**Crossings Text Study Group – All Are Welcome!**

**Wednesday Mornings at 9:30 A.M.**

**Martin Luther Lutheran Church, Milwaukee**

9235 W. Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53226

This Sunday, the first Sunday after Epiphany, celebrates the “Baptism of Our Lord,” Luke 3:15-17, 21-22. It marks the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry among the peoples. Significantly Jesus’ ministry is inseparable from the call to be baptized that John the Baptizer announced. You might say, John’s baptism is symbolic of the universal problem all people face—the problem of sin—and his desire for us to become aware of the problem, that is, to repent.

To get a picture of how interlaced sin is with ordinary, everyday life, note the examples John gives: we who have “two coats” or “food” aplenty do not share with those who have none (Lk 3:11) and those of us who have powerful positions in life, like tax collectors and soldiers, use them to exploit others and are never satisfied with what we have (3:12-14). John’s critical assessment understandably “fills the people with expectation” and "questioning in their hearts," causing a “gulp” as they wonder what’s coming next. Is John the messiah who will give sinners their due? At this point, anyway, that seems to be what people expect in a messiah. Why else would they wonder if John is he (v. 15)?

But that, as we will see, is not the kind of messiah Jesus is—and it will take hearing the whole story, what Luke calls the “good news” of Jesus, to see exactly what kind of a messiah he is. Luke will slowly, drip by drip, vignette by vignette, make known to us (“epiphanize”) who Jesus is. He has to do it slowly because of the unexpected, unprecedented, unusual character of Jesus’ messiahship. To turn the spout wide open would overwhelm us.

The baptism of Jesus, then, is only the *beginning* of the public unveiling or “epiphanizing” of who Jesus is. It will not be *complete* until his crucifixion and resurrection. And what is significant about Jesus’ being baptized by John, a theme that is more directly addressed by Matthew (3:14-15) than Luke, is that he, unlike John, has come into the world to immerse himself into our problem, our sin, so that he can become our solution, our savior, our righteousness. John is good at spotting the problem, but only Jesus is good at solving the problem. That’s why John says of Jesus that he is “more powerful than I” (v. 16).

Of course, the big reveal comes at the end of the text. After Jesus is baptized, indicating thereby that he has come to be among sinners to save them, God displays his total and complete “pleasure” in what Jesus is doing. Luke presents it – as do all the Gospels – in dramatic fashion: “the heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove” and “a voice came from heaven” saying, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (vs. 22).

But note what also gets revealed. In the process of expressing his “pleasure” on the man Jesus, God reveals himself as trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three acting as one, one acting in the three. God the Voice is God the Father of Jesus; Jesus the man is God the beloved Son of the Father, and the descending Dove upon Jesus is God the Holy Spirit, God getting his saving will done in the world through Jesus at the bidding, by the sending, of the Father. Don’t imagine for a moment that we humans can comprehend this mystery of God. We cannot. But we can cling to it with the “expectation” (cf. v. 15), that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Father is also pleased with us on account of our baptismal connection with his beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

**About Crossings**

Crossings has developed a visual model for organizing the message of a particular biblical text based on the simple idea of

distinguishing law and gospel, God’s own diagnosis of what ails us and God’s own prescription of what heals us.  The model

is useful for everyone, both those who listen to and those who proclaim the text, because it helps to remind us what to focus

on and listen for in the process of reading and understanding a biblical text and relating or crossing it into our daily life.

Who: Anyone interested in studying the Bible – clergy and lay, preachers and listeners

What: We will learn the Crossing Method by using it on the texts that everyone will hear on Sunday Morning

Questions? Email me or call me at 262-642-6303

For more Info on Crossings go to [www.crossings.org](http://www.crossings.org)

I look forward to exploring the Scriptures with you together,

Peace,

Steve Kuhl

The Crossings Community, Inc.