

Baptism of our Lord

Luke 3:15-22

Unwrapping the gift of Jesus, The Baptism Unwraps Jesus as The Son of God!

At Christmas do you remember the joy and excitement of receiving a gift? Remember the anticipation when you unwrapped a gift? As you removed the wrapping paper the gift is revealed. Then you show your delight by putting it on, playing the game, and making good use of it. When a gift is received in such a way, the giver too is delighted, when it is received with joy.

Our faith in Jesus Christ is the pure gift of God given through His Word and received in faith. Can you imagine the delight that God has when you receive His gift of Jesus with faith? Also, you can be assured that we have a God who delights in giving gifts and is very delighted to give you His Son Jesus Christ for you and your salvation.

I hope and pray that you are delighted to be here this morning to, 1) unwrap the gift of Jesus' baptism revealing Who He is for you, and 2) to delight in receiving His gift and give praise to God for your baptism. I hope you have the same anticipation; I hope you are sitting on the edge of your seats as this gift is unwrapped for you today.

Such was the time when John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching. There was a sense of urgency in John the Baptist's preaching and ministry. Luke reports when John the Baptist comes on the scene, Proclaiming a baptism of repentance and forgiveness of sins.

And the people responded. They came from all the region to be baptized repenting of their sins. And when the people need help in repenting, John gladly helped them.

Of course, this all created an atmosphere of anticipation and excitement. People were on the edge of their seats. Finally God was breaking into history, and many wondered if John might be the Christ himself. John of course refutes this thinking. I am not He. But the gift of God's salvation is coming. The coming One is mightier and I am not worthy to stoop down and untie His sandal. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Along with that Jesus will bring judgment. A separation of good fruit and bad fruit. "The winnowing fork is in His hand ready to separate the wheat from the chaff. So do not delay. Repent now. Get baptized! Do not put it off. Do not assume you have lots of time to get around to the business of repenting. Repent now! You just never know.

Then Jesus, the one John has been pointing to comes down to be baptized. It is Jesus' baptism that reveals who He is. "When Jesus was baptized too, and as He was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove, and a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'" There you have it, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus's baptism unwraps the gift of who He is, God's Son. The one whom God is well pleased.

For Jesus being God's Son does not bring with it any special privileges. God's Son will not live in a special earthly mansion. He will not be protected against all that broken and sinful people like you and me endure. He will wear be adorned in special princely garment with a crown to match. But here is Jesus, having been baptized, affirmed by God the Father in heaven who is well pleased with Him. Pleased for what He has done? At first glance Jesus has not done anything of note, like miracles, and teachings, except for what was taught in the temple when He was twelve. He has His work to do to bring to you and me the gift our Salvation. Jesus' baptism marks the beginning of the mission to judgment and forgiveness begins. In His baptism is where it begins and in Baptism all point to the work the way this wonderful gift of salvation will be brought to you and me. And this mission of God's saving work will be Holy Spirit Driven. And God the Father is well pleased.

Given with what was just said about Jesus, may God was well pleased with His Son for His baptism.

First of all, Jesus did not need to repent or be baptized. He was the sinless one, the spotless Lamb of God. He had no sins that needed forgiven. Yet He is baptized. He is not doing this for himself. He is doing this for those he came to save, for you and for me. St. Luke reports that "when all the people were baptized, Jesus was baptized too. It is as if Jesus is the culmination of these baptisms of John – then Jesus was baptized. It was after the waters of the Jordan got all good and dirty with all the sins of all those baptisms before Him, Jesus steps in. Not to get clean, but to get dirty. Not to be forgiven, but to ready himself to take the guilt of all the sins, that he be condemned instead of us, and that is what He did when he offered Himself on the cross. Jesus was the spotless Lamb of God. He becomes the sacrificial Lamb for us. He takes our sins and gives us his righteousness. Luther called this the great exchange. Jesus' baptism point to His saving work of salvation for you and for me.

Now in Jesus day as well as in this day, this not quite what people expect. Some would say that the Kingdom of Heaven is something to be bigger and much grander, than just another baptism. But really what could be greater than this? To have the Son of God, to go into the water of your baptism with you. Then take your place in sin and death and give you a place as a child of God. To give you approval of God the Father and gift of the Holy Spirit. Could you do any of this on your own? Not a chance! Yet it is all given here. According to God's Word and the promise of Jesus in His work for you. In faith we live in relationship with whose death has brought us back. In relationship we live our baptism praying, as Jesus did, keep in connection to God. We live joined to Christ. That he goes with each and every day.

In our baptisms we also become a member of this great community of forgiveness, as Children in the family of God. Jesus has given us this gift, to share in the sonship of our Lord as God's Children.

You know this is a big with Jesus getting baptized. And I will stick my neck out there too and say that any baptism that happenings in this church or any church is important. Your baptism was a big deal, and so was mine.

Why is it a big deal? St. Paul unwraps for us the gift of our baptism. You have been crucified with Christ, You have died to the old sinful life. And in this baptism, just as Jesus was resurrected from the dead, you too are raised to new life in Christ with the hope of being raised from the dead in a resurrection like His. All of this the Son of God, Jesus Himself did for you and me. No wonder God the Father was well pleased in His baptism. And God is certainly well pleased with us for the sake of our Savior Jesus, the of God.

I hope and pray that as we all journey in this life of faith we learn what great gift your baptism is and what a great gift it was you and me as Jesus was baptized.

Now May the peace of God which passes all understanding guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.