

SOCIAL NETWORKING: Join the GOOD NEWS Conversation

January 8: **Set Up Your Profile** (Establish Who You Are):

Matthew 3:13-4:11 (Identity)

Intro: We are all children of our time and place, shaped by the culture of which we are a part. But we don't want to allow the society to give us our identity. Rather, we want to receive our identity from the Heavenly Father and our relationship with Christ Jesus.

We need to make sure before we venture out on our good news mission that we understand our identity and calling. Many pitfalls await us in the social settings we will enter. Some of these may be very tempting. If we are not careful we will be "conformed to the world" rather than transforming it.

Here are two events in the life of Jesus that defined and declared the nature of his presence in the world. One of these he initiated, and one he successfully navigated. They came at the very front end of his introduction to the world.

You must have a sense of who you are, your own identity, before you launch out into the world. If you do not, you will be blown around by every wind of doctrine. You will be as unstable as a raft on choppy seas. You must know enough about yourself and your calling to SET YOUR PROFILE first. Then you will find success in the good news conversation with those about you.

I. IDENTIFY WITH GOD'S ACTIVITY IN THE WORLD: *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John* (Matthew 3:13).

A. Baptism represented forgiveness for us, the washing away of sin. We understand it that way when we baptized today—as a picture, a drama of the cleansing that Christ brings to our lives.

B. Baptism did not represent forgiveness in the life of Christ. He was the spotless lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Baptism represented at these things for the Savior:

1. **Obedience**—Jesus wanted to do everything that was right, to fulfill all righteousness. He pleased the Father by his baptism, as the Father announced.

2. **Solidarity**—he was identifying with us, the people of God, as he did this.

3. **Announcement**—he was launching his ministry in the world. Baptism for Jesus was the initiation of his ministry and the announcement that he was entering the world of his day with the intention of bringing glory to God and bringing spiritual transformation to people.

C. We need to have the experience and knowledge of God's grace in four dimensions as indicated by our own baptism:

1. The experience of **forgiveness** from our sins. Without the knowledge of our forgiveness we will be easy prey for the devil's schemes. We will not have a spiritually confident presence.

2. The determination to obey the Father's will and to finish his work. **Obedience** is a big part of baptism. It is why we sometimes resist it so fiercely. But we must decide up front that obeying God is our chief priority in the world. We will soon discover that the temptation to forego baptism is small compared to the temptations we will encounter in the world.

3. **Solidarity** with the people of God. This is related to our baptism. It requires submission and humility to become a part of a spiritual family. But without this community gathered around you, you are both lonely and alone in your battle to change things. And you will miss the encouragement and correction that the family of faith brings to each of us.

4. **Announcement** of our intention. The Good News of salvation deserves a declaration at the front end. We are not secret followers of Jesus but bold and public disciples. We do not intend to sneak into the world but to attack the gates of hell through the power of the gospel.

II. CLARIFY YOUR OWN INVOLVEMENT IN GOD'S WORK (Temptation Brings Refinement and Definition): *Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil* (Matthew 4:1).

A. Temptation forces us to decide about our loyalties and our self-understanding. Are we servants of God or pawns of our culture? The process of self-identity takes place in the furnace of temptation.

B. Temptation also helps us put a fine point on our purpose. When it comes, it is inevitably an effort to distract us from our calling, from the things we are instructed to do by the Lord Jesus. Giving in to temptation confuses our sense of mission. Victory over temptation reinforces and clarifies our mission.

C. **THE THREE PITFALLS:** Temptation came to Jesus—and comes to us—in three ways:

1. Feed your appetites (“tell these stones to become bread”—v3).

a. Jesus had been fasting 40 days, and he is hungry. The devil tempts him to abandon his spiritual discipline and indulge himself.

b. You will be tempted to let your desires and passions establish your identity and set your course. This is basic hedonism—if it feels good, do it.

c. The danger in this temptation is that we are all “by nature children of wrath” (Ephesians 2:3). Our appetites are polluted, inordinate, and beyond our needs. If we do not exercise the disciplines that make the body subject to the spirit we will experience the dissipation of our energies and resources—the wasting of our gifts on lesser pursuits.

d. We resist this temptation by resolving that we will value the things of God above the things of this world: *Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God*—v4.

2. Feed your fears (“throw yourself down”—v6). Here is the temptation to establish whether God is really with us or not. It is basic and poisonous unbelief that prompts us to insist on God’s demonstration of love and concern after he has already given his Son on the cross. We cannot establish with any more certainty the attention of God to our need. If we insist on further proof, no proof will be enough. No sign will be great enough. We conquer doubt, not by insisting on proofs of God’s presence, but by acting in faith in our world.

3. Feed your ego (“all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ‘All this I will give you’”—v8-9).