

Matthew 3:13-17 “Marvel at the Miracles of Jesus’ Baptism” January 11-13, 2020
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Matthew 3:13-17

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 alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” (NIV)

Introduction

We have just come through the celebration of Christmas and the observance of many miracles – the Gabriel and Mary, an angel and Joseph, the virgin birth, God and man in the person of Jesus, the appearance of angels, the Magi, and more. As we continue in this Epiphany season we see many more miracles. Today as we look at the baptism of Jesus, we see miracles. Therefore, **Marvel at the Miracles of Jesus’ Baptism.**

The Trinity

One miracle we observe is the revelation of the One God who is three distinct persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Deuteronomy 6:4 says, “**Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.**” 1 Corinthians 8 reminds us, “**There is no God but one....**” Yet, as Matthew 28:19 – “**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 2 Corinthians 13:14 – “**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all**” – remind us, this one God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus’ baptism reveals the three persons of God as they manifest themselves at the same time – the voice of God the Father speaking about his Son; God the Son, Jesus, baptized; and, God the Holy Spirit visibly present in a form like a dove.

This phenomenon emphasizes the truth that reason wants to deny or explain away in some logical heresy. That truth is that God is one God who is three distinct persons. Jesus’ baptism reaffirms this truth. This account also makes clear that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit - three distinct persons - all at the same time. But the Father is not the Son; the Son, not the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit not the Father. The Athanasian Creed says that whoever wishes to be saved, along with the truth that Jesus is our Savior, must believe this truth that God is one God yet three distinct equal persons. This is the first miracle of Jesus’ baptism.

Jesus Co-Signs With Sinners

When Jesus asked John to baptize him, we’re told, 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 ... **Jesus was baptized...**” Some take this to mean that being baptized was only that Jesus had to do to show perfect dedication and obedience to God. They tend to look at baptism – that of anyone – an expression of dedication, submission, and obedience to God. Those who take this approach do not consider baptism a means of grace by which God gives his grace and peace to poor, undeserving sinners – even babies.

But baptism is more than that. Through it the Holy Spirit works faith – (Titus 3:5) “**He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing**

of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” In baptism God gives the forgiveness of sins - **(Acts 2:38)** **“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”** In baptism God’s Spirit makes us children of God and dresses people with Jesus’ righteousness – **(Galatians 3:26,27)** **So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,** ²⁷ **for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”** In baptism the Holy Spirit makes us heirs of eternal life – **(1 Peter 3:21)** **This water (Flood) symbolizes baptism that now saves you also-- not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”** Baptism is for all people. Baptism is a means of grace.

What Jesus is talking about with his statement **“it is proper to fulfill all righteousness”** is best explained with passages like 2 Corinthians 5:21. There the apostle Paul wrote, **“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”** Martin Luther aptly explained what Jesus said with these words - ***“John here is getting a sinner who in his own person has no sin, and yet is the greatest sinner, that has and bears the sin of the whole world. For this reason, he permits himself to be baptized and confesses with this action that he is a sinner...”*** The righteous to which Jesus pointed is also the righteousness of which Paul wrote to the Romans: **“But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe (3:21,22).”**

It’s like the co-signing of a loan agreement or a lease. When my sons Noah and Jesse, and daughter Naomi, who attended MSU - Mankato, rented a large apartment together with two other students, I had to co-sign that I would take responsibility to pay the rent during the lease period if they didn’t. I was taking responsibility if they couldn’t pay the rent. With his baptism Jesus is signing on to a partnership where he assumes responsibility for our sin for which there needs to be payment. Jesus is taking responsibility for the righteousness only he can give. Imagine that! The sinless Son of God co-signs for our sin and for our righteousness!

Earlier this week we heard of the 6.4 magnitude earthquakes in Puerto Rico. What devastation! Have you been struck by shockwaves of guilt lately? For one it may be the nagging reality that you don’t love someone as you should. For another it might be guilt tied to drunkenness. It could be the lack of patience with which you battle. Or it could just be the guilt connected with your trying hard to do what’s right, but often, doing what is wrong. Your conscience says, **“You’ve sinned.”** God’s law says, **“You’re condemned.”** You spiritually feel like you’re shaken and devastated.

In Jesus’ baptism we see a miracle has constructive impact. Jesus’ baptism gives comfort because there you see Jesus associating with you. He has no sin of his own, but he carries yours. He has no place among sinners, but he takes yours. He has no debt of his own, but he owns yours. He’s perfect, but at the same time he becomes the chief of sinners. He allows himself to be under condemnation for your sin. He eventually dies on the cross to pay your debt of sin. From birth to death Jesus is righteous with a righteousness you don’t have but is yours through faith in Jesus as is the forgiveness of sins. Jesus’ baptism is so amazing because it assures you and me that he co-signed with sinners - he did what you couldn’t do to save us. It is a miracle.

God the Father & God the Spirit Bless the Son

There is one more. **“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 '(v. 16,17).'" These are miracles.

The Holy Spirit publicly anointed the Savior. Peter put it this way in today's Epistle reading, **"God anointed Jesus with the of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power (Acts 10:38).** When presidents or governors assume their elected office, they are inaugurated. When others take office, they are often sworn in. When pastors, teachers or professors assume their duties in our congregations or schools, they are installed or inducted. In ancient times when someone entered a special office, they were anointed with fine oil. This activity designated the transfer of authority and mandated the giving of honor to the anointed. This was a miraculous working of the Holy Spirit by which he equipped and encouraging Jesus' human nature for the ministry as Savior into which Jesus was officially entering.

At the same time there was the Father's voice from heaven - **"This is my son whom I love, with him I am well-pleased."** As we need encouragement and approval in our lives, Jesus, in his humiliation, needed to be encouraged by God the Father and the Holy Spirit. As he had to be tempted in every way as we are, one of his temptation was doubt. God the Father now gives loving assurance by re-emphasizing to Jesus - "Yes, you are my Son. How you are and what your doing, is good." Jesus needed to hear that.

We need to hear it too. We need to hear this about Jesus because otherwise we might start to wonder, "How can one person do so much? How can he take my place as a sinner and take yours too? How can we be sure that Jesus did enough to save us?" Jesus baptism is a miracle because it shows us that he isn't just any guy, he's the Son of God who has enough value to save a world of people. At Jesus' baptism we see Jesus so pleasing to his Father in heaven that heaven opens and the Father speaks words of approval. This reminds us that with his life and death Jesus so pleased his Father that his Father has opened the kingdom of heaven for us here in time, and to us at the end of time -whether the end of our time or the end of the world.

Conclusion

Because of Jesus and the powerful working of the Holy Spirit, now God the Father can look at us and say, **"This is my son / daughter, whom I love; with you I am well-pleased."**