

January 11, 2015
Sermon for The Baptism of Our Lord
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Mark 1:4–11

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Mark 1:4–11 (ESV)

⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie." ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." ⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

As Jesus of Nazareth rises up from the waters of the Jordan, the heavens are *torn open*. The Holy Spirit descends as a dove upon Jesus, and the heavenly Father says, *“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”*

In the washing of this one Man, all heaven breaks loose. It is as though the heavens can no longer contain themselves. Heavenly sights and sounds that are extraordinary are seen and heard upon the earth.

What are you to make of these sights and sounds?

Well, the Baptism of Jesus begins in a rather plain and earthy manner. John may be the last of the Old Testament prophets, but he appears to be nothing special in light of his clothing and food.

Similarly, the Jordan may have an honored past among the Jews, but it's merely a muddy creek compared to the great tributaries of the world.

And then there is Jesus.

He is not from Athens or Rome or any other major city of the day, but rather, He is from the otherwise ordinary village of Nazareth. All of this is quite ordinary.

Yet, following the Baptism of Jesus, the extraordinary occurs: your heavenly Father anoints His beloved Son with the Holy Spirit.

St. Mark paints a bright and vivid picture for you of your God; this is the glorious presence of the Holy Trinity.

The heavenly Father who first spoke at creation speaks again.

The Holy Spirit who initially hovered above the primordial waters of creation now descends upon the waters of the Jordan.

And Jesus stands at the very center of it all. He is the Son of God: His heavenly Father anoints Him with the Holy Spirit.

This is an event of epic proportions. In the midst of that which is quite common and ordinary in appearance, the one true God reveals Himself to a people who would not otherwise know Him or about Him:

God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Heavenly realities are made known to earthlings: Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God.

The Baptism of Jesus is awe-inspiring—one of the most beautiful pictures in all of God's Word. And at the same time, it is quite overwhelming in that it shows to you what you are lacking: proper family relationship with God.

You are reminded of your failed family relations on earth.

The commandment is rather clear: children must honor their parents. Likewise, a wife is to love her husband, and brother is to show respect to his sister.

These God-pleasing relations within the family, though, are too often absent. Children, even at a very young age, disobey their parents. A wife covets her neighbor's husband, and a husband has an illicit relationship with a woman who is not his wife. Sisters and brothers fight as children, and as adults they harbor animosity and resentment for one another.

Far worse, the intimate Father-Son-Spirit relation so clearly portrayed in the Baptism of your Lord reminds you of your failed family relations with your heavenly Father.

The commandment is so clear: you shall have no other gods.

At worst, you worship at the altars of other gods.

At best, you do not trust in God to give to you a fish rather than a serpent, or an egg instead of a scorpion (Lk 11:11–12).

And so, you act like a spoiled child, ranting and raving that your heavenly Father does not truly love you, that He is not as generous as the other “godly” fathers are toward their children.

When it comes to family relations, you are an utter failure.

The ultimate purpose of the Baptism of your Lord, though, is not to remind you of these failures nor to dangle an unobtainable carrot before your eyes.

Instead, the Baptism of your Lord reveals to you the ultimate familial relation of Father, Son, and Spirit, and at the same time shows to you the promise of new familial relationships for you.

In the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, you are born again into a new family.

There you become precious children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus. Old family ties are cut and dissolved, while new ones are formed. Human parents are replaced with a heavenly Father, and a brother who is both divine and human takes the place of human siblings.

In the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, your past family failures on earth are cast aside as you are brought into a heavenly family.

Of this, there is no doubt. Your heavenly Father first spoke and then, with the descent of the Holy Spirit, anointed His beloved Son at the Jordan River.

Before this, there may have been questions about who Jesus was, but following,

this there can be no doubt.

Jesus is the Son of God. And so it was at your Baptism. When the pastor sprinkled water on you and said the divine words “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit,” the heavens were rent asunder.

God identified Himself as your heavenly Father and you as His sons and daughters, and consequently brothers and sisters of His Son, Jesus.

The full reconciliation of the cross, that yet future event for Jesus at His Baptism, became yours; the sin against God, against husband, wife, brother, sister, child, which separated you from each of them, was forgiven; you were with God and with them once again. And when your heavenly Father anointed you with the Holy Spirit in that same glorious moment of your Baptism, all doubts were dashed: you are children of God.

In the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, your family relations are retooled: not only your heavenly family, but your earthly family also.

Instead of belonging to many different families with many different interests and directions, now all baptized Christians are part of the one family that is both in heaven and upon the earth:

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph 4:4–6)

As you look to your Baptism, there are certainly earthly components: the pastor, the font, yourself.

Of themselves, they are rather common and ordinary. God utilizes these for His divine purpose, but do not get too caught up in the earthly.

Instead, look very closely and listen rather carefully for the divine sights and sounds reminiscent of Jesus' Baptism.

In both, the glories of heaven spill forth upon the earth.

In both, the one true God reveals Himself in splendor.

In both, the heavenly Father anoints His sons and daughters with the Holy Spirit.

We are reminded to look again upon Jesus' Baptism, for

In Jesus' Baptism, **the Baptized Are Made Children of the Heavenly Father.**

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria – To God alone be the glory

Sermon Outline

Children of the heavenly Father

Mark 1:4-11

1. In Jesus' Baptism, the Father is revealed.
2. Our sin breaks our relationship with the Father.
3. In Jesus' Baptism, our relationship is restored.