

# THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

January 10 2020 / D.M. Kerns

Old Test: Isaiah 42:1–7

Epistle: 1 Cor. 1:26–31

Gospel: Matt. 3:13–17

## ***Standing...***

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

If you get anything out of this morning,  
I pray it's for you to value your baptism  
as the greatest treasure you possess.  
For in your baptism, the fullness of the Triune God—  
the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit—  
is at work...to save you.

Let us pray. These are Your words Holy Father. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is  
truth. Amen.

## ***Sitting...***

At Christmas, we worshiped the infant God in the manger,  
along with the shepherds and the angels—  
angels who burst out of heaven with great excitement,  
giving glory to God and telling of the peace that God would make  
among men brought about by this Holy Child.

This past Wednesday night, we worshiped Jesus along with wise men from the East,  
basking in His light and rejoicing in His life.

And then, Jesus just up and disappears.  
Between Wednesday and today roughly thirty years pass.  
In a sense you could say it was the longest week of your life.  
And during those years Jesus lived hidden away in Nazareth of Galilee.

We don't know anything of those years,  
except for His flight to Egypt after the wise men leave—  
around the age of two.

And, of course, that one time when Joseph and Mary  
 lose track of Jesus for three days.  
 Ultimately, to be found in the Temple.  
 Other than that,  
 all we know about Jesus is  
 that He increased in wisdom and stature  
 and in favor with God and man.

The locals in Nazareth?

They knew Jesus as the carpenter's son, who had learned his father's trade.  
 He cared for His mother.  
 Went to synagogue every Sabbath,  
 practiced morning and evening prayer,  
 and went to the Temple in Jerusalem  
 on the occasions required by the Law.

If you were to ask His neighbors in Nazareth,  
 they would tell you Jesus was a good and godly boy  
 who grew to be a good and goldy Man.

But then came the day when He stood on the banks of the Jordan River.  
 It is the first recorded appearance of the long-awaited Messiah—  
 Epiphany...made known to Israel.

As you know, John the Baptist had been baptizing sinners.  
 Tax-collectors, drunkards, liars, prostitutes and all the rest.  
 But where did their sins go?  
 They didn't just vaporize into thin air.  
 They have to end up somewhere.

Jesus, as the Sinless Lamb of God, should have been repulsed by these waters,  
 for they were sin-infested. John essentially tells Him to stay back!  
 He has no business being baptized with dirty sinners.  
 For those waters were polluted with  
 the idolatry, profanity, rebellion, murder,  
 hate, adultery, lust, theft, dishonesty, lying, betrayal,  
 and coveting of Israel.

But none of this stops your Jesus.  
 He does what no angel in heaven would dare do.

He goes straight in—without any hesitation.  
 And now, hip deep in those toxic waters,  
 Jesus is about to absorb the sins, all of them—like a sponge.

But Pastor, you say, the sins in that water will kill Him! You are exactly right.  
 Jesus will shoulder them all the way to Calvary's cross,  
 where He answers for the world's sins in His death as the Suffering Servant.  
 He will be forsaken by God and despised by Mankind,  
 which is Hell for Him.  
 But salvation for you.

See, your immorality and adultery.  
 Your greed and gossip.  
 Your disobedience and rudeness,  
 prejudice and pride and indifference to others...  
 Your murders and thefts,  
 intolerance for others and great tolerance for yourself.  
 Jesus takes a bath in that.  
 Becoming sin for you,  
 so that He might put it death,  
 once and for all.  
 No wonder creation responds with the  
 heavens splitting open.  
 No wonder the Holy Spirit descends  
 as a dove into Jesus.  
 And no wonder God the Father speaks,  
 proclaiming that this Man Jesus  
 is the very Son of God.

Baptism as symbolic? Hogwash.  
 Baptism as an act of obedience? Ridiculous.  
 Baptism as a meaningless religious ritual? Fooey!  
 To Hell with all of those conclusions!  
 Jesus sanctifies the water.  
 For as you know, whatever He touches does not and cannot stay the same.  
 Just ask the lepers. Ask the blind man. Ask the daughter of Jarius.  
 Ask Peter's mother-in-law,  
 healed from a fever by the touch of Jesus.  
 And this water—it now flows into all the fonts  
 of Christendom as a lavish washing away of sin.

And whether it's Pr. Bruss' hand or mine,  
 or any other unworthy pastor's hand,  
     it is your Savior baptizing you,  
             making that water a pure, holy,  
             life-giving water rich in grace.

But Pastor, you say, a little bit of water and a few words—  
 How can water accomplish all of that?  
 How can water do such great things?

Look, when something gets added to water we don't call it water anymore.  
 We call it by what we've added to it.  
     Mix water and a packet full of dye with sugar—it's not water, it's Kool-aid.  
     When water is poured over coffee grinds, it's not water, it's coffee.  
     When water containing sugars is squeezed from grapes  
     and allowed to ferment it no longer is called water, but wine.

What God adds to the water is His promises.  
 His promise to wash away all of your sins  
     and His promise to give you the gift of the Holy Spirit.  
     So, now, it's not water, but Holy Baptism.  
     Where God makes a Christian out of you,  
     And thus, you become,  
         a new creation—  
         born again—  
         born from above.  
     Setting you back ultimately on the path to Eden—  
         the place where we were always meant to be.

On the day of your baptism, heaven opened for you,  
 and it will never close.  
     God the Father sees not a contaminated sinner,  
     but a forgiven, recreated, resurrected  
     dearly beloved son or daughter  
     with whom He is well pleased.

But Pastor, you say, as soon as I walk out of those doors, as soon as I get into my car...  
 the sin is back! Beloved, your baptism goes with you. You don't leave it here.  
 Your baptism follows you out those doors into Monday, into your  
 entire week. It's a washing that follows you your entire life long.

Sure—people may forsake and leave the gift of their baptism,  
but the gift of baptism never leaves them.

So, when we wander—because we indeed are prone to wander  
and prone to leave the God we love,  
we only need to be returned to our baptism  
where everything good in the Lord began.

Firmly hold this gift of holy baptism  
this gift that works the forgiveness of sin,  
rescues you from death and the devil and gives you eternal life.  
God has indeed chosen the foolish and the weak things  
of the world to put to shame the ways of the world.  
And know that the splash of water upon your head,  
with the promises of God attached to them  
makes all the difference in the world.  
And say from now on,  
with certainty and conviction,  
“I am baptized!”

In the holy name of Jesus, Amen.

***Standing...***

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and  
minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.