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 Baptism of Jesus

***Baptized***  
***Matthew 3:13-17***

**13** *Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.*

**14** *John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"*

**15** *But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.*

**16** *And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him 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, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."*

Today we celebrate the baptism of ***Jesus***.

Do you know ***why HIS baptism is so important?***

His baptism is the ***example*** for ours.

He was baptized, so we believers are baptized,  
 whether it's as an infant and our parents make promises until we are  
 confirmed, or as a youth or adult and we make the promises ourselves.  
 In baptism we ***confess our faith*** in Jesus as Lord and Savior,  
 we turn from sin and accept God's grace,  
 and we essentially begin a ***new life*** in Christ.

But ***why*** was ***Jesus baptized?***

He was ***not a sinner***,

so why would he come to John asking for baptism?

Well, just before this story we see John talking about the ***kind of baptism*** he offered—it was for ***repentance***.

Which is probably why John tried to ***prevent*** Jesus from being baptized—  
 why would the Son of God need repentance?

But Jesus tells him it is to "***fulfill all righteousness***",

In other words, it was to follow the ***will of God***,

so John consents and Jesus goes into the water,

and comes out with the voice of God saying ***this is my Son, the Beloved***, with whom I am well pleased, and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

In Jesus' baptism we learn that baptism is ***a sign of*** repentance and grace.

And it is also about ***identity***,

because the voice of God declares Jesus' identity>

***It's also about being prepared for a mission—***

for after the Spirit of God descends,

Jesus is sent ***by the Spirit*** into the wilderness

to be tempted three times, before beginning his three-year ministry.

Did you realize that Jesus' baptism was so ***meaningful?***

His baptism was an ***end*** to his life as a carpenter

and the ***beginning*** of his ***new life*** as a preacher and teacher.

It was the beginning of his work as the Son of God, the Messiah.

Jesus' baptism is so important for us today—

Because baptism is ***a sign of OUR new identity*** as sons and daughters of God, and our ***preparation*** for mission in the world.

For us, that preparation includes the ***forgiveness and grace*** of God!

In baptism ***we repent*** of our sins, and ***we receive God's grace!***

Do you ever think about your baptism? Most of us don't, very much.

The famous Reformation Pastor, Martin Luther,

knew that baptism was so powerful,

he knew it meant a new ***identity***.

Do you know what he used to say to ***encourage*** himself when he was overwhelmed with life?

He would touch his forehead, and say,

***Remember, Martin, you have been baptized.***

Legend has it that these words were written over his desk:

***Remember, you have been baptized.***

Could baptism become that meaningful to us?

Just as God's voice came down and said to Jesus,  
 this is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am pleased,  
 God does **comes to us** at our baptism, saying,  
 this is my child, **the Beloved**, with whom I am well pleased.

But do you **think of yourself** that way?  
 As God's **child**—the Beloved?

There's a story about a young boy who was shivering on a steel grate in the sidewalk. His clothes were thin and tattered.  
 A woman, dressed warm for the weather, stopped and engaged the young boy in conversation.  
 He was a child living on the street.  
 The compassionate stranger took him to a clothing store and outfitted him from head to foot, including cap, scarf, and gloves.  
 The boy was filled with gratitude.  
 He could not thank her enough.  
 As they said good-bye and walked in opposite directions, he turned back to ask, "**Hey, are you God's mother?**"  
 The woman answered, "Oh no! I'm **just a CHILD of God**".  
 To which the smiling boy replied, "I knew you were **related**".

Isn't that who we are? **children of God? The Beloved?**  
 Talk about finding **new life**, if we truly take that identity to heart!  
 If we really remembered how the waters of baptism  
**wash us, make us new, and declare us beloved---**  
 there's nothing that could stop us!  
 To be Beloved, is to **be made new!**  
 Who doesn't need that?

One pastor I love to read, David Lose, says he thinks we should practice saying this about our baptism:  
**I am God's child, and God will use me to change the world.**  
 What do you think of that?

Author and theologian Henri Nouwen once said that self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the "**Beloved.**" **Being the Beloved constitutes**

***the core truth of our existence.*** <https://www.goodreads.com/.../9477-life-of-the-beloved-spirit>.

***We are the Beloved.*** It's our identity in Christ.  
We should live with ***THAT*** as our true identity—nothing less.

In baptism, we are ***cleansed*** for new life, so we can be the beloved,  
And we are prepared for ***our mission and purpose*** in this world.

With baptism comes wilderness—for Jesus, and each one of us.  
We live in the wilderness—a world of challenge, and testing, and learning.  
So, we ***NEED the promises*** of baptism!

You know in some corners of the world baptism is taken ***very seriously***.  
We could probably learn something from that—  
because to be baptized is a life-changing decision.  
Ideally, it means we ***live differently***.

Sometimes when people are baptized they are ***risking their lives***, sometimes they risk losing their families for this decision.

I was reading about pastor Jim Denison, who served as a summer missionary in East Malaysia, at a very small church. At one of the church's worship services, a teenage girl came forward to announce her decision to follow Christ and be baptized.

During the service, Denison noticed some worn-out luggage leaning against the wall of the church building. He asked the pastor about it. The pastor pointed to the girl who had just been baptized and told Denison, "Her father said that if she was baptized as a Christian she could never go home again. So ***she brought her luggage.***" Raymond McHenry, *Stories for the Soul* (Hendrickson, 2001)

***Asian Access (or A2)***, a Christian missions agency in South Asia, has a series of ***questions*** some church planters have asked new believers who are considering baptism:

1. Are you willing to leave home and lose the blessing of your father?
2. Are you willing to lose your job?
3. Are you willing to be beaten rather than deny your faith?
4. Are you willing to go to prison?
5. Are you willing to die for Jesus?

Talk about a sobering reminder for all Christians! Sometimes our brothers and sisters from other countries are threatened when they come for baptism.

South Asian nation struggles to shape itself, Mission Network News (1-17-12)

In light of that, do **we** take our baptism **seriously enough?**

The famous sportscaster **Pat Summerall**, who died in 2013, sure did.

He was baptized after he overcame alcoholism and became a follower of Christ in his late sixties. He said: *"I went down in the water, and when I came up it was like a 40-pound weight had been lifted from me. I have a happier life, a healthy life, and a more positive feeling about life than ever before."*

Afterwards he was always looking for a Bible study to attend, wherever he was working.

About prayer meetings and Bible studies Summerall said: *"It's like an alcoholic looking for a drink. If he wants it bad enough, he can find it—no matter what. I'm like that when it comes to finding prayer services and Bible studies. No matter where I am working, I know that they're out there and I can find them."*

Art Stricklin, Sports Spectrum (Nov/Dec 2001), p. 27

That's the idea---our baptism **prepares us** for a new and different life.

Where we want to live out our faith.

And it's where we get that **Holy Spirit power** to make it in life.

Remember how the **Israelites** wandered in the wilderness for 40 years on their way to the promised land?

That's when they learned to **fully rely** on God,

where they received God's **laws**,

and where they learned to **lean on one another**.

**Jesus was sent** into the wilderness by the Spirit after his baptism to be tempted, in preparation for his ministry.

Spending time in the wilderness is true for us, still today.

**We all walk through times of trial and temptation.**

But **we are never alone**.

That's something really important **about the wilderness** in the Bible.

People are not sent there all alone.

**Jesus** had the Spirit with him the whole time,

and angels came to wait upon him after his three temptations.

The **Israelites** were never alone,  
they had the literal presence of **God** in the cloud by day and pillar of fire by  
night, and they had **one another**.  
**No one is alone** in the wilderness.  
Not Jesus. Not us.

When we are baptized, we are not alone,  
we enter a new community—of the body of Christ.  
It's not just about us anymore.  
All too often we think of baptism as very individualistic,  
because we Americans are very **individualistic**.  
But baptism is not just about my salvation, my future,  
Or my relationship with God.  
It is also about all of us, **the body of Christ**, in the wilderness together.

Baptism itself is based on the relationship of the **Trinity**—  
God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—together.  
This is why we baptize **in the name of** Father, Son, and Spirit.  
**God IS community**.  
**We live in community, and we're in this together**.  
**Baptism is about US**.

We have God.  
We have **one another**.  
We are **not alone**.  
We are in this **together**.

What does that **mean to you**?  
Do you realize that you are part of **a community of baptized people**?

So baptism is a sign and seal of God's grace and forgiveness.  
It's a sign of our **new identity** as beloved children of God.  
It's our **preparation for living** in this world, the wilderness.  
And it's a reminder that we **always have the Father, Son, and Spirit** with us,  
And we have **one another**.  
This is why we ask the whole **congregation to make promises** during  
baptism, because we are all in this body of Christ together.

Today as we remember the baptism of Jesus,  
we also remember our **own baptism**.  
Maybe you have no actual memory of it—  
but the term **remember** for God's people is deeper than just memory.  
**Remembrance** is an **act of faith**.

The term **remembrance in Hebrew** is very powerful—  
much more than a mental exercise.  
For God's people **to zakar, or remember**,  
means to **experience again** the power of the original event.  
Remembrance is not just finding a fact in your mind.  
To **zakar** is to use your body, words and actions,  
to engage in an act of remembrance.  
Remembrance is something you do with your **body**, not just your brain.

For instance, Chad Bird writes in his blog  
*"The One Hebrew Word you Don't Want to Forget"*,  
about the **difference between how Charlie and Tom "remember" their  
wedding anniversaries**.

**Tom** remembered his anniversary by sending his wife a dozen red roses at  
work, taking her out to her favorite restaurant for dinner, and buying her a  
little gift that said, "I love you and I'm so happy that you're my wife."

**Charlie** remembered his anniversary the same way he remembered that  
 $2+2=4$ , and that he's going golfing with Jeff and Marty next Saturday!

So at night when his wife asked him why he forgot their anniversary, he said,  
"no, I remembered the date and I've been thinking about it all day long".  
That didn't impress his wife.

<http://www.chadbird.com/blog/2016/8/20/the-one-hebrew-word-you-dont-want-to-forget>

See the **difference**?

Remembrance for God's people is **putting our faith in ACTION**  
to commemorate the event.

It's **using our whole body** to recall something significant.

That's what we're going to do **today**— as we see in the waters of baptism  
And as we stand to affirm our faith.

And I encourage us to do what Martin Luther did—to say to ourselves,  
***Remember, you have been baptized!***  
That is our Good News today!

Today as this sermon ends,  
a celebration and ***reaffirmation of our baptism*** will begin.  
We, as a congregation, are invited to ***remember and reaffirm***  
the ***promises and power*** of our baptism.  
And if you haven't been baptized, you can still affirm your faith,  
and you can talk to me about being baptized.