

January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Sermon for Epiphany/The Baptism of our Lord  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
Matthew 3:13-17

Matthew 3:13-17 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup> John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” <sup>15</sup> But Jesus answered him, “**Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.**” Then he consented. <sup>16</sup> And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; <sup>17</sup> and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version.* Wheaton : Standard Bible Society, 2001

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

This past Thursday was the day that the Church celebrates Epiphany, the day that the Magi or Wise men from the East came to visit the Christ Child. Epiphany means revealing or manifesting. In history this revealing or Epiphany has referred to the birth or arrival of kings or princes but more importantly for this morning, it refers to the revealing of the Son of God; not in the flesh, we celebrated that arrival at Christmas in Bethlehem, but with the Baptism of Jesus we see the revealing of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world and the beginning of His public ministry and of His trek to the cross.

Well, including today, we are about fifteen days past Christmas, yet our text for this morning springs us forward about thirty years in the life of Christ. The babe of Bethlehem has grown into manhood.

The Bible only gives us a brief glimpse of the childhood of Jesus after the visitation of the magi. Luke tells us of the time when Jesus' parents accidentally left Him behind and when they went back and found Him, He was in the temple and when His mother asked "*Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.*"<sup>2</sup> Jesus calmly answered:

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<sup>2</sup>*The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1996, c1984 (electronic ed.) (Lk 2:48).  
Zondervan: Grand Rapids

*“Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”<sup>3</sup>*

Well, in our text today, Jesus was again going about His Father’s business. Earlier in Matthew we have seen John the Baptist, Baptizing people in the Jordan River, he has just told the Pharisees and Sadducees to flee from the coming wrath and told of the great One that was following after him, and now in our Gospel the great One is here. Whether it was the same day or not, we are not sure but either way, Jesus came to John to be Baptized, not because of John’s preaching of repentance, but because it was to be done as according to God, again, Jesus was going about His Father’s business.

Now John had been baptizing all manner of people and here comes the Salvation of the world, Jesus Christ, whom John had recently said that he was not worthy to carry His sandals.

Matthew tells us that John would have prevented him, he actually argued with Jesus over His baptism. We can imagine many of the arguments that John might have used, stating his unworthiness, Christ’s perfection, and the fact that He was sinless while John was a sinner, but all of these arguments were silenced when Jesus said “Let it be so now.”

In the original language, the words used is are commanding language, our translation says that John consented, but he really had no choice—

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<sup>3</sup>*The New King James Version*. 1996, c1982. Thomas Nelson: Nashville

the argument was over as Jesus told Him *“it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”* Again, Jesus was going about His Father’s business, to fulfill all righteousness.

To be fair, John did have a point, Jesus had no need for the forgiveness of sins, in and of Himself, but because of and for us—He came for us, He stood with us and He, Jesus, became the chief of sinners because He was taking all of our sins upon Himself, shouldering the burden of a weight that we couldn’t stand. This was the start of a horrible path for Jesus that would end in His death on the cross as a perfect sacrifice—for us!

Jesus had been living a sinless life for the past thirty years, growing up, living among the people, and fulfilling the law perfectly, and now it was time to begin the public part of His ministry and it was time for Jesus to be revealed as the Messiah, the Son of God, who came to take away the sin of the world and God had a spectacular means to make this revelation known to us. In all of our readings this morning as well as our introit we see that God was setting Christ apart for this work throughout the Scriptures. We read from our Old Testament lesson:

*“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight;”*<sup>4</sup>

Carrying this forward to Jesus’ Baptism, we see His Epiphany, the first public pronouncement that the lowly-born Son of the manger, the carpenter’s son from Nazareth, was and is—God’s Son, the Redeemer promised so long ago to Adam and Eve to save all mankind. And what an Epiphany it was.

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<sup>4</sup>*The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1996, c1984 (electronic ed.) (Is 42:1).  
Zondervan: Grand Rapids

As Jesus came out of the Jordan River, Heaven was opened and The Spirit of God descended like a dove, and the very Voice of God spoke, saying:

*“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*

As Christ was revealed as the Savior, the Son of God, we witness through Scripture, the entire Trinity; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit present on the banks of the Jordan.

An awesome sight, what an experience this must have been, yet all that have been baptized have witnessed and even been a part of this great event and we have the opportunity to witness it every time there another baptism in the name of the Triune God. When the pastor speaks the Words “I Baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” we witness this event again. It is not the pastor that makes a baptism but the fact that the Trinity of God is present in Baptism. This is the power of Baptism when the Holy Spirit is bestowed on the baby, child, or adult being baptized. And as Baptized children of God, we are marked as His Children who can never be snatched out of His hand.

Jesus stands with us, the sinners. He has given us His Holy Spirit through Baptism and His Word and as we have seen this morning, where the Son is, so to is the Father. What is Christ’s becomes ours even as our sin became His. Luther calls this a “happy exchange” as Christ exchanges His righteousness for our sins. Jesus went about His Father’s business and all righteousness is fulfilled through Him, even as He told John by the river, *“it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”*

All righteousness is fulfilled in another sense in our Baptism: faith is planted and we become sons and daughters in the Kingdom of God. In our Baptism the Triune God finds a dwelling place within us to comfort and sustain us.

As far as we know, there have been no roofs raised after any modern day Baptisms, no doves descending, or voices from the sky, but that isn't really necessary. Something spectacular still happens in Baptism as the Father, and the Son stand together and give us the Holy Spirit. As we have been told in the Scriptures, so it is and ever shall be.

Amen.

The Peace of God, which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus,

Amen.