

Sermon 2018-01-07 - Year B - Baptism of our Lord
Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 89:20-29; Acts 10:34-38; Mark 1:7-11

Why was Jesus Baptized?

- Why was Jesus Baptized? This is one of the more confusing stories in the scriptures.
- John's baptism was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin (Mark 1:4). Did Jesus need to have his sins forgiven? NO! From the account in Matthew, we can see that even John was confused by this (Matthew 3:14)
- So why was Jesus Baptized? There are three main reasons that we will look at this morning.

Jesus' Baptism is an Epiphany

- We have just entered the season of Epiphany, the season which follows Christmas.
- When we think of Epiphany, mostly what comes to mind is the visit of the wise men.
- Traditionally, however, the feast of Epiphany celebrated three events, the coming of the wise men, Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan, and Jesus' first miracle at the wedding at Cana.
- What do these three events have in common? They are all epiphanies.
- An epiphany is "a usually sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something" (Mirriam-Webster).
- Mthr. Carrie and I have been watching a mystery show, and there is always a moment, right near the end of the episode, when the detective pauses and stares off into space as everything clicks together for him and he figures it all out. This is an example of an epiphany.
- In the context of the story of Jesus, these events reveal a bit more of who Jesus really is.
- The visit of the wise men, which we remembered yesterday, is an epiphany because it shows that this child, who was born to poor parents from the backwoods town of Nazareth, is actually a king. And that other kings felt compelled to travel a vast distance to bring him costly gifts.
- Jesus' Baptism show us that he is not just a good man, not just a great moral teacher, but the Son of God who took on human flesh. Mark 1:10-11. What a dramatic scene!

Jesus' Baptism is a fulfillment of all righteousness.

- Jesus is the one that all of the prophets pointed to as the Messiah or Christ. The last (and greatest) of all of these OT prophets is John the Baptist who literally points to Jesus, calling him the Son of God (John 1:32-34).
- This is the hand-off. The passing of the torch. From this point on Jesus must increase and John must decrease.
- Jesus' baptism by John authenticates John's ministry and identifies Jesus' ministry with John's.
- John is the great forerunner, the opening act that gets people ready for the main act.
- John is the herald that goes before the King, preparing the way for his coming.

Jesus' Baptism Transforms John's Baptism

- Jesus takes John's baptism, a Baptism simply for repentance and forgiveness of sins, and enriches it. He gives it deeper meaning and makes it a sacrament.
- Jesus descends into the water of Baptism to cleanse and sanctify and consecrate it for us. The Baptism liturgy in the 1662 BCP says, "...by the Baptism of thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ, in the river Jordan, didst sanctify the element of Water to the mystical washing away of sin..."
- Jesus' baptism unites him who was sinless with each of us who are sinful.
- We meet him in the water, where he washes us and pulls us out to new life.
- Just as the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus in the form of a dove and the voice of the father

proclaims him as his son. So to, in Baptism, we are declared sons and daughters of our heavenly father and we are given the Holy Spirit. This is remarkable!

- Just as Jesus' Baptism marks the commencement of his ministry, Baptism (along with confirmation) commissions us as missionaries to our community and to the world.
- There aren't any benchwarmers on God's mission team. All of you are part of the A-Team, the first string. Each of us has a role to play in God's plan of salvation.

So What?

- So what does this mean to all of us? It means we have a God who loves us so much that he was willing to send his one and only Son into the world he created to save each one of us from our sins.
- Looking back at the story of Noah, the world had come to a place of being totally wicked (Gen 6). At that time, God decided to wipe out everyone on the earth through a flood, saving only Noah and his family. This is seen as an OT allusion to baptism.
- When God sent Jesus into the world it was for this same reason, to wipe out sin, but this time God sent his perfectly righteous Son to be killed so that we who are wicked might be saved. This is how much God love us.
- If any of you have any doubt regarding God's love for you hear this, 2 Cor 5:21.
- God's grace is rich, and his forgiveness is deep. The debt of our sin is so great that there is nothing we could possibly do to save ourselves. And yet God bridges the gap for us with himself.
- All we must do to obtain that promise is be washed in the water that he himself cleansed and put our faith in the only one who can save us.