

Sunday Sermon: January 15, 2017

Sermon Text: Matthew 3: 13-17

Sermon Theme: Jesus shows us what Baptism is and what it means for our lives

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

This was the year almost everyone in the Buch family received a present they had to build. The kids received these gifts and then mom and dad got the gift of helping to put them together.

The gifts came with bags and bags of parts and pieces and stickers that they would have to put together. But without a set of directions, or an example picture, the pieces and parts would have never come together to look like anything,

Some of the gifts had such good directions and examples that the kids could put the things together themselves. The directions were step-by-step, piece-by-piece directions so easy that even a 7 year old could follow them. Any help could be given by mom or dad and within a minute or two the kids were back to building.

Another gift was a bit more difficult. While most of the directions could be followed, there were a few example pictures that were unclear or hard to understand. Dad exclusively got these questions. Dad and child had to put their heads together to figure out how it could work, but by the end of the day the task got accomplished and the toy built.

There was one other gift that was so complicated that dad ended up putting it together. Even though the directions said that it was within the age range of the child, the directions were not clear, they were not step-by-step, the example pictures were no good. They were so difficult that a 40 year old had to struggle to understand where the next piece went. It was just too much for the children to handle on their own.

Having directions is a wonderful thing, but only when those directions, those examples, are clear and make sense. Directions do no good if we don't understand them. For a cook it is the recipe that is not thoroughly explained, in algebra, it is the teacher who goes quickly through an example, for technology it is the fix for our computer or our phone, that comes so quickly we don't know which keys to push next time to do the same thing. Directions are good, but only when we are clear about what they mean.

In our sermon text for today, we see Jesus showing us something very important, he is very clear about it is though. He shows us what our baptism means and the great blessings we receive.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus is a "high priest who knows our needs." When he says this, he is reminding us that Jesus was True Man. He walked and talked, he had emotions and feelings, he got hungry and was probably sick during his life. All the while he walked the earth he did it in the same way that we do, except he was without sin.

Jesus had to be a True Man in order that he could live a perfect life for us. God says that for a person to enter heaven on their own, they must be perfect. There is no way that sinful man can or could achieve this absence of sin on their own. Sinful man needs help. Part of God's plan of salvation was the answer to this problem. Jesus would take our place in this world and live according to the perfect Law of God. He would abide by that Law his whole life and provide for us the perfect obedience to that Law that we could not do ourselves. All that Jesus did in his life he did for our benefit, not for his own.

Today we see Jesus being baptized. We know that we are baptized because we are sinful, we need forgiveness of sins, which baptism brings, however the question is often asked, "Why did Jesus need to be baptized?"

Strangely enough that seems to be the same thoughts that John the Baptist had. "**I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?**" By saying this John is really stating two things: First he is saying, "I am a

sinner who needs forgiveness. I need to be baptized myself.” Secondly, he is saying, “You are the Savior who is not a sinner, you are holy, you do not need to be baptised.”

Jesus answer shows us that his baptism would clearly point out to us what our baptism means and the blessings we receive through it, “¹⁵ Jesus replied, **“Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.”** We see Jesus calm John’s troubled mind by saying, “This is not wrong to do, it is good and right and proper before God for you to baptism me. We also see Jesus giving us the reason for his baptism. It is proper to do this to **fulfill all righteousness.**

Who’s righteousness? Jesus is not talking about his own righteousness. He was perfect. Jesus did not live his life perfectly, or righteously to earn himself anything. All that Jesus did in his life he did for us. He must be baptized so that in turn we would be baptized. And in that baptism, our God would give us the righteousness that Jesus won for us.

Jesus shows us the importance of baptism for our lives by coming to baptism himself. He gives us a living example, living directions, of what we should do as Christians who are following him and what it means.

God’s Word never presents Baptism as optional for Christians. The words that talk about Baptism are often commands. We know what a command is. When we hear, “Get outta my way , Give me my toy back, Show me your license, or Put your hands behind your back” we know that these are not requests that we can think about, or questions, we know that someone is telling us to do something.

Our Lord directs us in his Word that we and our families should be baptized. But he even goes one step further than just telling us, Jesus shows us how important and blessed baptism is. He who did not need to be baptized came and was baptized so that we who need to be baptized would also come.

¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

We see our Triune God in all of his glory pointing out that baptism is good and blessed. What is more, when we see what happens to Jesus at his baptism, we also see the great blessings of baptism for our lives.

Heaven was opened and the Spirit of God descended like a dove and lighted on Jesus. When we are baptized with water and the Word, the Holy Spirit comes down to us from heaven. He lights on us, coming to us and making his home within our hearts, and there he works saving faith in our Savior.

The voice from heaven made a declaration before all people that this was his Son. At our baptism, God also makes a declaration that we are adopted into the family of God. We are his child and heirs of eternal life.

The blessings of Baptism are only possible because of the work of Jesus our Savior. Without the perfect life that he led in our place, without the punishment that he took for our sins, baptism would not mean anything. But with the work of Jesus, baptism takes away our sins away. The water that is in baptism symbolizes the blood of our Savior, shed on the cross, washing away our sins now and forever. We are made holy by this washing.

Because of Jesus, our heavenly Father can and does make a declaration that we are his children who he loves deeply and is pleased with. He says, “You are my sons and daughters through Jesus. I love you deeply, more than any Father can ever love his own children. I love you so much I am willing to forgive you for Jesus’ sake. Because of what my son Jesus has done for you I am well-pleased to call you my children and to bring you into my heavenly home.”

Jesus was baptized to show us exactly what baptism means and the blessings that are ours through baptism. But remember John, he was skeptical wasn’t he. He could not understand why Jesus would do what he was doing.

Sometimes we are skeptical about baptism too. We are skeptical that baptism is anything more than a ceremony because we don’t see the dove or hear the voice. How can anything be happening with water and God’s Word...we ask ourselves. We don’t view baptism as a sacrament in the same way we view Holy Communion because many of us were baptized when we were little and have no recollection of it. We don’t think about our baptism and how special it was and still it for us today. This viewing of baptism as a secondary sacrament might lead us to lose the urgency that we should feel to bring our children, or encourage that our grandchildren be baptized.

This skepticism about baptism may also lead to skepticism about any of the promises of God. Did God really create the world as he said? Did Jesus really do all those miracles? Did Jesus really go to the cross for us? Do we receive the blessings of the cross through Holy Communion?

This skepticism is really our lack of faith in our powerful and loving God. It is really our sin talking. We should never be skeptical of the promises of God. Jesus did all this for us, to fulfill all righteousness on our behalf that we might stand forgiven before God for our doubts and fear, our worries and lapses of faith.

It was good and right that as Jesus stood in the place of mankind at his baptism and at the cross. Through his baptism, Jesus shows us that our forgiveness and righteousness do not come from ourselves, they can only come through him and that he can and does freely and fully give to us the blessings of the cross through these sacraments. In Jesus' baptism we see exactly what baptism is and the blessings that we are given through baptism. Praise the Lord for his holy baptism, which is also our baptism. Amen.