

January 8, 2023

Baptism of the Lord.

Mathew 3:13-17

In this morning's reading John the Baptist seems very nervous. He does not know how this is going to go. He knows that his cousin Jesus holds a power that is far beyond what any of us could imagine. John has been spreading this exact message far and wide long before Jesus showed up this morning. That was John's ministry to prepare the way of the coming Messiah. John knows that Jesus has come to judge humanity. John has also been preaching this too. That is why John's baptism was so centered on repentance. After knowing and preaching this John seems to get performance anxiety. John refuses to baptise Jesus out of recognition of His greatness. Jesus has no sin and has no need to repent or to be baptised by John. Therefore, John says that

things should be reversed. John recognizes his unworthiness to baptise the Master.

John finally gives in to Jesus's request. Jesus's baptism has two great effects that we are just starting to understand. Firstly, this is a great shift from the top-down dynamic of power that John thought was at work here. This is a beginning of a lifestyle based on faithful repentance. Certainly not faithful reliance on hierarchy. By insisting that John baptise Him, Jesus reveals that God's power is based on relationships with us. That God's power is to be shared. His power is more fluid than rigid and more inclusive than isolated.

Secondly, Our Lord's insistence on John baptising Him shifts the focus from judgement to deliverance. John and his baptism were all about repentance and judgement. The imagery here is beautiful as the heavens open up. It seems like God is well pleased. Yet what is it that has God so happy? It must be this shift in focus from judgement to deliverance. Jesus's baptism is a rebirth and a new life. It calls us to

shift how we think also. To move our minds from judgement to deliverance, wrath to grace and from death to life.

I find the event of Jesus's baptism to be filled with symbols and images of life. John 's gospel says that Jesus came so that we could have life and have it in abundance. Today's event has examples of life on two dimensions. Jesus comes baptising with water and the Spirit. Water is the source of all life on earth. Our bodies are eighty percent water and the cells of our bodies need water to function. So water at baptism is a beautiful reminder that it is the source of our physical life and continued good health.

The Holy Spirit is the source of our spiritual life. It guides the church and inspires and guides us through this life. Jesus's baptism shows us how our physical and spiritual lives can be lived to their fullest. This truly is life in abundance.

Take aways: Jesus's baptism reveals a new way that God wants to interact with us. It is a shared concept of power and inclusive relationships. The focus is now on deliverance and grace and not wrath

and judgement. Baptism in water and the Spirit is about living our physical and spiritual lives to their fullest.

God bless you all and have a grace filled week, Pastor D