

Sermon:

**"HIS BAPTISM – AND OURS"**

Mark 1:4-11

Baptism of our Lord St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Holt, MI 01/10/21 Pastor Martin Greunke

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we have recently begun Series B of the Lectionary, we notice that today's text is from the Gospel of Mark...in fact, most of our Gospel readings in this Lectionary Series will be from Mark's Gospel. Did you know that Mark is the only book in the Bible that announces itself as a 'gospel'? (Mk. 1:1 ***"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."***) This verse plus verses 2-8 comprise the Gospel lectionary reading for five weeks ago on The Second Sunday of Advent, which was December 6. The Baptism of our Lord is covered quite extensively in Matthew's Gospel. Luke briefly mentions it in a couple of sentences. John doesn't mention it at all. So when we look at Mark, there is no word about the birth of Jesus nor of His youth. It starts right in with this "good news" of Jesus' baptism as the beginning of His ministry. It is the fulfillment of the **"messenger"** promised by the prophet Isaiah (40:3) and by the prophet Malachi (3:1)...the **"messenger"** being John. This promise was reiterated by John the Baptizer's own explanation of Jesus' baptism, that his (John's) baptism was with water, but **"Jesus will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."** (Mk. 1:8)

In case you're wondering where this sermon is going today, let me say that I am correlating Jesus' Baptism to our own baptisms...hence, the title of today's sermon: **"His Baptism--And Ours."**

Let us look at John's baptism; we see that it had two components -- repentance and forgiveness. (v. 4) As John explains what took place with Jesus, he adds that the baptism is not only with water, but with the Holy Spirit. Those elements are still true of baptism today. the baptismal liturgy marks the end of the old life (***"Do you renounce....?"***) and the beginning of a new life lived in God's grace and forgiveness. Then John adds a new component with the gift of the Holy Spirit, often used in some baptismal liturgies when anointing oil is used and the words spoken (***"...you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit..."***)

Later on, toward the close of His ministry, Jesus Himself makes clear that baptism leads to a new way of life. When the brothers James and John (AKA 'the sons of thunder') ask to be seated next to Jesus in the life to come, Jesus points out that ***"the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized."*** (Mk. 10:39) To be baptized in Jesus is to follow Him.

After Jesus finished with His life on this earth and His followers became the early Christian church, they developed what baptism means for us. The process starts immediately at Pentecost when God gives the disciples the gift of the Spirit to carry on this new life in Christ. After his sermon on Pentecost, the listeners ask the apostle Peter how they should respond; he answers with these same three components of baptism with these words: ***"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins will be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*** (Acts 2:38)

As we continue in the New Testament, our understanding of what baptism means for us continues to unfold. It always follows faith -- the faith of the person being baptized (Acts 8:13,36) or even the faith of the parents. (Acts 16:15, 30-33; 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:16) Now as we look closer at our text from Mark 1:4-11, we see that John the Baptizer is a main character in this account. In today's gospel, we heard that all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were

going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan river, confessing their sins. People responded to John's proclamation by confessing their sins. These people repented of their sins and received forgiveness. That is what we heard in today's Gospel. But then something really odd happened. Jesus came for baptism. Now remember, this is a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The thing is that the Bible tells us that Jesus never sinned. We heard John himself in today's Gospel saying, **"After me comes He who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."** (7,8) The Holy Spirit inspired Peter to write, **"He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth."** (1 Pet. 2:22) The Holy Spirit also inspired John the Evangelist to write, **"In Him there is no sin."** (1 Jn. 3:5) It would seem that Jesus had no need to repent. It would seem that He had no need for forgiveness. Here is the perfect Son of God getting down into the water with John. Why? Why should the sinless Son of God receive a sinner's baptism from a sinner like John?

The answer comes from the words of the Apostle Paul. By the power of the Holy Spirit he wrote: **"For our sake (God) made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."** (2 Cor. 5:21) Even though Jesus never sinned, God declared Him to be a sinner -- not with His sin but with your sin and my sin. The sin that Jesus carried into that baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins was the sin that He took away from us and carried it all the way to Calvary!

Yes, Jesus became one of us. He took on all that has gone wrong with us -- every sin. By taking our sin onto Himself, He becomes the Great Sinner. He becomes the Greatest Sinner so that He could become our One and Only Savior! He takes His place under our sin so that He could lift it from us and carry it away. He carried our sin away from us so that the punishment for that sin will not fall on us but on Him. That is how God has decided that His judgment and His righteousness should go. Jesus should take our sin to Himself with all its condemnation, guilt, and punishment. God turns His friendly face to us because Jesus became one of us and took our sin on Himself.

So it is that Jesus submits to the Baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. He repents of your sin. He undergoes the sinner's baptism for sinners. Jesus stand with us in the waters of a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

From the moment that the single cell of Divine humanity came to be in the womb of the Virgin, the Son of God has carried the sins of the world. Up until this moment of baptism, He carried our sins in silent anonymity. Now, at His baptism, His role as sin-bearer becomes public. **"And when He came up out of the water, immediately He saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descended on Him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.'"** (10,11) These passages tell us that now the time has come for Jesus to publicize His journey -- a journey that will pass through the cross where He will take away the sin of the world -- a journey that will also pass through the empty tomb of Christ's resurrection that demonstrates His power over death. God the Father is pleased with His Son as He continues this journey of salvation.

On our liturgical calendar, this day, The Baptism of Jesus, could also be called the First Sunday after the Epiphany, which was January 6<sup>th</sup>. So this day is an 'epiphany' of Jesus to John the Baptizer and his followers -- but it is more than that. This is an 'epiphany' of the

entire Holy Trinity. Thus we see that while it is the Son of God who takes on our human flesh in order to redeem us, it is the entire Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are involved in our redemption. This 'epiphany' of the Triune God shows us the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within the Triune God. **"You are My Beloved Son; with You I am well pleased."** (11) This is a statement that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate to one another in love; as the Apostle John states in his first letter, **"God is Love."** (1 Jn. 4:6,8) At Jesus' baptism the heavens were torn open as the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit brought heaven down to earth – to unite heaven and earth – to heal our relationship with Him.

The fact that the heavens were torn open tells us that the heavens were closed. The heavens were closed because our love for God was broken. The intimate loving relationship we see within the 'epiphany' of the Triune God reminds us that our love toward God has grown cold. The Law states, **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."** (Deut. 6:5) Nevertheless, we look for love from the gods of our own making. Very often the god we worship is the one we see in the mirror. It is our pleasure – our wants – our desires that are at the center of our lives. God desires our relationship with Him to be like the relationship between a bride and a groom, but we often commit spiritual adultery and pursue the gods of our own desires.

The Baptism of Jesus reveals the plan of God to restore this love – to heal our relationship with Him – to open heaven to us to take our place under the Law. Here stands the sinless Son of God who carries in Him the sin of the entire world. Here is Jesus standing with us in the waters of baptism in order that we might be joined to Him in eternity.

In today's epistle, (Romans 6:1-11) the Apostle Paul tells us that in baptism we are united to Christ's death and resurrection. He states, **"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."** (3,4)

The voice from heaven said, **"You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased."** (11) This is God the Father expressing delight in God the Son. This is God the Father expressing delight in us as well. For Jesus' journey through the cross and the open tomb earned salvation for us. Through baptism, the Holy Spirit joined us to Christ Jesus. All that is ours belongs to Him, and all that is His belongs to us. So God delights in us just as He delights in Jesus. In a world that has long ago surrendered to sin, death, and the devil, there is one place where we receive the delight of God. That is when we are in solidarity with Jesus who heard the Father say, **"You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased."** (11)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, how wonderful it is to be in the family of Jesus. In Him, we are truly brothers and sisters in Christ – we are the beloved sons and daughters of God. Through Baptism there is one great family in Christ. Paul writes in Ephesians: **"There is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and in all."** (4:4-6) This family spans the globe for it includes believers on every continent all over the world. This family transcends time and space for it includes all who believe in Jesus Christ here and in eternity.

In the eyes of those outside the Church, baptism looks like pretty ordinary stuff. All they can see is someone applying water to someone. How gracious it is of God to use the ordinary to

do the extraordinary. In baptism, the Word of God is applied to the water according to the command of God. Do you recall that Dr. Martin Luther reminds us to daily remember our baptisms? You are to be reminded that the gift of baptism has poured out on you all the blessings of your God. May the Holy Spirit remind you of how this Sacrament is truly rich with the grace of God. In this holy gift, you were united with the Blood and the Death and the Resurrection of Christ. This was all purchased for you by Christ in these precious few drops of water.

On my bedroom wall, I have a document, written in German, hanging there. This is my '*Tauf-Schein*' – my certificate of Holy Baptism. It states that I was born on November 11, 1938 but it also states I was re-born on November 25, 1938. Over 82 years ago, my pastor took a bit of water and put it on my forehead three times, calling me by three names: my first, middle, and last, but also saying that I was baptized into three other names: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. The water used at my baptism has long since evaporated from my forehead – but the blessings remain – now and forevermore.

Friends in Christ, God has put His name on you too. He put His name on you when water was joined to God's Word according to Christ's command. He put His name on you at your baptism. Through baptism, Jesus is with you and you with Him. Because you are in Him and because He is the beloved Son, you are also beloved. You are never alone. Jesus is with you and you are with Him – in the water – at the cross – at the resurrection. You are in Christ and with Christ into eternity. **AMEN.**