

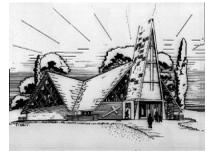


Free Evangelical Lutheran  
Synod in South Africa

## Sermon for Baptism of Jesus

*The Baptism of our Lord reveals  
the person and purpose of Jesus  
as 'Son' and 'son' of God!*

St. John's Lutheran Parish



Shelly Beach



• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mt 3, 13-17:

• <sup>ESV 13</sup> Then Jesus did appear from Galilee at the Jordan to John, in order to be baptized by him.

• <sup>14</sup> But John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I myself have need to be baptized by You, and You yourself are coming to me?”

• <sup>15</sup> And Jesus answered and said to him, “Allow [it] at this time, for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he did allow him.

• <sup>16</sup> And after he had been baptized, Jesus at once went up from the water, and, look, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him,

• <sup>17</sup> and, look, there was a voice from heaven that was saying, “This one is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

• Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and give us faith so that we will believe and behold the Glory of our Lord! Amen.*

• **Dear Israel of God!**

• From the Birth of Jesus we fast-forward to the Baptism of Jesus, the beginning of His public ministry.

• We need to ponder about the fact that the Baptism of Jesus was totally unacceptable from John the Baptist's point of view. What Jesus was asking of him, did not seem to be consistent with what John had to preach concerning Jesus! What did preach: *“prepare the way of the Lord ... he who is coming after me is mightier than me, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry” ... and finally, “He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”* That sounds like the mighty God's own Son! That's the right order, John prepares for the one who comes after him who is much mightier!

• But then, Jesus steps into the Jordan river- He appeared- to do what? He wants to be baptised! By John? A mere human being? How could God be baptised by a human being? The one who is to become less baptises the mightier one! What good could come from that? What sort of Son of God is He who accepts baptism from the lessor one, from John, a fallible, sinful human being! And John was fallible, it shows, he didn't understand what Jesus was doing!

• How could God use John? The Pharisees later on would challenge Jesus' authority-

who gives You the right to cleanse the temple and do all these things? Do you know to what Jesus pointed? He asked them this very important question [Mt21,25]: *“The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?”* The Pharisees didn’t answer, because they did not want to acknowledge the fact that John’s baptism was from God! God was giving repentance to Israel through John, the prophet of God.

• But now comes Jesus- so, does God want to give repentance to Jesus through John? Repentance for what sins? Jesus didn’t have any sins. Then why come and be baptised? That was John’s big question. Something is going on here, something new happens here.

• And indeed, Jesus gives the new reason, the new intention of His Baptism by John: *“Allow [it] at this time, for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”* This shockingly unexpected action is comprehensively fitting now that the reign of God has broken into history! With John’s participation, Jesus will perform all righteousness. He is baptised to do this, to fulfill all righteousness. He will enact God’s saving deeds for the people, by standing with the sinners, by taking their place in the same Baptism sinners received. Furthermore, this places Him on the road to Jerusalem, because He has taken on the sins of sinners, onto Himself. He stands in the place of many, because He has no sins and because He was sent by God to enact the salvation. He was baptised with your and my sins, with the sins of the whole world!

• This reveals *how* Jesus will save His people from their sins, how God will save Israel, in what unexpected way the reign of heaven has come. In what lowly and vulnerable way He submitted Himself to take our place!

• Then John consented. He didn’t understand, but listened to the command of the mightier one and baptised Him! Important, on the command of Jesus did he baptise Jesus!

• Then it happens, the newness comes through: In that moment, when Jesus ascended from the water, the *“Heavens were opened to Him...”*. This is the answer to the ancient prayer, by the prophets, for God to *“rend the heavens and come down.”* A prayer every Christian has, namely this deep sigh, oh please Lord, come, come and help us here in this dark world!

• God has answered that prayer. That day, at the Baptism of Jesus, the Heavens opened to Jesus. That is, where He is, the Heavens are open. Where He is His Body is. There is the place where God’s Grace reigns. There, right there, with Him is the place of access into God’s heavenly reign.

• And the Spirit of God descendid upon Him, like a dove, in a visible form! This reminds us of the first Creation where the Spirit of God hovered upon the waters. The descend of the Spirit proclaims that Jesus is the One promised in the Servant songs of

Isaiah, especially in Isaiah 42, the OT reading of today, “*Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.*”

- Who exactly this servant is, is furthermore proclaimed by the next thing we must behold, behold, there was a voice from heaven that was saying, [3,17] “*This one is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.*” God the Father’s voice was audibly heard saying these words. Of course Jesus is the Father’s only begotten Son. Many Scripture passages reveal this very clearly.

- Here Jesus is God’s ‘son’ in another special and significant way. In Mt 2,15 where the report is given of how Joseph and Mary had to flee to Egypt to escape the murderous tyranny of Herod and from where they were later called back to Israel, Hosea 11,1 is quoted as being fulfilled in Jesus’ coming back out of Egypt: Hosea 11,1 says “*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.*” Matthew draws this on Jesus’ staying in Egypt until Herod was dead. [2,15] “*This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I called my son.’*”

- Israel was God’s son, the Israel God had called out of Egypt to Mount Sinai. At the first Exodus God had constituted the nation Israel as His ‘son’. In Exodus 4,22 God says “*Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, ...’*”. In other similar passages God speaks of His love for Ephraim and speaks of “my beloved son”.

- But now, Jesus is identified as being that son who was called out of Egypt, the fulfilment of that ‘son’, the summation of God’s entire people of Israel.

- Now, at Jesus’ Baptism God confirms, that Jesus, His only begotten Son from eternity is at the same time His ‘son’ Israel. He was baptised like Israel and as Israel. That is, all promises about Israel as the “son” of God, are fulfilled in Jesus!

- Jesus is truly the Son of God, both in His person and in His purpose! He is the One who will and has truly carried out the Will of God. He is the One to watch and focus on and preach and proclaim, because He is the One doing the fulfilment, perfectly accomplishing God’s salvation, for all sinners.

- The Father is well-pleased with His Son humbling Himself. He got baptised in the place of sinners to complete the fulfilment of all righteousness on the Cross at Calvary.

- Now, the other text we heard today was Romans 6 which speaks about our Baptism. How are the Baptism of Jesus and our Baptism linked with one another? From Romans 6 we know that we are baptised into the death of Christ. Our old Adam is buried together with Christ, so that we will live in Christ. So, the link goes via the death of

Christ. Jesus is baptised into our place. He stands in our place, suffers on our behalf, believes on our behalf and dies on our behalf. Into the whole of this ministry we are baptised and receive the fruit of it, namely to live with Christ, to be sons of God, to be brothers of the One who is Israel and therefore be Israel.

- In Baptism we come to stand in the place of God's Son. We are baptised into God's name, which means we belong to Him, we are baptised into the sonship of God. We are born from above into His new nation with all its promises! That is what is in the Baptism of our Lord and in the Baptism we were baptised with. God is acting on our behalf, He humbles Himself and suffers on our behalf and dies on our behalf, so that we may have a bright and especially certain future together with Him! And this bright future gives us certain hope and this certain hope empowers us to review our current life, to see it with new eyes, to ask ourselves, what is really important for the rest of the time we have to spend in this world?
- Can our life be business as usual after realising what God has done for us, with us, and still does with us? We have received such a huge gift, dynamite for the hardened hearts. Now that we are Israel, His sons, He wants us to call others to this wonderful act of God, namely Baptism and Teaching. All those who are sulking in darkness, all those who have no hope, no help, He sends us out to be kind to them and to lead them to God's act of salvation, the washing of water with the Word, so that they may also be part of God's sonship, of God's holy nation in which He makes us sinners holy.
- Tell the world, the best kept secret, that Christians go to church because they know and feel that they are terrible sinners! Going to church means, going to the place where God's salvation is acted out upon us, is bestowed upon us, is given to us. Here we are renewed. Our hopes are restored. Here we learn certainty and the wisdom of what the Bibles means when it says Christ. 66 books speak of Christ and the endtime act God pulled off so that His righteousness will be fulfilled for our salvation, for us to live, without fear of condemnation, but to have joy in Him and in His work. That is why we keep preaching Christ's person and work, who He is and what His purpose is. He is all we have in life and in death. He is all we need in death and in eternal Life. **Amen.**
- *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **Amen.** [Phil 4,7].*