



Sermon

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The other day I was watching some early elementary school children playing. It was endearing how they imitated their parents and teachers. If only they could learn the material as easy as the methods used to teach. But then again, our Lord being baptized, MMMMmmm. Maybe we need to learn this lesson as well. Did you ever ask why did Jesus get baptized? It is not just in one or even two of the gospels, rather Jesus baptism is found in all four Gospels. Each of them with a slightly different emphasis of the event.

Today we heard Luke's account; did you catch a few odd things? Two very striking things are that John is not present at Jesus' baptism and the Holy Spirit was a bodily shape like a dove. These differences are not for us to debate which Gospel is more accurate or ignore the differences. Luke was very careful in the way he bears witness to this account. First, the role of John the Baptist. Luke portrays him to be an End Time Prophet who announces that the apocalypse is going to occur that will end the present day evil and bring about the realm of God in which all things will live forever in love, peace, justice, mutual support, freedom, and dignity.

John called people to repent and to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins in order to be part of the coming new world. Repent is to turn away from complicity with the old age and its values and behaviors and to turn towards the coming realm. Baptism gave baptisands a physical assurance

that their final destination was no longer determined by the brokenness of the old age (and its heinous rulers) but would be the realm, God. Baptism was an invisible mark initiating those who received it into a community anticipating the realm.

The reason John is put in prison foreshadows Jesus' rejection in Nazareth. John has told Herod the truth about his life. Herod doesn't like the truth and gets rid of the evidence. How do we do the same? Second, while John had a major role in the first chapters of the Gospel, including the story of his mother and father, his birth, his relationship to Jesus, now that Jesus will be baptized, it's just Jesus, and there will be no confusing the two.

According to Luke 3:15-17, however, John is not the one through whom the apocalyptic transformation will take place. The coming one -- Jesus -- will baptize the community with the Holy Spirit and fire and will carry out the final judgment (separate the wheat and chaff), i.e., the coming one will be the catalyst for the realm and will leave the Holy Spirit to empower the community to continue to witness to the realm after Jesus ascends.

Jesus' baptism will be different, and Jesus will baptize differently. We will know they are not the same by how they go about baptizing people. John's baptism is just with water. But Jesus? Well, that's with the Holy Spirit and with fire (think Acts 2).

Of course, this anticipates the scope of Luke's vision reaching back to Adam and then forward, far beyond the confines of Luke 24:53 into the book of Acts. As a result, the Spirit takes center stage here and reminds us of the unique function of the Spirit in Luke-Acts. Reading the Gospel of Luke through the lens of the Spirit's role generates the following, yet only a sampling, of the Spirit's presence. We see this from Chapter 1 with Conception all the way Through to Acts Chapter 2 at the Pentecost. In Luke, the Holy Spirit is a Bodily entity at the baptism. This gives clear promise of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

This passage calls us to repentance, not of a feeling sorry for our transgressions, rather from pulling us away from the evil of this world, with its false promises. Herod exemplifies who not to be like. He did not want to hear the truth. John only stated the truth, and Herod hated him for that.

We are called to live and proclaim the truth. BUT WHAT IS TRUTH? Jesus, the one we follow. The statement, “**You are my beloved Son**” shows Jesus is not only a man; he is also the uniquely loved Son of the Father. This divine affirmation will be repeated at the transfiguration. “**Well pleased**” shows that the Father takes delight in all that Jesus is and all that he has done in his life. It may also indicate that Jesus is the servant of the Lord by alluding to, in which case it would be forecasting the death of Jesus for his people. The Holy Spirit that embodies Christ will embody us as well.

We are called to bear witness of Jesus healing and inspiring repentance by bringing the truth to this broken and hurting world. We have the assurance that the Holy Spirit will guide us. Like the elementary students emulating their parents and teachers, we emulate Christ. For our salvation is at hand, and we know by Holy Spirit that Jesus is with us and for us to go out, Baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. AMEN.