

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
January 15, 2017
2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 42:1-7, Acts 10:34-38

Hymns: 364; 237; 755; 309

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Matthew 3:13-17

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." (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God my Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Epiphany message --

Our focus during this time of the church year is really a double focus. We talk about Jesus' glory being revealed, demonstrating that Jesus is the Christ who was to come into the world. At the same time we are looking at Jesus as the Savior of *all* the world.

We see this emphasis in both of our Scriptures lessons this morning as the Prophet Isaiah was led to speak of the salvation that would come to the Gentiles and how the Servant of the Lord was to serve as a light to the Gentiles. In our lesson from the book of Acts we read of Peter entering the house of a Roman Centurion and proclaiming the gospel to a household of Gentiles, for the Lord through a vision had brought Peter to understand that salvation was not to be limited to the Jews. So it is that in both of these Scriptures we see that the glory of Jesus was to be presented to the Gentiles.

We don't see that thought emphasized in our gospel lesson, which is our text for this morning. In fact in the older, historical pericopes this text is reserved for Trinity Sunday. With the dramatic presentation of the Trinity at the conclusion of this event one can easily see why that would be. Why then do we find it in such a prominent position in the Epiphany season? As we examine the record of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist we will see --

THEME: The Glory Revealed in Jesus' Baptism.

We begin with something that is too easily overlooked in our text: we see the glory of Jesus in --

I. The Heart of a Savior.

We need to realize the significance of this event and what it took for this event to happen. Jesus came to John to be baptized by John in the Jordan River. The obvious truth, the truth that was obvious to John as well, was that Jesus didn't need to be baptized by John. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Jesus didn't need repentance. He had no sin to confess. He had no sins that needed to be washed away. He had no need to be restored to peace with God. The second aspect of this was that Jesus was greater than John. John knew that. John taught that the One coming after him was so much greater than John that John was not worthy to perform the lowliest of task of tending to Jesus' sandals.

So we see how easily John saw reason to protest: "**John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?'**" (v. 14). However this was the wrong conclusion, for John didn't perceive that the need for Jesus' to be

baptized did not lie with Jesus needing salvation, but with Jesus securing salvation for us.

Here we see the heart of a Savior. Jesus was in control. Jesus had come to be baptized by John, and when John objected Jesus spoke decisively, “**Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.**” (v. 15). Jesus’ authority settled the matter. “Permit it to be so now,” was no longer a request, but a directive for this baptism take place.

Jesus was determined to be baptized for our salvation. And this is where we see the heart of a Savior. Jesus didn’t need to be baptized and yet Jesus was so determined to be baptized by John that He made a long, arduous trip on foot from Galilee into Judea, to the wilderness area of the Jordan east of Jerusalem. And there, over the objections of a mighty preacher and yet a humble servant of the Word, Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River. Jesus’ determination is a mark of His will for our salvation. Jesus determination was not for His gain, but for ours.

This was a part of His active obedience to the will of God. Jesus provided the reason why it was so important for John to baptize Jesus. It was part of Jesus fulfilling all righteousness. This was essential to our salvation.

In this inspired account of the Baptism of Jesus we see the glory of Jesus in securing --

II. The Righteousness of God.

It was all about securing that perfect righteousness. Let us recall again Jesus’ response to John’s initial objection: “**Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness**” (v. 15).

It is all about that righteousness which we do not possess on our own, which no man can attain on his own. It is all about that righteousness which is revealed to us in the gospel, where the righteousness of God is revealed for us and our salvation. It was right and necessary for Jesus to be baptized to fulfill all righteousness. God credits Jesus’ righteousness to us; in order for us to be saved that righteousness of Christ had to be full and

complete and perfect in every way. So the righteousness we receive by faith is “*all righteousness*” because Jesus came to John to be baptized by John in the Jordan River.

Sometimes we may be asked the question, “What about people that are not baptized?” Doesn’t the Lord require baptism? “**He who believes and is baptized shall be saved**” (Mark 16:16). That is the word of the Lord. How then can someone who is missing that righteous act still be saved? The answer is right here in Jesus’ baptism. Jesus did all that was required for our salvation. The dying thief was not baptized, but his plea to Jesus to be remembered when Jesus entered His kingdom received an absolute assurance of salvation, “**Today who will be with me in paradise!**”(Luke 23:43). How could that be? Because Jesus fulfilled all righteousness for us, including for the dying thief. Through faith in Jesus we are credited with His righteousness. This does not grant license for anyone to despise baptism and the grace that it brings, for such willful disobedience precludes faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. We needed His righteousness to be ALL righteousness, so that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us through faith in Jesus. And so Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River.

Finally this wondrous account of the events surrounding Jesus’ baptism reveal Jesus’ glory in the spectacular --

III. Assurance of God’s Blessing.

We read in our text:

Matthew 3:16-17 “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. ¹⁷And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

As soon as the baptism was completed Jesus began to walk up out of the river, and simultaneous with Jesus walking back up on the shore was the opening of the heavens and the sign that John the Baptist had been told he would witness. John referenced this

glorious sign later as a part of his testimony concerning Jesus. We read in John's gospel:

John 1:32-34 “And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him.
³³ I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’
³⁴ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

So first for John and then also for us this confirms the truth about Jesus; *He is the Christ the Son of God!* One cannot deny such an endorsement from heaven above. It also assures us of the Spirit's blessing upon Jesus not only as the Son of God, but also as the Son of Man. It was time for Jesus to begin His own public ministry in which Jesus would be teaching and preaching concerning the coming of the Kingdom of God. People marveled at Jesus' teaching for “**He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes**” (Matthew 7:29).

Jesus teaching came with the highest authority for the Holy Spirit not only landed on Jesus in a visible way but remained with Jesus. Jesus also testified that He taught the people the things that He received from His Father. When the scribes and Pharisees challenged Jesus concerning His authority, whether it was His authority to forgive sins, or to heal on the Sabbath Day, or to drive the money changers out of the temple it was this authority received from the Father that stood behind all Jesus' works. Jesus said, “**The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me**” (John 10:25). As the Son of God Jesus possessed His own authority. It was the authority of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the only true God, the God of our salvation that stood behind all that Jesus taught and did. He was indeed the Lamb of God who had come into this world to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29)!

Now can we see the Epiphany message? We see how Jesus' glory truly shone at His baptism, and it still shines for us and our salvation! In Jesus' baptism we do indeed see the heart of a Savior, the wonder of righteousness secured, and glory of the only begotten Son of God, who is Christ Jesus our Lord!

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.