



Free Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
in South Africa

Sermon- First Sunday of Epiphany (Proper B) 2018

*The Baptism of Jesus reveals God in three
persons, using His means of creation to
save us and give us certainty of His gift!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish
Shelly Beach

The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mk 1, 4-12:



• ⁴ *ESV* John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

• ⁵ And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

• ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild

honey.

• ⁷ And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

• ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

• ⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

• ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opening and the Spirit descending on (into) Him like a dove.

• ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

• **Let us pray:** *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, let Your Word be a light in our hearts and reveal Christ to us. Amen.*

• **Dear Beloved of the Lord!**

• In the season of Epiphany we focus on the Epiphany of the little baby boy Jesus. Last Sunday, we heard and saw how the Magi were led by the star to Jerusalem, to Herod and the scribes, who confirmed by the Holy Scriptures where the Christ was to be born. God, nature of the first creation, even Jesus' enemies, the Holy Scriptures were paradoxically working together so that the Christ-seekers eventually found the King of Kings and bowed down to worship Him.

• Today we make a jump, fast forward to some thirty years later, when this baby boy Jesus had become a full-grown man. The time had come to begin His ministry.

John the Baptist came before Him, in a way summarising the whole of the OT prophets pointing with a lo-o-ong finger to Jesus as being the one who was going to fulfil all prophecies.

- The time had come. God had prepared for this time to come and had proclaimed in so many words, through John, that Jesus is the ONE.
- Then Jesus came to be baptised by John in the Jordan. We have to see the ultimate significance of this act of God. All four Gospels proclaim the Baptism of Jesus, which is not the case with for example the birth of Jesus. Later on when the Pharisees would challenge Jesus' authority to do things like cleansing the temple, He would refer them to the Baptism John was administering: was it from God or man?
- Such was the significance of what happened that day! So, let us pay close attention as the Gospel of Mark takes us through the act! Jesus, the Son of God by nature, born by the Holy Spirit, of the virgin Mary, the word became flesh, goes to have Himself baptised by John!
- Jesus' question is a good one, is it from man or from God? The Pharisees argued, it is from man, because they didn't believe that John was a prophet!
- But what do we see? Jesus submits Himself under John! He confirms, John is a prophet from God! Just like the rest of Israël, Jesus goes to be baptised by John! Now, we know, He had no sin. What was He doing there? He had no need to confess His sins!
- Then we hear, as soon as He was coming out of the water He saw the heavens opened. Let us pause there for a moment. Jesus was on earth baptised in the waters of the Jordan, fully identifying Himself with the most basic element of this life: water. Fully identifying Himself with the whole of the OT prophets, submitting and at the same time confirming what they spoke and did in God's name. Jesus, fully human, under the law of God, one of Israël, and yet during baptism the heavens opened!
- The curtains are pulled away! Do you see what happens here? Everything that belongs to God is united here with Him! And here comes the massive confirmation: and the Holy Spirit descended, like a dove, *into* Jesus! Here is revealed for us, what Jesus came to do, what His ministry is. The Kingdom of God has come in, with and through Him! In His Baptism the Holy Trinity is revealed working salvation for us!

- This means, God and His creation, Creator and creation are reconciled in, with and through Jesus' ministry. And, truly astonishing, God uses means of the first creation, which He has commanded, together with called individuals, to descend with His kingdom into the first new Adam, the first new Israelite, namely Jesus.
- But, Jesus is not only the first new Israelite, He is the One who will baptise with the Holy Spirit. He will share with others, what He has received. And just like God, He would do it through called individuals, initially the Apostles and later on through the called servants of the Word using the same means of the first creation in the act called Baptism to bring the kingdom of God even *into* the baptised person.
- And God the Father confirmed Jesus as Christ, as He spoke audibly from Heaven [6]: "*You are my son, my beloved, in You I am well pleased!*" The clear confession from God. Jesus is the ONE who does God's Will! He fulfils all righteousness!
- We know that Jesus' ministry beginning in His Baptism came to fulfilment in His death on the cross.
- Now, let us pause once again and ask, where are we involved in all of this? Where is humankind involved? We saw John was in there, called, and doing as commanded by God. He was pouring the water, the rest God did! And with the rest of Jesus' ministry culminating in His death?
- Resistance to and failure to understand and grasp what Jesus was doing for us! That is how we can summarise humankind's input in God's salvation. And yet, as we have seen, last Sunday with the Magi, Herod and his scribes, in spite of this, God managed to fulfil His mission in Jesus.
- What are we saying? God reconciled Himself with us! It's all from His side! He brings His kingdom to us, yes, even into us! That's where the Epistle reading for today comes in. This happens in Baptism. In Baptism we were united with the death of Christ! Our old Adam was crucified and died with Christ in Baptism. Our old Me is no more! He is dead, buried in God's eyes, by God's doing!
- But, this is only the one side of Baptism. We were buried with Jesus in Baptism, so that just as Jesus was raised from the dead, we will also live with Him. Jesus was baptised to die and give Life! We are baptised to die and receive Life from Him.
- Both God does to us! And if God does something He does it to the full! So, you can stop being your old Self, because He is dead in God's eyes! Stop fighting for him- he is dead! I know the whole world is preaching to you, through all the media you

can think of, to nurture your self, to spoil your self. Well, the good news is, you can save all that money and time, because in God's eyes that ouk' is dead! He has no future at all! Its deception! Its human-logy not theo-logy! Its teaching of men.

• Its not true, that's not what we need the most, more time and money for our selves. No. Most certainly not! It's also not true that we need to taste of evil to be able to make the right decision between good and evil! Eating from that tree never helps us nor satisfies. It does not give life. It draws us deeper and deeper into death.

• What we need the most is, we need to repent, that is, to have our mind renewed, to be reminded of who we are in Christ. This person, Jesus, who died and was resurrected to give His Life to us is the person in whom God is well-pleased. He is our future which has started when we were baptised into His name. Its Him we need to come to know and taste! He speaks to us through His Word and lets us taste His forgiveness in the Lord's Supper. It's His Word we need to study and have a conversation with. That is where He pours His heart out, which is the same as saying, that is where He pours His Spirit out. We need more time with Him, or let's say, we need more quality time with Him.

• The extraordinary good news is, the more time you spend with His Word and with Him, the more you will receive from Him! You don't need to be afraid. He will only take what is evil from you. Anything good you want to do or give as thanksgiving, He directs you towards your neighbour who needs it. And guess what happens: You will become more and more certain of the gift God has given you in Baptism! So much so, that you will even begin to invite others to this wonderful gift God wants to give to all sinners! To God be the glory! **Amen.**

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen. (ESV Eph 3,20-21)