

The Baptism of Our Lord
“God’s pleasing Way to fulfill all righteousness for us!”

Matthew 3:13-17

January 11, 2026

Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for the Baptism of our Lord is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 3:13-17.

“13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. 14 And John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?”

15 But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him.

16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. 17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

So far the text:

Have you ever enjoyed a nice meal at a restaurant with a friend or family member, and when the meal is ended, the person you are eating with says: “Let me get this.”? And then you maybe say, “That’s kind of you” and you offer to help out with the tip. But, the reply is : “No, I’ve got this”. And then you express your gratitude.

It seems to me that this is what’s happening in the most profound spiritual sense with John the Baptist and Jesus. In order for baptism to be more than a simple application of water, ...just a sign as the reformed churches believe...in order for baptism to have the power to forgive sins...as we read in Luke 3:3

“And he (John) went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins”

...in order that Peter could write:

“1 Peter 3:21

“Baptism now saves us— (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

The bill had to be paid! In order for there to be power and efficacy in every baptism, there had to be linkage to the One who gives it power and life – Jesus Christ!

Baptism had to be united to Jesus’ death and resurrection. For the forgiveness which Jesus won for the world, which Jesus paid for with His precious blood, is thereby truly given when a sinner is baptized. So, Jesus Himself ordered John the Baptist to baptize Him. Yes, this is an order...an imperative that Jesus speaks here.

“I insist” . Literally “Leave it to Me”. Leave the bill for the sins of all humanity to Me. Jesus could only say this because He is sinless and as the Son of God, His death on the cross abounds to all sinners. Jesus paid the bill for you and me and He picks up the check personally for you and me in each of our baptisms.

Permit it be now...Now, in this moment...Now, that I am entering My office publicly as the Savior of the world...as Prophet, Priest and King for the salvation of all people...in order to fulfill all righteousness.

Jesus doesn’t say “some” righteousness, but “all” righteousness. For in this moment, as Jesus is baptized, He places the sins of all people, you and me included upon Himself, and says, “I got this”. “ I got the whole tab including the tip for any and all debts of sin.

And you and I personally receive this gift, this payment for our debts in our baptism. Luther writes:

“Jesus is saying, If that shall be performed that the poor sinners may come to righteousness and be saved, you must baptize Me. Because for the sake of sinners I have become a sinner, and must therefore do what God has charged the sinners to do, in order that they may become just through Me.”

Last week, we hear the 12 year old boy Jesus in the temple telling His parents:

“Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” 50 But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. “

And 28 years later, this becomes very clear what the Father's business is as Jesus enters His office as our Savior. The Father's voice is heard now at His baptism.

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Why would the Father say He is well pleased? Because the Son is doing the work that He was sent to do...serve the world by giving His life as a ransom for all people.

And the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus in the form of a dove, anointing Him as the Messiah to do this most holy work of being our Priest and sacrifice for sins.

The Holy Trinity is united in the mission to save this lost world. And the only way this could be accomplished was through the only Man who is God-pleasing – Jesus Christ – the sinless Son of God.

Paul speaks of this saving mission and connects it to the saving means of grace – baptism as he writes in Titus 3.

"But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Like John the Baptist we say: "I need to be baptized by You." I, a lost sinner need your mercy. My works of unrighteousness are not sufficient. I can't pay for the tab. I can't go and wash the dishes to pay for the bill.

No, it is by pure grace that I am saved – Justified by grace. Baptism is not what I'm doing to show God that I am a follower. No! Baptism is what God is doing to make me a follower, a disciple, an heir of eternal life. It is 100% God's doing. 100% the work of the Triune God claiming me and washing me of my sin and renewing me by the power of the Holy Spirit!

This gift, because it is a gift and entirely the work of God, not dependent upon human efforts or reason is given to all people regardless of age. It is given to infants in whom God creates saving faith, to adults, to all people, Jews and Gentiles alike. For in baptism

all righteousness is fulfilled in all people. One becomes a child of God – and united to Jesus in baptism God is pleased with you. For Christ's righteousness is yours!

For that reason, Jesus gave His Great Commission:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20

This is how God, the Triune God, makes disciples with simple water and His most powerful word. This is how Jesus picks up the bill and says, “I insist. I’ve got this.” And then He commands us to teach all His word that a baptized believer may grow in faith and service to God. He promises that He will always be with us. Amen.

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