

**Mark 1:4-11.** <sup>4</sup> *And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.* <sup>5</sup> *The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.* <sup>6</sup> *John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.* <sup>7</sup> *And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.* <sup>8</sup> *I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."* <sup>9</sup> *At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.* <sup>10</sup> *As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.* <sup>11</sup> *And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

### Get to Know Jesus in Baptism

#### 1. His baptism reveals our Savior.

#### 2. Our baptism connects us to Christ

Get to know Jesus better. That was the theme of the sermon last Sunday. That could also be described as the theme for the entire season of Epiphany. Get to know Jesus.

But, where do you start? Jesus is the Son of God. He is this remarkable historical figure. He is this great teacher. He is the Savior of the world. Where do you start? How do you begin to learn more about Jesus?

The gospel writer Matthew started his account of the good news of Jesus with a genealogy of Jesus. This Jesus was the promised Savior. This is the promised Messiah from the line of David who would fulfill the words of the prophets, who would fulfill God's plan to save mankind. Luke started his account of the gospel with an inspired retelling of the eyewitness accounts of the life and times of Jesus. Luke begins by setting the historical context, *in the time of King Herod king of Judea, a priest named Zechariah* had a son whose name was John. Detail after detail follows as Luke sets the stage for this Jesus who came into our history to save people from their sins. John's gospel account begins in a poetic, almost philosophical, monologue contemplating the immense significance and mystery of the incarnation. *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us (John 1:1, 14).* Jesus came to give us light and life.

Mark's account of the gospel does not begin in such poetic or even detailed language, but he simply, almost bluntly, cuts right to the chase. Mark 1:1 reads, "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Mark spends no time

retelling the story of Christmas. He takes no time in detailing the genealogy of Jesus. But make no mistake about it Mark is very much interested in telling the good news about Jesus. And so Mark writes his concise introduction, speaks a word of prophecy, and with a few interesting details sets the stage for the ministry and work of Jesus the Christ and then gets right to the heart of the matter. And so Mark retells of how John the Baptist came as second Elijah, a voice in the desert, as the one promised who would prepare the people for the Christ. John came to pave the way for the Son of God, and Mark highlights John's use of baptism to accomplish this task. ***And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*** John prepared the way for Jesus by preaching a baptism for the *forgiveness of sins*, and one could argue that the evangelist, Mark, uses the concept of baptism to cut his own path to the Savior; to tell us more about Jesus.

Mark wants us to know the good news of Jesus. He wants us to know Jesus better and so where does he start? He starts with baptism. He starts with the *forgiveness of sins*. He brings attention to the fact that John the Baptist came proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, and then he points us to one who brings forgiveness of sins: Jesus the Christ. Mark points us to the one that is greater than John, the one who will baptize with Holy Spirit; and then goes on to tell us that even Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River. Again, when approaching this significant moment Mark cuts right to the action with little delay. ***At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.***

Suddenly Jesus appears in Mark's account of the gospel, and Mark's first record of Jesus is the account of his baptism. There he was; the one the Scriptures had foretold; the one that John had prepared the people for; there he was. He was baptized by John in the Jordan, and then he came up out of the water and God spoke words of approval and love.

So why start with baptism? Of all the places to start his account of the good news of Jesus why does Mark start with baptism? The key phrase that seems to jump off the page is this, "*for the forgiveness of sins*". This is why Jesus had come. This is why the Father had sent the Son; for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus was the one that God had chosen, appointed, and now anointed, to cleanse the world from the guilt of sin, to set us free from the punishment that our sins deserve.

And so take a closer look. Get to know Jesus in his baptism. Consider who this is, what he was doing, what he was going to do. There he was, the sinless God from heaven, standing in our sinful world. He left his glistening throne in heaven to stand in our dirt. He took on our human nature and the eternal holy God had to live in our human flesh. The Son of God's feet ached as he walked in the desert as a man, as one of us. His lips cracked and were parched in discomfort of heat and arid conditions. The daily stuff of life wore on him just like everyone else, but unlike everyone else he was weighed down by the sins of the entire world. He stood there in the waters of the

Jordan as he carried our sins, the crushing weight of the sins of the whole world on his shoulders, and the dirt and the filth and the stench of all our sinful nature and all our sins covered him, and then he was washed. He was cleansed. He was refreshed and renewed. He was strengthened and blessed by the promises poured out on him in baptism. He was reassured of God's love and prepared to live and carry out his work for us. And he was anointed and publicly commissioned and sent out to do the work that he was sent to this world to do. Mark tells us how this happened and God himself assures us that he was well pleased. ***And then Jesus saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*** Jesus came to forgive your sins, and at his baptism God makes it clear that he was pleased with his work.

He was sent to forgive our sins and so he was standing in our place. The sinless Son of God - who had no need of baptism for his own forgiveness - stood in the Jordan River as one of us. He stood in the Jordan River for all of us. He was sent to stand in our place, to be our perfect substitute. He was sent to live the life that we could not, and die the death that we deserved, and so because he stands there as our substitute, the reassurance that he received also becomes our reassurance. His perfect life, his innocent death, his glorious resurrection makes valid the blessings of baptism which are now yours in your baptism.

Because Jesus is our perfect substitute, because God was pleased with his work, because Jesus would complete his work of redemption and forgiveness, God says this same thing to me and to you, *"You are my child, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."* Born into this world as sinners, living in this world as those who constantly sin, and yet we are forgiven. We are washed and cleansed and made a dear child of God through baptism. We are born again through this cleansing bath, given new life, and we are then daily strengthened and renewed each day to live for him who lived and died for us. Like a relaxing bath at night we are given peace. Like a reinvigorating shower in the morning we are renewed to go out and live our lives for our Lord and Savior. This is what Jesus does for us through baptism.

If you want to know Jesus better, if you want to know more about God, baptism is a pretty good place to start. In baptism we see the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and in Jesus' baptism we see this unique and powerful LORD invested in our salvation. Here we see the Father and the Spirit giving their approval to God's own Son. Here at the Jordan River we see the one whom God the Father loved; the one whom God sent to take away the sins of the world. This is his coronation and his public commissioning. This is the anointed one, the Christ, chosen by God for this special purpose, and the Spirit of God descends upon him.

Get to know Jesus in his baptism. He is your substitute and your Savior carrying the weight of your sins. See how he desires baptism, how he requests those promises and wants those blessings of forgiveness, and strength. See him strengthened and

renewed and sent off with God's blessing to do the work that he was sent to do for you and for me.

This is who Jesus was. This is who Jesus is: the one who took our place. He is our perfect substitute. He is the one who came to give us forgiveness. He is the one who cleanses us from all sin.

If you want to know Jesus, look at your baptism. In baptism God creates saving faith. Those who were born dead in sin and blind to the gospel of Jesus, are born again, our eyes are opened to the good news of the gospel. Baptism is a means of grace, a tool of the Holy Spirit for giving us through faith all the blessings Christ secured for us by his life and death. Through baptism we get to know Jesus, our spiritual eyes are opened to his grace. We get to know his love and forgiveness in this special way.

And in your baptism you were forgiven. Jesus came to give us pardon and peace and through baptism we receive the forgiveness of sins that Jesus came to give us. Our sins are washed away and we are given Christ's righteousness and holiness and purity. In your baptism you were blessed with a deep connection to Christ and his work of salvation. Once lost in sin, covered in unrighteousness, and slaves to sin and temptation in baptism we were washed and cleansed, and made a child of God, clothed with Christ's own righteous. Get to know Jesus in your baptism. See his holiness and righteousness that is now draped over your shoulders. Know that you have a pledge of a good conscience toward God because you are assured that you are God's dear child and your sins are forgiven (1 Peter 3:21). Get to know Jesus in your baptism. He has given you his forgiveness and his righteousness. He has given you pardon and peace and forgiveness, and he has connected you to his saving work. We have been buried with Christ through baptism and we have been raised to a newness of life. (Romans 6:4). He has made you a new creation, created to be like him in true righteousness and holiness.

And now, Christ Jesus is made known in the way that you and I live. Jesus is made known in the way that we live in our baptismal grace. We are born again and daily renewed to live for God. We see Jesus in how we serve our God. We get to know Jesus better in the way that we live to love one another.

Get to know Jesus better in baptism. In his baptism he was revealed as the one who brings forgiveness of sins, our perfect substitute and Savior. In your baptism he is revealed as the one who personally forgives your sins, gives you peace with God, and renews you to live a new life. If you want to know about Jesus, it seems baptism, is certainly a good place to start, for Jesus is the Christ who came to cleanse us from our sin. Amen.