

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Baptism of Our Lord C
January 9, 2022
Luke 3:15-22

Jesus Baptized for You

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."
(Luke 3:21-22 ESV)

In the Name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world.

Advent prepares us for a true and proper celebration of Christmas and Epiphany, even as John prepared Israel for the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. Both Advent and John proclaim a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and point us to Jesus, our Savior. And as Advent fades into the background with the arrival of Christmas and Epiphany, so John, the Forerunner of Christ, decreases as Christ Jesus now increases. And as Christmas proclaims that God has taken on flesh and become Man, Epiphany proclaims that the Child born of Mary and lying in a manger is God Himself. And while the Church celebrated the visit of the Magi to the Christ Child on Epiphany, today we celebrate our Lord's Baptism where He takes His place with sinners and is declared God's beloved Son.

Now, while it is John who baptizes Jesus in the Jordan River, Luke makes a point of putting John in prison before he even mentions the Baptism of our Lord Jesus. Why? Because the Baptism of our Lord is a decisive turning point, a startling transition, and a new beginning of all that will be finally accomplished upon the glorious Cross of Christ.

It starts already in the Jordan, as Jesus enters the water He is for us already "crucified, dead, and buried." Indeed, everything that will happen to our Lord from this moment onward – until His Crucifixion on Good Friday – is one long, continuous Baptism into His death. Later, He will tell His disciples, "I have a Baptism with which I must be baptized, and how distressed I am until it is completed!" And of course, He is speaking of His death. So His Crucifixion truly begins in the Jordan River . . . in a Baptism that continues until death.

Likewise, your life, from the font to the grave, is one continuous Baptism as by daily contrition and repentance the Old Adam is drowned and dies with all sins and evil lusts and a New Man daily comes forth and arises to live before God in righteousness and purity. Thus, for Jesus and for you, it is a lifelong Baptism into His Cross and Resurrection.

So, when Jesus was baptized, He "consecrated and set apart the Jordan and all water as a salutary flood and a rich and full washing away of sins. . . ." In this way, the Baptism of our Lord

has become your Baptism – only what is Law and sin and death and judgment for Christ is for you the sweetest Gospel, forgiveness, life, and salvation.

For we know from Saint John that Baptism is a call to repentance, and that it gives or profits the forgiveness of sins. But you receive forgiveness in Baptism, because Christ receives your sins in His Baptism. It is the place of a great exchange, whereby Christ goes into the water holy and sinless and perfect . . . but He comes out drenched in your sins, in your death and damnation. Whereas you go into the water covered with sins and dressed in filthy rags . . . and you come out dressed in the beautiful white robes of Christ and His perfect righteousness. Your sin and death . . . in exchange for His divine life and eternal salvation.

All of this, as St Paul writes, because you have been united with Christ in His death by your Baptism into His Cross, that you might also rise with Him in His Resurrection and thus live with Him forever. In this way, Baptism is your personal Good Friday and Easter. You have been crucified with Christ and buried with Him by your Baptism into His death; and just as He has risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity, so does He rise in you and you rise up with Him out of the water in the Spirit of His Resurrection to live as a child of His Father (now your Father).

You see, everything that happens to Christ is for your sake, and He receives all things in heaven and on earth for you! So you have a new identity, a new reality, a new life in Him. So that, when the Father looks at you, He does not see the sinner that you are (by nature sinful and unclean); He sees instead His own dear Son, and so He speaks His divine blessing now also concerning you: "You are My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased. . . ."

In your Baptism, you have been given the same Holy Spirit Who descended on Christ in the form of a dove at His Baptism. For all that Jesus has received is given to you as well. That means you now bear the Spirit of God Who unites you with Christ in His Church; Who strengthens you and keeps you steadfast in the one true faith; Who helps you in your weakness and teaches you how to pray to the Lord God Almighty as your own dear Father.

Thus your Baptism has an ongoing -- daily -- significance. It defines your entire Christian life; it dare not be forgotten. For the drowning and dying of your old Adam and his cohorts, which began at the font, is a drowning and dying that must continue throughout your life. In this life, in this world, there is never a point at which you can say that sin is once and for all behind you. . . It is a battle that rages until you pass from this world of sin to your true home in heaven.

And you will only win this battle against sin and your Old Adam by clinging to God's Word and allowing yourself to be crucified with Christ. Through the ongoing, daily process of repentance and faith, Confession and Absolution, Baptism is your crossing of the Red Sea out of the Egypt of sin; and it becomes your crossing of the Jordan River into the Promised Land of heaven. So Jesus' baptism in the Jordan is for you. The same waters of Holy Baptism, sanctified by the Lord Jesus in the Jordan River, bring you out of slavery and death and into the life and salvation of the Holy Triune God.

By God's grace you will constantly remember that you are Baptized, and thus be sustained in confidence and hope in Christ – even in the middle of all sorts of personal doubts, ongoing challenges, and numerous threats all around you. When you're tempted or afraid, you can recall your Baptism by making the sign of the Cross which marks you as one redeemed by Christ the Crucified. Be comforted that you are baptized into the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, that you have received forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit, and that you are a beloved child of the Father.

Beloved, to the human eye and senses, according to the wisdom of this world, Baptism is nothing but a splash of ordinary water, merely an empty symbol. But to the eyes of faith, according to the gracious will and wisdom of God, it is a gracious water of life, a rich and full washing of regeneration; it works the forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the Words and promises of God declare: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Grant this, Lord, unto us all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener