**Calvary Fellowship 3.6.2022 Matthew 3:1-17 “Just Add Water”**

* **So I got a lot of questions last week about the story I told about asking my wife out on our 1st date & the day we met**
* If U weren’t here, I talked about how I was in a band & my friend had just bought a new guitar & he asked me to try it out - that’s why I went to his house
* So I picked it up & started playing - A crowd started to form around me & this really pretty girl walked away & sat down on the other side of the room
* So I put down the guitar & sat next to her & introduced myself
* This is where people wanted to know what I said to her - I prefer to leave this detail out of the story b/c it doesn’t bode every well for me, but here we go
* We started talking & she told me how much she loved school
* Carey was on a scholarship at FAU & I had just finished my 5th year of school
* I only graduated b/c I talked 2 of my teachers into giving me a passing grade
* So she’s telling me how great college is & how much she loves school & she asks me, “Do U like school?”
* I say, “Do I like school? I love school! I go to school more than anyone else I know.” I went on & on about my love for school
* What’s funny is, a few years later I would end up graduating college w/ just under a 4.0 GPA & ended up running a college
* And I just started a masters program - so in a couple years I won’t just be Pastor Bob, I’ll be Master pastor Bob
* But Carey tells the story & says, “Yeah, Bob started our entire relationship w a bunch of lies.” - I tell her, “Honey, it wasn’t a lie. It was a prophecy.”
* **But have U ever done that? Changed something about yourself to be more liked or to be accepted by a group of people - we all have**
* Here’s the problem w/ that - It robs us of our true identity - the person God created us to be - that's what blind conformity does
* It tries to clone us into an image different than the unique image given by God
* God created each of us uniquely in His image & the challenge we have is to maintain that originality & uniqueness
* Even in Christian circles, you’d think maturity & conformity go hand in hand
* They don’t - That was never God’s design - diversity was God’s intention
* **That why I love Calvary - we’re diverse, yet we’re united**
* It’s the only place where Abuela’s sit next to guys covered in tattoos
* Ex-cons sit w/ the Cops who arrested them/ Phd’s come & listen to a guy who says being a Senior was the best 2 years of his life
* But today we’re going to look at someone who was a true original - someone who who was raging against the machine long before the band ever did
* His name is Yochanon the Immerser - or as we call him, John the Baptist
* If U aren’t aware, John is the son of Zacharias & Elizabeth - Elizabeth was the cousin of Mary, the mother of Jesus - so John is Jesus’ older cousin
* Now, John didn’t follow in his father’s footsteps, which is a bit out of the ordinary
* But he did something that was so important - he was the forerunner of the Messiah - he was the 1 letting people know that the Messiah was almost here
* **So here’s the question - why would Matthew talk about John the Baptist in his gospel? B/c it was all about proving that Jesus was the Messiah**
* 2 weeks ago, we started a brand new series of teaching at Calvary called “The Story” as we work our way through the Gospel of Matthew
* We’re calling it The Story, b/c I firmly believe if U learn His story, it will change yours - And everyone wants to live a better story - we want today to be better than yesterday - we want a better future for ourselves & those we love
* And Matthew is going to show us how that’s possible through Jesus’ life
* **Matthew’s goal in his gospel is to prove to a Jewish audience that Jesus is the Messiah & that means giving special emphasis to fulfilled prophecy**
* Also to the miracles of Jesus, & especially the words of Jesus like the Sermon on the mount & his private discourse in Matt. 24-25
* And this chapter is no different - the last prophecy given in the OT is about the coming of the Messiah & how God would send someone 1st
* “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents…” (Malachi 4:5-6)
* Now, this is literally going to happen in Revelation 11, but Matthew is going to show us that this speaks of John the Baptist & the arrival of Jesus the Messiah
* In fact, in Luke’s Gospel, he shares what the Angel told Zacharias about the birth of his son John
* “He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:16-17)
* John was a man who was preparing the way for the Messiah & his presence would cause many to believe that Jesus was the Messiah
* But he wanted to prepare for the coming of the Lord by getting people’s hearts right w/ God - that’s what he’s doing when he 1st meet him…

**———(v. 1-6)———**

**#1 - Baptism Means I’m Turning from My Old Life**

* **A few questions we should be asking as we read this - 1st, why were people coming from everywhere to hear John preach?**
* B/c he was saying that God’s kingdom was near - this was big b/c God hadn’t spoken in 400 years
* Malachi was the final OT prophet & until John started preaching that the Messiah was coming, God hadn’t uttered a word in 4 centuries
* His message was a simple 1 - “repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”
* Repent is a word that our culture doesn’t like very much, but it’s a beautiful word that refers to changing your direction
* It’s a word that pictures us leave our own path & getting back on God’s path
* When we’re on the wrong track, God will use circumstances & everything else at his disposal to get us to come to our senses & make a U-turn
* In the Greek culture, the word is ‘metanoia’ & it refers to changing your mind, but in the Hebrew language repentance is ‘teshuva’
* It refers to changing your direction & going back to God’s path
* In Judaism, it refers to turning from breaking the laws of God to righteousness, which is keeping the laws of God
* It means, “Stop what you’re doing & start following God!”
* **That’s why the people were baptized - It was a symbol of cleansing & washing away the old life & beginning a new life**
* It was an invitation to the life we were created to live
* Here’s the interesting thing: baptism isn’t actually an English word
* It’s a transliteration of a Greek word “Baptizo”
* Transliteration is when U take the sound of a word & U shift it to your language
* Carey asked me the other night how to say “cake” in spanish - so I said, “Cake”
* She said “That’s it” - it’s just cake - I said, “Just like bleach” - it’s Clorox (decolorante)/ or diapers are “Pampers” (pañales)
* **Baptism means to be immersed, or drenched or drowned**
* But to call John, “John the Drowner” sounds more like a serial killer name than it does a prophet’s name, so we transliterated it
* But “Yohanan the Immerser” as he was known, was immersing people into the water & people were showing up to be immersed
* B/c they knew that this act of baptism symbolized something - a changed life & that this act sent us deeper into knowing God
* **That’s the beauty of baptism - it’s a picture of saying goodbye to your old life & hello to the new life that Jesus is offering U**
* “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3-4)
* As a young pastor, I had a guy come up to me & say, “I’m giving up the old life & that includes smoking.” - so he handed me his pack of cigarettes in the water
* People ask me, “Will I go to hell if I smoke?” I always answer the same thing, “No, you’ll just smell like you’ve been there.”
* Anyway, so he hands me the cigarettes & I put them in my pocket during the baptism, but I forgot to throw them out
* So I got home & Carey was washing my shorts & a pack of smokes in my pocket & she says, “Bob, is there something about I don’t know about?”
* We laughed over the whole thing as we shared a cigarette
* But baptism is a picture of saying goodbye to the old life - it’s identifying w/ Jesus in Hie death & then coming up out of the water in our new lives
* **Baptism is what separating the followers of Jesus from the fans of Jesus**
* The fans like Jesus & like to hang around so they can feel good, but the followers obey Him & their lives are transformed
* **Listen, if you’ve never been baptized as an adult - that is, it is your decision to be baptized, then that’s the 1st order of business for U**
* Maybe you’re like me & U were baptized as an infant - that infant baptism spoke of your parents faith - your adult baptism speaks of your faith
* Here’s what I love about baptism - it’s easy - God isn’t asking to do something that’s impossible or life threatening or dangerous
* It’s so simple & yet, I think that might be why we neglect it
* It’s very easy to do & b/c of that, it’s very easy not to do
* If U decide to be baptized, U are setting in motion a pattern of obedience to God in your life & that leads to the life you’ve always wanted…

**———(v. 7-12)———**

**#2 - Baptism Means I’m Internally Changing**

* **So everyone shows up to see John - why? 1st as I mentioned, b/c God was speaking & God hadn’t spoken in 400 years**
* The 2nd reason is b/c of how he was dressed - here’ what U need to understand - we live in the West where we present ideas in facts & figures
* The East is very different - they present ideas in pictures & stories
* John didn’t pick his outfit b/c the salesman said Camel hair was the new cotton
* He was speaking truth in a picture – John’s clothes should have reminded them of another wild prophet they revered…Elijah
* “The king asked them, ‘What kind of man was it who came to meet you and told you this?’ They replied, ‘He was a man with a garment of hair and with a leather belt around his waist.’ The king said, ‘That was Elijah the Tishbite.’ (2 Kings 1:7-8)
* These religious leaders that go to see John, they know the Scriptures & they know what someone dressed like Elijah means - Messiah is coming
* **But here’s the other why these religious leaders showed up - John was the son of a priest & he rejected the priesthood to become a preacher**
* That’s not the way it worked - if U were from the tribe of Levi, U became a priest - your whole family were priests - that was the order of things
* And John rejected all of that b/c he believed it had become corrupt
* The way we know that is b/c John’s message of repentance paralleled a community in the 1st century that were called the Essenes
* If you’ve ever heard of the Dead Sea Scrolls - those were written by the Essenes - but they rejected temple worship b/c they believed the priesthood & temple worship had been corrupted & they went into the wilderness (Qumran)
* We can’t know for sure if John was an Essene, but he certainly held similar views as them - and this really bothered the Pharisees & Sadducees
* **The Pharisees were a strict sect of Judaism in that day there were only about 7,000 of them - Pharisee means “separated ones”**
* I’ll give U the full exposition on them in a future message, but they were a very evangelistic seeking to convert people to Judaism
* Now, becoming Jewish was different than becoming a Christian today
* To become a Christian, U simply trust in Jesus’ work on the cross & embrace God’s forgiveness - converting to Judaism was different
* There was months, if not years, of study - there was testing & then lastly, U would be baptized & the men would have to be circumcised
* **Typically, converts to Judaism are be baptized in what’s called a “Mikveh”**
* This was a ritual bath where you’d immerse yourself to be cleansed ceremonially so you could go and worship at the temple in Jerusalem
* When someone converted to Judaism, the Mikveh baptism was a sign of dying to their old lives & entering into a new relationship with the God of Israel
* **But there was a little problem—John was baptizing Jewish people**
* He was telling them to repent because the kingdom of God was at hand, and that their Jewish heritage wasn’t proof that they walked with God
* So these committed people were being baptized to signify their desire to really walk with God. That’s why the religious people were angry
* They’re also angry b/c John calls them “brood of vipers” - understand, that in the Jewish mind, snakes were connected to the serpent in Genesis 3
* So while they were very proud of being sons of Abraham - John is calling them sons of the devil - so they were a little bothered as U could imagine
* The other reason was that John was baptizing Jews
* Baptizing Jews was outrageous—it was also unheard of!
* So when they ask John why he was baptizing, he responds by saying, “B/c there’s One coming - the Messiah - He called me to do this.”
* John didn’t cite a city permit or a permission slip that someone gave him
* Instead, he pointed to Jesus & his calling from God & that gave him boldness
* **Here’s the thing I see so often - people lacking boldness b/c they don’t know who they are in Christ or how valued they are by God**
* **So about 8 years ago, I came into the office on a Monday having gotten only an hour of sleep - No amount of coffee could fix my situation**
* Here’s what U have to understand - when Xander as young & woke up in the middle of the night, he wanted me
* So Sunday night I had fallen asleep around 11:30 & Xander woke me up at 12AM b/c he was cold & wanted to sleep next to me
* So Xander gets in bed & falls asleep a few minutes later - so I get up & lay down on the couch - right as I’m about to fall asleep, Xander appears
* He says, “Dad, where did U go?” - So I put him on the couch next to me
* Then he falls asleep - So I go back to bed & now I can’t sleep, so I grab my iPad & turn on an episode of Doctor Who
* Then an hour later Xander show up again & just walks by & says, “It’s OK Dad, I just have to go to the bathroom.” - After his bathroom beak, he climbs into bed
* By this time it’s about 4AM & he falls back asleep & I go back to the couch to finish my Doctor Who episode & go to sleep at 5:20AM
* Then at 6AM my alarm goes off, I walk into my bedroom & Xander is sawing logs like he doesn’t have a care in the world
* That night I’m putting Xander to bed & he says to me, “Dad, I’m really sorry I kept U up last night. I’m never going to do it again.”
* I say, “Buddy, you’re my son. If U need me, U come find me. I’ll always be there for U when U need me.” - Xander got so happy
* He says, “OK Dad. So I guess we’ll be talking in a little while.”
* **Here’s what we forget - that we’re a child of the king - God is our heavenly Father - the Bible says there’s nothing too hard for Him**
* “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” (Jeremiah 33:3)
* Stop selling yourself short - stop believing things about yourself that aren’t true
* You are loved by God & valued by God, treasured by God, & all of God’s promises are yes & amen in Christ Jesus
* **So don’t sell yourself short in life - don’t settle for less than God’s best**
* Girls - don’t settle for a loser b/c God hasn’t brought the man of God you’re waiting for - Wait on Him & watch Him work
* Guys - don’t miss out on God’s best for your career by doing shady stuff
* Instead, wait on the Lord b/c U belong to Him
* I have a baseball bat at home that’s worth about $20 - but another baseball bat recently sold at an auction for $100K - why? B/c it belonged to Babe Ruth
* I have a handkerchief at home that’s valued at about $2
* But another handkerchief just sold at auction for over $300K - why?
* B/c that handkerchief belonged to Elvis Presley
* I have a bunch of guitars at my house - but a guitar was auctioned off recently at over $1mm - why? B/c the guitar belonged to Eddie Van Halen
* It’s not the item that gave it great value - it’s the owner of the item that gave it great value - and if you’re a Christian, U belong to Jesus
* That means you’re of infinite value & worth
* So don’t look to anyone else to give U a sense of worth & value
* Your value comes from God b/c U & I were bought a price when Jesus died for us - His willingness to die for us shows how much worth & value we have

**———(v. 13-17)———**

**#3 - Baptism Means I’m Honoring God**

* **There’s a couple of questions the reader should be asking - the 1st is, why was Jesus baptized? He didn’t need to repent**
* It’s like when I go walk in the morning & I see people who are in really good shape running - like the guys who go running w/ no shirt on - that bothers me
* I’m thinking, “What are U doing out here? You’re done. Go home.”
* I saw this 1 lady running the other day & I could literally see her ribs
* My 1st thought was, “Man, I haven’t eaten ribs in forever.”
* My 2nd thought was, “There’s no more weight to lose lady. Go home. U did it. U have achieved the skeleton look. Skeletor from He-Man would be proud.”
* **But Jesus was baptized for 3 reasons:**
* **#1 - To Affirm John’s Ministry -** He wanted John to know that his ministry mattered & was crucial to what Jesus would ultimately do
* **#2 - To Identify with Us -** Jesus isn’t asking to do anything that He hasn’t done Himself - He was giving us a pattern of obedience to the Father
* **#3 - To Declare His Mission -** He went into the water show us that He would die & He came out of the water, showing us He would rise again
* But then there’s amazing moment when Jesus comes out of the water
* **The Spirit of God descends in the form of a dove & rests on Him**
* This is significant to the Jewish reader b/c they would have associated the dove w/ the dove that Noah sent out after the flood
* He sent it out the 1st time & there was nowhere to rest, so it came back & reset on Noah - then he waited 7 days & sent out the dove a 2nd time
* And the dove returned w/ an olive leaf in its mouth & rested on Noah
* Then he sent it out a 3rd time & the dove never returned - and then we see the dove here resting on Jesus after His baptism
* And in the Jewish mind, they thought, “This Man is trying to save us. The dove rested on Him like Noah, another savior.”
* “When once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. 21 There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 3:20-21)
* **But then there’s a voice that says, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”**
* It’s a beautiful picture the Trinity - the Father speaking from heaven, the Son in the water, & the Holy Spirit descending like a dove
* But here’s what I love about this - the Father was pleased w/ Jesus before Jesus had begun His ministry
* Think about it - before Jesus walked on water or raised the dead - before Jesus fed 5,000 or cleansed a leper - before He preached to the multitudes
* Before He had done anything, the Father was pleased w/ Him
* **That’s so important for us - a lot of us are trying to earn God’s favor or make God love us or do enough good so God will hook us up**
* Here’s what U need to know: if you’re a Christian, God already loves U
* God is already well pleased w/ U - God knows everything, that’s why U can’t let Him down - He knew U from eternity past & He still chose U
* So here’s the beauty of this - it’s not about what U do, it’s about being connected to Him - that’s the goal here
* **I had this conversation w/ my son a few years ago - b/c I always tell him that I’m proud of him - that’s an important thing for your kids to hear**
* I tell my girls that too - but boys need to hear that from their dad
* My dad was a great guy, but he waited way too long to tell me that
* I needed to know that at 7 more than I needed it at 47
* But I told Xander I was proud of him & he said, “Dad, you’re always saying that you’re proud of me, but I haven’t done anything yet.”
* I said, “Xander, I’m not proud of U for what U do. I’m proud of U for who U are.”
* He said, “Oh. OK. I get it. Well, in that case I’m proud of U too Dad.”
* Listen, what if instead of spending all this energy trying to make God love us or be pleased w/ us; what if we spent our energy drawing close to Him?
* I can assure U of this, you’ll have so much more joy in your life
* You’ll have more joy in your family b/c you’ll reflect that in your relationships
* And you’ll have the thing that’s been alluding U for so long - peace
* That’s why baptism is such an easy thing to do - that’s why communion is such an easy thing to do - coming to God honestly & gratefully - b/c He loves us
* This is what Communion is all about - coming to the table in humility
* The rabbis teach that’s why God commanded the Passover meal be celebrated w/ unleavened bread - so there was nothing that was puffing itself up
* We all had to be authentic, own our mistakes, & come to God honestly…