Holy Spirit visibly descend and the booming voice of the Father thunder out, “You are my beloved Son’ with you I am well pleased.”

It’s understandable. Our Holy Baptism—nothing like that. Most of us don’t even remember our baptism because we were only a baby. Those baptized as adults may have experienced an emotional/spiritual “high” at the time, but it wasn’t earth-shattering enough that it endured in perfect trust and faithfulness...you know, like Jesus. So we tend to separate our baptism from Christ’s baptism.

But that’s a big mistake. St. Paul writes quite plainly, “*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized **into Christ Jesus** were baptized into His death?*” and continues to assure us that this baptism is also into Christ’s resurrection. Your Holy Baptism joins you to Christ’s entire holy and righteous life, including His baptism! Each one of us should rightly consider these baptisms one in the same!

But we push against this because of the Father’s declaration, “...with you I am well pleased.” That works fine for Jesus, but God knows all those sinful slip-ups from this past week. He’s heard the awful stuff that’s come out of your mouth. He knows those absolutely horrible, hateful thoughts you’ve had. He knows we simply do not keep His greatest commandments—love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself—not even close, you know, like Jesus.

But that’s not only wrong thinking because God has indeed baptized you into Christ. It’s dangerous thinking because when you separate yourself from Christ in this manner what does that make of you? A sinner. A person with whom the Father is not well pleased. A person who is blemished and unclean. And yes, according to the fallen human nature and the original sin you’ve inherited from Adam and Eve and all the sinners before you this is true.

But if this is solely how you identify yourself, how easy it is for you to fall into sin and disobedience! I mean, it’s what you are, so why not? If you believe sin is just part of your nature, aren’t you just going to go ahead and roll with it? You may not be a completely evil reprobate pervert and blight on society, but your not really going to sweat the little stuff either. If you get comfortable in that mindset, well that is hardly the life of repentance to which Christ calls all believers. That is not living in the Gospel—the taking away of all that sin.

But you have been baptized into Christ Jesus! That was not some empty ritual which accomplishes nothing. It changes your reality! St. Peter assures us that “baptism...now saves you.” St. Paul assures us “*you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*” Jesus Himself tells Nicodemus how one must be born again by water and the Spirit. Holy Baptism is a work of God in which He accomplishes salvation and joins you to your brother in the flesh, Jesus, the holy Son of God!

So when you hear the telling of Christ’s baptism in the Jordan River this is the blessed reality: you are there in Christ and thus the Father is speaking over you, “With you I am well

pleased.” The words of Isaiah on your bulletin cover are the Father’s words over you, “*You are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you.*” You are pleasing to God, holy in His sight, a beloved child...because God in Christ has made it so.

Living in this reality changes the game. Sin is not your nature; holiness is. All the sin, big and small, has no part with you and thus you continually, in shame and contrition, bring it before Christ and glory in the grace of His sure forgiveness. You don’t get in bed with it, you are continually kicking it out of your life.

Why? Because you’re really good at doing that now? Certainly not! When St. Paul says, “*So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus,*” he isn’t issuing an order that you must now accomplish by force of will. He is urging you to accept and trust the new reality that Christ has made of you. You’ve died to sin with Christ on the cross and you’ve risen in holiness with Christ from the tomb! You stand, in Christ, as the Father’s beloved child with whom He is well pleased—so we go out each day joyfully and eagerly living that reality as best we can.

And I but some of you right now are feeling uneasy because you simply don’t think of yourself as joyfully and eagerly carrying this out. All I can tell you is stop looking at yourself so much and focus on Christ, His work, His promises, His truth proclaimed upon you in His Word and performed upon you in your Holy Baptism, literally fed to you in His body and blood. God has done this. Accept that He has done this to you, not because you’re that good, but because He is.

Look at Jesus standing there in the Jordan River, the Father’s voice booming, the dove descending. Does sin and evil have any part with Him there? Of course not. His is the Holy Son of God with whom the Father is well pleased.

In Him, so are you. I know, it seems impossible, poor, miserable sinners that we are. But all things are possible with God and He leaves no doubt that He has done this for us. Trust in your Baptism into Christ, because that baptism is indeed Christ Himself accomplishing the work of salvation for which He was sent into our flesh as our brother forever.

Every day look to your brother in this holy washing, forget the sins of yesterday, and know that the Father declares over you “This is my beloved child, with whom I am well pleased.” Then walk into your day and live it.

Amen.