

Baptism of Jesus

January 12, 2020

Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

Pastor Labuhn

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

This morning when you came to church, you may have noticed that things look a little different. Our Saviors Way is starting to enter into a new season. The Christmas decorations have been put away. The poinsettias now have new homes. And if you walked by Pastor Mann's old office, the door is closed, and the light is off. Having been released from his pastoral duties, he is doing something that he has looked forward to for a couple of years now, traveling across the country to spend more time with family and friends.

Even though we know that it's part of life, change is not always easy. Sometimes it surprises us. Sometimes, we think that we can control it only to be surprised. Sometimes, it sneaks up on us even though we know of it ahead of time. When that happens to us, we often react. Sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. We know that the Lord commands us to "overcome evil with good" and that we ought to "pray for our enemies." But we can feel a range of emotions from bitterness, resentfulness, and anger. To love, joy, and happiness because change can reveal new and exciting opportunities. And as that change continues to manifest itself within our lives, we begin to grow in ways we never knew possible. Not only in our own lives, but in the lives of those around us as well.

In our Gospel reading for today, we see a change. John the Baptist had gone out into the wilderness to preach and bring about a change in the lives of people. He encouraged them to repent of their sins, so they might be prepared for the Messiah to come. John must have been pretty good because people who heard him were confessing their sins and being baptized by him in the River Jordan. John's

baptism represented a repentant change in people, as their sins were washed away, and they emerged from the water purified and cleansed once again.

Now, Jesus had traveled from Galilee, some 15 miles away, and John must have been pleased to see Jesus. He may have been expecting that Jesus had come to baptize him. After all, John had been preparing the way for the one whose sandals he was unworthy to carry. And yet, Jesus asks John to baptize Him. Verse 14 of our text says that ***“John would have prevented Him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you and do you come to me?’”*** (v.14) This was a change in John’s mind that was hard for him to understand. You can almost hear the emotion come through his words when he says ***“...and do you come to me?”*** He could have gotten bitter, resentful, or even angry after Jesus said, ***“let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”*** Instead, the text tells us, ***“Then he consented.”***

God knows how hard change can be for us at times. Some changes are easy, others can be difficult if not impossible for us to overcome. That’s why God sent His One and only Son to change for us. Jesus goes to the Jordan River and joins in with sinners like you and me who are in need of repentance. John baptizes Jesus to fulfill all righteousness. As He comes out of the water, the Spirit of God descends on Him like a dove and comes to rest on Him. And a voice from heaven says, ***“This is my Son with whom I am pleased.”*** In doing so, not only do we see God reveal Himself in the persons of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, but a new ministry emerges from those baptismal waters. One that leads Jesus to the cross where the sins of the whole world are placed upon Him, and He dies for each one of us. Rising to new life on the third day, He changes everything for us as He brings to us new life that we so desperately need.

Baptized by water and His Word, not only do our sins become washed away in the water of repentance, but we also receive the Holy Spirit, who comes to rest upon us. This is God’s means of grace to us as His Spirit brings about a new spiritual life in our lives. His

Spirit encourages us to bring about change in our lives, enabling us to grow in faith and in love to God, so much so that we share it with others. In a world full of sin and temptation, this ongoing change is certainly not easy. But with the Holy Spirit resting upon us, having been baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection, these changes in our lives are pleasing to God, and we are called sons and daughters of God.

There's a story of a pastor that had just finished saying all the words according to the rite of Baptism. But feeling like more needed to be said, he continued to speak to a young child in a way not everyone in the congregation could hear. The parents and sponsors of the child standing close could hear and smiled. Afterward, some of the congregational members who came up to congratulate the parents, asked them what the pastor said. They shared that they thought he was speaking as much to the congregation as to their little daughter. He said, *"Little sister, by this act of baptism, we welcome you to a journey that will take your whole life. This isn't the end. It's only the beginning of God's way with your life. What God will make of you, we do not know. Where God will take you, may surprise you, but we can't say. What we do know is that God is with you."*

God will be with all of us as we live out our baptism daily in Him. He is with us when we care for those in need, share God's love with those who feel isolated and alone, comfort to those who are in disease and discomfort, and as we bear one another's burdens when overwhelmed. These are some of the changes that God wants for our lives and in the lives of those we meet.

While the Christmas decorations may have been put away and Pastor Mann may have retired, when we become the hands and feet of Jesus, we are the sons and daughters of God with whom God is well pleased. Because we are fulfilling our mission of glorying God and making disciples for Jesus by forming relationships, experiencing Jesus together, and sharing God's love.

In Jesus' name Amen.

Service Notes: Baptism of Jesus

1. In regard to change in my life, I find that:
 - a. I have learned to embrace it in my life.
 - b. I have learned that it takes me time but find that I can adapt to it.
 - c. I have learned that it helps to talk with someone about it.
 - d. I have learned to just roll with it.

2. In the Gospel reading, John the Baptist:
 - a. was probably glad that Jesus came to see him baptizing people.
 - b. was surprised that Jesus did not baptize him.
 - c. was surprised that Jesus did not help him baptize people.
 - d. was glad to take a break and hear Jesus preach.

3. Jesus was baptized at the Jordan
 - a. to join with repentant sinners and fulfill all righteousness.
 - b. to reveal to all that He is the Son of God.
 - c. to reveal that God the Father was well pleased.
 - d. to reveal that the Spirit of God came to rest on Him.
 - e. all of the above.
 - f. none of the above.

4. Baptism is
 - a. God's means of Grace.
 - b. Water and the Word.
 - c. where a new spiritual life begins.
 - d. an ongoing process of repentant change.
 - e. all of the above.
 - f. none of the above.

5. Circle the following statements that are true:
 - a. we are God's sons and daughters because we have been baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection.
 - b. we are God's sons and daughters because we are Jesus' hands and feet in the world.
 - c. we are God's sons and daughters because God is pleased with us.
 - d. we are God's sons and daughters because we have been given the Holy Spirit.

6. As a baptized member of Our Savior's Way, I intend to live out my baptism and support the mission of our congregation by: