

1stS after Epiphany (1/7/24 - SJ, SM)

Mark 1:4-11 - ⁴And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." ⁹At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

In the name of Jesus Christ, baptized for us, DFR:

Sinful people need to be baptized. Jesus, however, was perfect. He had no sin, and so it would seem to us that Jesus didn't need to be baptized. Yet he went to John the Baptist because he wanted to be baptized. As we'll learn today, it isn't just about Jesus' baptism, but our own personal baptism, as we consider today:

Our Baptism In Light of Christ's Baptism

1. Ours acknowledges sin; his fulfilled all righteousness
2. Ours confesses faith; his proves he is the Savior
3. Ours makes us children of God; he is God's Son

1. Ours acknowledges sin; his fulfilled all righteousness (vv.4-5)

We know why we were baptized. Whether we were baptized as babies or as adult converts, we were baptized because each of us was conceived and born in sin. We were sinful from the time we were conceived in the bodies of our mothers and we have remained sinful ever since. Our baptism is an acknowledgment that we are poor sinful beings who need our sins washed away.

The people of Jesus' day saw their own baptism as a confession of sin as well, as Mark tells us: **Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.**

John the Baptist knew that he was a sinful human being that needed to be baptized and that Jesus was not sinful. Because of his many sins, he was not even worthy to bend down on his hands and knees and untie the thongs of Jesus' sandals!

Yet Jesus insisted that he be baptized **to fulfill all righteousness**. He did all that his Heavenly Father asked him to do. He became human, because that was his Father's will. Now he begins his public ministry, and he will proclaim by Word and action that he is our Savior.

Our need for baptism proves our sinfulness; our Savior's baptism proves his obedience to the will of his Father and our Father.

2. Ours confesses faith; his proves he is the Savior (9-11)

People came to be baptized by John for the same reason that we are baptized. They believe the promise of God that in baptism he comes to the sinner and through the power of the water connected to his all-powerful Word, God washes away the stain and taint of sin from our souls. Scripture teaches us about baptism that it **now saves you also-- not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ**. Peter told the crowd on Pentecost: **Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins**.

Our baptism — among many other things — is a confession that we believe the promises of God that God comes to us with his grace and mercy and washes us clean of sin in our baptism.

God the Father proved that Jesus was the Savior when he announced **with you I am well-pleased**. Jesus was beginning his ministry, he would point to himself as Way, the Truth and the Life, telling the people of this world that there no way to heaven except through him.

For you and I, Jesus' baptism is a wonderful assurance that Jesus is our Savior. Not only does the Father tell us that Jesus has his blessing, but the Holy Spirit descends on him and fills him with power to carry out our salvation.

3. Ours makes us children of God; he is God's Son (10-11)

At the moment of our baptism, we are changed. Not only have our sins been removed, but we have become children of God. Those who are baptized receive adoption as children of God.

By a miracle of God, we are born a second time. Not from the bodies of our parents like the first time, but as Jesus told Nicodemus, through water and the Word we are **born again**. Jesus told the crowds that it wasn't his flesh and blood relatives who were his true brothers & sisters, but those who believe in him. And because we become God's children, Jesus promises us that we have eternal life. We will live forever with our Father and our brother in heaven.

Jesus never needed to become God's child. He was and is the eternal Son of God. But at his baptism, the Father publicly declared to all: **You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.**

It was the blood of God's one and only Son that has washed over us and cleansed us. Peter reminds us that **it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ.**

Baptism in a very real sense is an adoption ceremony. You don't need to be adopted a second time; once is enough. We don't need to be rebaptized – assuming it was done correctly the first time. The first time brings us into the kingdom of our faith, seals us as God's children by faith, and establishes our citizenship in heaven.

How often do we think of our baptism? Every day we should remember the power that baptism provides us to strip off our old, sinful nature and to clothe ourselves with the new natures we have been given by faith, empowered to no longer live for the flesh, but instead to live as what God has made us, his holy children.

How often do we think of Christ's baptism? It doesn't really matter if we remember that we commemorate it every year on the first Sunday after Epiphany, but we do want to remember that he WAS baptized, baptized for us, for our salvation. And his baptism reminds us of the importance of our own baptism, adopting us into God's family and making God our beloved Father and making us his dear children. Amen.