

JESUS' BAPTISM REVEALS THE BLESSINGS OF OUR OWN

We are revealed to the world as Children of God

We are possessed by the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 3:13-17

TEXT: *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. 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. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

In Jesus' name, fellow redeemed:

Relatively few people today know and understand what God made Baptism to be. In the simplest of words, know and understand that God made Baptism to be a miracle that he has authorized his Church, that is, his believers to perform.

When Jesus was 30 years old he came to John the Baptist who was doing something in his teaching that symbolized the washing away of sin, and pointing to God who through the Christ would forgive all sins. But since Jesus was born without an earthly father, he had no sin. That's why John the Baptist objected to Jesus' strange request: *Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"* While we, along with John the Baptist, wonder about these things, it becomes obvious that Jesus' baptism serves God and us in an entirely different way than does our baptism. There is no sin in Jesus to be washed away. Instead JESUS' BAPTISM REVEALS THE AWESOME BLESSINGS OF OUR OWN. We are revealed to the world as Children of God; and, We are possessed by the Holy Spirit. All this is a miracle.

John voiced his objection toward baptizing the sinless Son of God: *I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?* John tries to deter the Lord, stop Him from making this serious theological mistake. But Jesus simply told John: *Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented...* Yes, I am the Lord, the Eternal Son of God, the Word Made Flesh, and I will tell you what must be done to fulfill the will of God, and I will teach and instruct you. Trusting that Jesus is the Christ of God, he humbly submits to our Lord's request to be baptized.

The Bible then says: *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. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."* Immediately, everyone knew and understood what Jesus' baptism was all about. They saw the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove. John later declared: *I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.* In 1 Then there was the voice from heaven: *This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.* This is the Father testifying publicly that this is His Son, the Christ of God, and being "well pleased" with Him means that this Jesus is the sinless Son of God.

Jesus' baptism was not to wash away any sin. But it served the purpose comparable to the inauguration of a president, or the installation of a pastor or teacher. It marked the official beginning of Jesus' public ministry before the eyes and ears of the world, with God the Father Himself being the installing authority. At the end of our Lord's ministry, and as he ascended into heaven, Jesus gave the power and authority of Holy Baptism to us, his disciples. He said: *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.* Mt 28 And as the apostle Paul writes in Titus, the Holy Spirit will descend upon men, women and children not in the form of a dove, but with the water that is applied in Jesus' name.

Our Baptism is a sign to you and to the world that you are a member of the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints. It reveals that we who are baptized have received the blessings of salvation, that is, the blessings of the Holy Spirit.

As we have already said, the Scripture says that Jesus was born without an earthly father so he did not inherit the sinful nature. But we have. We have all had earthly fathers from whom original sin has infected us, both body and soul. That's why Jesus once declared, "You must be born again." Jesus used this phrase in the context of Holy Baptism. A Jewish teacher and member of the ruling council named Nicodemus came to Jesus one night to discuss His credentials as the Christ of God. Instead Jesus declared: *I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.* Flummoxed, Nicodemus replied: *"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.* Jn 3 This is the work of God the Holy Spirit. It is a gracious miracle of His creating spiritual life in spiritually dead humans, regardless of age. The Bible says: *... if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ ...* 2 Co 5 And where this spiritual life is created, there is a Christian, a disciple, a believer, a priest, a member of God's family, and a human being who now has the heart and motivation to spend the rest of his days on this earth wanting to live up to what God has made him to be through faith in Jesus.

This spiritual life, the Holy Spirit living in us, also is revealed to the world in lives of true repentance. Our sins do trouble us, and we do not cover them up, but tell them to God and to those against whom we have sinned. In the congregation, it is the pastor who, in Jesus' name, and with His power and authority proclaims forgiveness to all. And all should believe that these gracious words are as valid and certain as if Jesus were speaking them to us Himself. Because, in truth, they are His words!

That's why Christians also go to church to worship. We don't go once or twice a month, or a year, but as often as our hearts desire. The heart of a Christian desires to worship his Savior God. It is as David declared: *I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD."* Ps 122 You say that you don't always feel like going to church? You don't FEEL the need to rejoice with the others who say: *Let us go to the house of the LORD...?* Or, as we would say: "Let's go to church!?" Then, by all means, return to your own baptism to remember what it is that the Lord has so graciously begun in you. Paul writes about our baptism: *...don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.* Ro 6 And Martin Luther properly teaches us and urges us to remember our own baptism on a daily basis. He writes: **Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.** Every day is a day of life under the promise and pledge of our Baptism.

But since the Old Adam cares nothing of this and we feel its sinful urgings Luther also liked to point out that while our sins are drowned in the flood of Baptism, the Old Adam is skilled swimmer. Yet the water of our Baptism allows us to push his head under water again and again with confession of repentance, and to believe what Peter calls baptism: God's Pledge of a clean conscience, not in our eyes, but before God. He writes: *... baptism ... saves you also-not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God.* 2 Pe 3 What a blessing this is!

Look at Jesus' baptism and hear the voice of the Heavenly Father declare Jesus to be his Son. Look at your Baptism and remember what Jesus, God's Son has declared your baptism to be. You are a member of that family of God! Amen.