

Talking Points Outward Expression to an Inward Reality 02 21 21

Psalm 25:1-10, Genesis 9:8-17; Mark 1:9-15 (Sermon)

We arrive on our Lenten walk with Christ on this first Sunday in Lent at pretty much the beginning of Jesus's earthly ministry.

We arrive in a powerful moment when all three persons of the Triune God we are told just a verse or two later are identified as being present.

At that moment in the Jordan river, where John is baptizing people.

Though today the word baptism generally evokes thoughts of identifying with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, baptism did not begin with Christians.

For years before Christ, the Jews had used baptism in ritual cleansing ceremonies and cleansing ceremonies of Gentile proselytes.

John the Baptist took baptism and applied it to the Jews themselves—it wasn't just the Gentiles who needed cleansing.

A ground-breaking message for John the Baptist to be sure.

Many believed John's message and were baptized by him (Matthew 3:5–6).

The baptisms John performed had a specific purpose. John of course is performing a 'baptism of repentance'.

"In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist mentions the purpose of his baptisms: "I baptize you with water for repentance."

Paul affirms this in Acts 19:4: "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus."

John's baptism had to do with repentance—it was a symbolic representation of changing one's mind and going a new direction.

“Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River” (Matthew 3:6).

Being baptized by John demonstrated a recognition of one's sin, a desire for spiritual cleansing, and a commitment to follow God's law in anticipation of the Messiah's arrival. *quote from: gotanswers.com*

In Matthew 3:7–8 we read “When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: ‘You brood of vipers! Who

warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance’”.

Even the religious leaders needed to repent of their sin, although they saw no need of it.

It is with this backdrop, of a people clearly in need of repentance, that we are shown a unique moment with Jesus.

It's a very defining moment in how we see Jesus and who we understand Christ to be.

We usually see Baptism as a moment when we as ordinary humans, come professing our believe in Christ,

the second person of the trinity and we come professing in our belief that Christ will forgive us of our sins and will make us whole.

This is a unique moment because Jesus, of course, had no earthly sins to be forgiven of.

He didn't have to profess or demonstrate His belonging to the Kingdom of God.

In many respects, He is the Kingdom of God personified.

He is the perfect God-Man.

He is without sin.

He is the lamb without blemish.

He is in His very extra-ordinary nature, the only perfect sacrifice to atone for the sins of mankind.

But yet, here we find Jesus of Nazareth of Galilee coming to John to be baptized.

Baptism is that outward expression of a new inward reality of a life dedicated to and given over to God.

The baptism of Jesus, then, was a visible sign of that attitude.

Jesus is making a very public proclamation that His earthly ministry is beginning by giving an example of what it means to be fully a part of God's Kingdom.

From this moment on, things are going to be very different for those around Jesus and to Jesus.

To those Jewish leaders who felt that repentance was beneath them, Jesus demonstrates His alliance with us, the painful flawed humanity by demonstrating in this moment that He is willing to be joined with us.

And the response around them was breathtaking.

Mark 1:10 says "And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit

descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased.”

In this moment, heaven and earth collide and at once the Triune God, our Holy God is present in all three persons.

We have the voice of God, the presence of Jesus, and the Spirit descending like a dove.

Indeed the Kingdom of God has come near.

And once the Kingdom of God bursts onto earth in this glorious moment in the Jordan with John, the scripture tells us that the Spirit immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness.

I want to call your attention to what says happens next, because it is a step upon our Lenten pathway that Christ invites us all to.

In those special reflective days between Ash Wednesday and Resurrection Sunday, those days known collectively as “The Lenten Season” Christ gives His church of today, of which we are a part of, an invitation to walk the path that He walked when He walked those dusty roads that would lead to Golgatha and beyond.

With that in mind, I call you to what happens next in our scripture.

After the voice of God has sounded, after the Son of God has come up out of the waters

After God's very heaven is literally seen as being torn apart.

After the Spirit of God descends like a dove.

After all that, the scripture says in vs. 12 that "the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness"

Not even time to bask in the warmth of this extraordinary moment, Christ is whisked away into the wilderness for 40 days, where He was tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts, and where *eventually* [sic] the angels waited on him. Mark 1:13

And Mark's writing style is as one of an author who thinks that the audience is privy to all of the 'other information' or as an author who knows that for the Lenten season 2021 we too will go through our own time in the wilderness as we discover over the next 40 days the Jesus of the scriptures and the Jesus in whom we move and live and have our being.

As we begin our Lenten journey, we hear the call of Jesus who came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and we hear his voice calling and saying in Mark 1:15 "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

And what is that *Good News*?

Here as described in 1 Peter 3:18-22 “¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. ¹⁹ After being made alive,^[a] he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— ²⁰ to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God.^[b] It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Since the days of Noah when water was used to destroy the disobedient world, we are now saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also, not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God.

In the Lenten journey we begin with the saving washing of a pledge toward God as demonstrated in the river Jordan so many hundreds of years ago.

Beloved of God our challenge this first Sunday of Lent in Lenten Season 2021 to take up the call of God through Jesus, and to believe in the good news, that the Kingdom of God has come near and that we should repent and believe.

As we repent and believe we are made new, awash in the name and the person of Jesus the Christ.

With the busyness of life, with the pressures of life, it is so tempting to fall into a pattern of not putting God first, and of not living as though we are members of God's Kingdom

It is so tempting to live as though there was not God.

It is so tempting to rush through the weeks of Lent and miss what God has to tell each one of us about our own personal journey with Christ.

It is so tempting to fall in line with those who live as though they were not waiting for Christ's return, and of

the so many deluded who are being told by the world that either Christ doesn't matter, or that the Kingdom of God is not attainable, or that Christ has already returned in the form of some ordinary human or lesser God.

Those who would try to turn you away from the one True, Triune God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit are agents of the enemy, sent to keep you from seeking, finding and living for God for yourself.

The Lenten days force the Kingdom of God, the Church universal that is Christ's hands and feet upon the earth now, to halt what we are doing and to look through new eyes, the eyes of Christ and to accept the hand of God reaching out to us and to grab a hold and walk with God and see His Kingdom and our place and purpose in it.

Beloved of God, we end this sermon with the words of Christ in Mark 1:15 “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe the good news.”

Amen.

OUR CHALLENGE TODAY:

As you go through the week, remember that Christ died for you, Christ rose for you, and Christ lives for you.

Remember He is reaching out to you to journey with Him during this Lenten season and beyond.

Call out to Him and He will answer you.

He wants to speak new life into you. Seek him in your prayers, your study of scripture, and your times of meditation.

Reach out to Him.

He is reaching out to you.

Amen.