

The Baptism of our Lord
January 10, 2021

“Beloved of the Father” (Mark 1:11)

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LSB 590

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today’s text for this Sunday, the Baptism of our Lord, is from our reading from Mark 1.

“Then a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Here ends our text.

The voice came from heaven, the voice of the Father, the first person of the Trinity. And He spoke to His Son Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, who was now in the flesh, true man and true God. And the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove.

The three persons of the Trinitarian Godhead showed themselves to the world on this most important occasion of the baptism of Jesus – three persons but one God. For this day marked beginning of the public ministry of Jesus which would come to completion three years later at cross for the salvation of the world. What the Triune God created good and perfect, as we heard in our Old Testament reading from Genesis 1, had become imperfect with sin.

And so, the Triune God had to recreate and restore what was fallen. And there was but one way to do this. God, the second person of the Trinity, the Word had to become flesh and take upon Himself the sins of the world. The Word spoke at creation and said, “Let there be light and there was light”. And now the Word would speak to the world where salvation alone can be found – in Him, the Light of the world.

“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

So also, in the words of Psalm 2 which we read earlier in the service in our introit, the Father says,

“Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.” (Psalm 2:12)

Kiss the Son, that is, believe in Him. Put your trust in Him and you will be blessed with salvation...lest He be angry. Why would God be angry? Well, let's go back to the beginning with our reading from the Old Testament.

The very first verse of the Bible tells us who created all things. **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”** And this word, God, Elohim in the Hebrew, is not singular but plural. For God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters. The Word spoke and created light, and the Father saw that it was good and divided the light from the darkness.

Later in verse 26, the Triune God said, **“Let us make man in our image”**. Man was made perfect and holy in image of his Triune God.

But man fell by eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. So the Triune God says, **“Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (Genesis 3:22)**

Like Us, the Triune God says, knowing good and evil, but not like the Triune God – sinful. Lest sinful man live forever in sin, he was driven from the garden.

But now, at the Baptism of our Lord, the Triune God manifests Himself to restore man's image and give him back his holiness. And this restoration could only be accomplished by the Son of God, the Father's Servant, His Elect One beginning His path to the cross at His baptism.

So the antiphon for our introit from Isaiah 42:1 prophesies of this day,

“Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.”

It is the soul's delight of the Father, that His only begotten Son would become the suffering Servant to save the world of their sins and bring forth justice by giving them His righteousness. So, Jesus says this to John the Baptist in Matthew 2.

But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."

Jesus comes to the water, to John the Baptist, not needing to be cleansed of sin for He is sinless. But Jesus comes bearing the sins of all the world to drown them in the water of baptism. Jesus comes to take upon Himself our sins to restore our lost image of holiness. The Holy Spirit anoints Him as true Man without limit for this greatest of tasks. And this pleases the Father immensely!

In Jesus, the Father is well-pleased that He would faithfully take up this task of the redemption of the world. The Father offers what is most beloved to Him, His very Son, for the sins of the world.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

And again, we hear in John's first epistle in chapter 4 these words.

"In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:9-10)

This is love. This is love! For you and me! The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for the appeasing of the Father for our sins! So that we might live! Live again with a restored image – free from sin!

You might ask yourself, "how could the Father do such a thing to His Son and call Him beloved?" How could the Father send His Son to be born in a manger, flee for His life into Egypt and as soon as He is baptized, drive Him into the wilderness to be tempted. That doesn't sound like love, does it? Because this is agape love. Sacrificial love for us. And the Father tells us that He will uphold His Elect One. Yes, Jesus will die, yet He will be raised from the dead and exalted.

Jesus was kept safe from Herod. He was sustained by angels after His temptation and in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus was kept strong by His Father to do His Father's business of saving the world. So we heard last week how Jesus spoke to His parents.

“And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49)

We see what's important to the Triune God by what the Son prioritizes. He goes to His Father's house to hear the word and grow in wisdom. How important for us to hear the Word of God for in it we see how the Triune God recreates and restores the fallen world through His Son.

We see what's important to God that at the outset of His ministry, He didn't go to the Roman emperor or to the Senate to protest His case for the sinfulness of the world. Yes, peaceful protesting is fine, but not like we saw this week in the capitol. Yet, no amount of protesting will achieve what Jesus achieved. No, the Pax Romana, could not give the peace which Jesus gives, which the angels sang of at His birth.

No, what's important, what gives true peace, is what the Triune God chose to give to His people – the Sacrament of Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar. These two sacraments book end Jesus ministry for they are of the highest importance for you and me. Jesus goes to the Jordan river, for He wants all people to go to the water of baptism for your washing of regeneration. He institutes the Lord's Supper right before His death because He wants all people to receive the gift of His love often in the eating of His body and blood for your forgiveness!

For by the washing of our baptisms, the Triune God brings us into His family and calls us His children. We are united with His death and resurrection as we heard in our epistle reading from Romans 6:4-5.

“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,”

United with Christ, we are also there called His beloved, His elect ones, beloved from eternity and elected from eternity to be His children and serve Him in righteousness, innocence and blessedness. So we hear in John's first epistle in chapter 3.

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.” (1 John 3:1)

And again we hear in Colossians 1.

“giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” (Colossians 1:12-14)

We are conveyed through baptism into the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love. This is the kingdom of grace which He has established by His death on the cross and His resurrection.

Such is the sacrificial, agape love of the Triune God for you and me. The Beloved of the Father gave all that we might be called His beloved again.

As His beloved, we are also called to show sacrificial love to God and each other. It is the new life that we live as heard in our epistle reading from Romans 6.

“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Was the sacrificial life that Jesus lived an easy one? Did He not immediately go into the wilderness and was tempted? Are we, the students above the Master? Yes, our lives will be filled with the difficulties, temptations, sadness, and distresses of this world. 2020 with the pandemic was a stark reminder of this for all of us.

Christianity will be mocked by unbelievers who think they are gods to themselves. Christians will be persecuted for their beliefs. And yet, standing firm in the faith, and proclaiming the salvation of the Triune God is part of our sacrificial love for God. For He wants all people to be saved. He wants all people to be baptized and receive the restored image which Jesus has graciously won for all.

We are daily motivated by the great love of the Father for us. He will uphold us as He upheld His Elect One in His path to the cross. And we bear Christ crucified to the world that they may repent and receive the washing of regeneration in baptism. So we say with Paul in Galatians 2.

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

This is the revolution our nation, our world needs. Christ living in you and all Christians, pointing the lost to Jesus!

The world doesn't need people carrying lecterns out of the House of Representatives, but more pastors preaching the Word of God from lecterns and pulpits. It needs more of God's people teaching the Word of God at their family altars.

The world doesn't need more feet storming the Capital and putting feet up on desks. The world needs the feet of God's people storming through the grip holds of Satan with Gospel feet, bringing the Good News of Jesus' salvation for all. Yes, kiss the Son, lest He be angry. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)