

The Baptism of our Lord -a study in the unlikely, the surprising, the twist in the plot in the history of the world, a history written God.

We hear from Isaiah 700 years before Jesus, God refers to the coming Messiah, this Chosen One as **My Servant**. We see the Holy Trinity at work, the Father and the Spirit conspiring to send the Son into the world, a coequal member of the Godhead, at the same time, the Father's **servant**. Though He is God, the Word by whom all things were made, He will **not cry aloud or lift up His voice** even as being crucified. He **will bring forth justice to the nations** even as He suffers injustice at the hands of Jewish and Roman nations.

He who **gives breath to the people**, but be killed by the people, yielding up His own breath, His own Spirit. Jesus is to take us by the hand to lead us to life, even as His hands nailed in death.

This is not the saga of heroes, marvel movies, or mythical legend. This is the stuff of a mystery novel that makes no sense until the last page –yet it's history.

Credo quia absurdum –phrase coined by church father Tertullian, *Credo quia absurdum* -so absurd I have to believe it. The only explanation is it's true. Nobody could make up such a religion filled with such irony.

And look at the church. Look at whom Jesus calls His redeemed, whom He calls to be heralds of this remarkable, unlikely story. St. Paul notes, **Not many of you were wise, not many were powerful, not many of noble birth**. I look at you people and agree with St. Paul, **Not many of you were wise**. The world considers us ignorant rabble, weak, pathetic noble royalty, fools who are beneath their dignity who follow myths and imagination. **But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise**; choosing the weak to show up the strong. True wisdom, strength, nobility is not of the world not as the world thinks, but given from Him.

And this ironic, unlikely turn of events is also how Jesus initiates His ministry, revealing who He is, unveiling the work of the Holy Trinity –using what's despised and weak in the eyes of the world -like that font there- to accomplish this most mighty work in history: recreation and reconciliation.

John the Baptist –after 400 years of no prophets; silence, this creational pregnant pause- then miraculous birth John. John called to preach the coming of the kingdom, calling sinners to a baptism of repentance– ironically giving away life in the dead of the desert. And who comes to John to partake of this baptism -the one person in history of the world who doesn't need to repent. The one John is preaching about!

John recognizes this plot twist; incredulous: **I need to be baptized by You, do You come to me?** Divine irony, the stunning, unlikely turn of events calls us to pay attention. Our Lord: **Let it be so, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness**. Which means Jesus is talking about you, what must be done for you, as He makes baptism, baptism, a life-giving stream, that font is a tributary of the Jordan river, poured out upon you to receive the righteousness of Christ.

And apocalyptic narrative continues: **immediately, He went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened (Greek ‘heavens torn open’, same word used when Jesus dies, the temple curtain is ‘torn open’ which links these events), and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased.**

The world never the same again, the revelation of the Holy Spirit that hovered over Genesis creational waters to breathe life is there over recreational water, your waters -to breathe new life in you. The Father called Him beloved. You know David in Hebrew is beloved. A play on words that this is the greater David, greater king to reign forever. This is remarkable stuff! Nobody could make this up!

Matthew 1 established genealogy that Jesus is the Son of David. David the man after God’s own heart, loved by God. Christ is even more a Man after God’s own heart. He is the Man who takes up the mantle of Messiah, becomes the Passover Lamb, Scapegoat, and whole burnt offering. He fulfills all righteousness.

The world is clueless about what happens at baptism, even with babies: the weakest who can’t even care for themselves. But isn’t that really us all who need this gift, this grace. By water and the Word God empower you, even little ones, arming you with power to fight the devil, to resist the world, and to even defeat death. But the world mocks, only seeing the weakness of a child, pathetic three scoops of ordinary water.

And the world, people can’t figure out their identity or purpose or gender. No one receives baptism as God's stamp of approval over you, who you are, what you’ve done. No one. Baptism is the killing of the sinful self, the birth of a new person, created in Christ, for faith, good works that glorify God, for eternal life. You live out life as male and female, created vocations by God, your entire identity -baptismal.

The font. Exactly how Jesus says disciples are made. How you are adopted by grace, how you’re saved, how you’re joined to His cross and resurrection.

The unlikely story continues as the devil, the world, and our sinful nature are all put to shame by the weakness of water and the Word. All by three scoops of water and the Name of the Most Holy Trinity –spoken by a mortal human being. The world laughs in mockery, we celebrate in the daily joy baptism works in you. *Credo quia absurdum* so absurd it is so true.

Luther commends us all to continue the ancient early church tradition of waking up each day, making the sign of the cross, as we do in the Divine Service, I am baptized. Remember each day your own baptism with joyful reverence, how you live Christian, repentant, daily die to sin, daily rise in His righteousness, live intentionally with no regrets as the men and women He made you, you are the baptized! Empowered to live in the kingdom, always led to Jesus, whose baptism fulfilled all righteousness on your behalf, and because of that righteousness, what the Father says of Jesus, He says of you. You are all David’s in Christ, people after His own heart, you are beloved of the Father, and in Christ with whom I am well-pleased of you.