

The Baptism of Our Lord
St. Matthew 3:13-17

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

"And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

Jesus is revealed as the Son of God, yet again. To Mary and Joseph, Jesus was revealed to be the Son of God as His conception was announced by an angel. (cf. Luke 1:35; Matthew 1:20-23) To Elizabeth, Jesus was revealed to be the Son of God as her son, John, leaped for joy in her womb. (cf. Luke 1:41-44) To the Shepherds, Jesus was revealed as the Son of God as the angels announced His birth to them. (cf. Luke 2:10-11) To the wise men, Jesus was revealed to be the Son of God by the star and the words of the chief priests and scribes in Jerusalem. (cf. Matthew 2:1-11)

These are just the few revelations of Jesus as the Son of God, the Lord, and the Christ that we have heard in this hallowed place over the last month and a half though Advent, into Christmas, and just this past Tuesday evening. There were other revelations (or at least hints) that happened between the visit of the wise men and the baptism of our Lord. The boy Jesus in the temple, teaching the teachers comes to mind (cf. Luke 2:42-52), or perhaps when He was only 40-days old and presented in the temple before Simeon and Anna. (cf. Luke 2:25-38)

Today, we read of Jesus being baptized by John. This is the same John who would one day soon after baptizing Jesus point Him out of the crowd and proclaim, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) He is revealed there again as the Son of God—Jesus, YHWH is Salvation. Today, however, we observe Jesus being baptized by John; as He came up out of the water, a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

We can say with certainty that this is the voice of the Father. The voice from heaven calls Jesus His beloved Son. The voice says that He is pleased with His Son—well pleased, in fact.

Jesus is Savior, and with the salvific work that Jesus is doing, the Father is well pleased. From the moment of His conception to the moment of His ascension and beyond, what Jesus does pleases the Father. The fact that the Son of God took on human flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary pleases the Father. That He was circumcised on the eighth day pleases the Father. That He was presented in the temple at 40-days old pleases the Father. That He was teaching the teachers at 12, baptized of John in the Jordan, crucified, died, and was buried pleases the Father. That He rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven pleases the Father. That Jesus is now seated at the right hand of Majesty as your Prophet, Priest, and King pleases the Father.

Why? Because the conception, birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and reign of the Son fulfills all righteousness. Ponder this for a moment, though: Why is it necessary that He who is inherently righteous fulfill all righteousness?

Well, take a look at your own life. Is there anything that you do that pleases the Father? In and of yourself, you are completely incapable of pleasing Him. In fact, your entire life runs counter to pleasing Him.

He gives you ways to please Him, tells you what you must do and not do in order to please Him, but on every count—all 10 of them (and more)—you do not do exactly what you are supposed to do and do exactly what you are not supposed to do. Let's pick a few out, shall we? I know that in the course of going through these, one should hit particularly close to home, if not all of them.

The Lord your God says, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." (Exodus 20:16)

"We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way." So, it's pretty easy, normally, not to tell lies about someone, no matter who it is, but betraying his trust and slandering him are harder not to do. In the process, again, no matter who it is, friend or enemy, his reputation is hurt. But what about if you hear someone saying something against a neighbor, no matter who it is? Do you join in or do you defend your neighbor and protect his reputation? No matter the dirt you may have on your neighbor, do you always speak well of him? Well, the answer is a resounding no for all of you.

The Lord your God says, "You shall not murder." (Exodus 20:13) "We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need." Again, not many of you, if any, can admit to taking the life of another. But harming another in his body? A punch, a slap, a pinch—all of these are murder, as they cause harm to your neighbor's body. So is not supporting a neighbor in physical need—such that if you see someone in need and you are able to help but do not, you have murdered your neighbor. Jesus takes it all a step further than Luther did:

I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, "Raca!" shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, "You fool!" shall be in danger of hell fire." (Matthew 5:22)

Murder is not limited to physical contact. Name-calling and unjust anger at a neighbor are murder, too!

The Lord your God says, "You shall have no other gods before Me." (Exodus 20:3) "We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things." Above all things...what does that mean? It means everything, so that for every time you murder a neighbor or bear false witness against him, you have placed yourself above the fear, love, and trust in God. Every time you covet, steal, commit adultery, dishonor father and mother, forget the Sabbath, or misuse God's name, you have placed yourself above the fear, love, and trust in God. You have made a god out of yourself. In fact, dear hearers, you make a god out of yourself every waking moment.

So I ask, is that something for which the Father should be well pleased? Absolutely not! In fact, it displeases Him to the point of death—your life should be demanded of you. Should you die as the just punishment for your sins, your death would be eternal—an eternal separation from all the goodness and blessings of the Father. The Father is not pleased that you sin against Him, but He also takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner. (cf Ezekiel 18:31; 33:11)

Now, enter the Son of God incarnate, Jesus the Christ, and there is one in whom the Father is well pleased. The Father is well pleased with Jesus because He is not wicked. In every respect where you transgress the law of God, Jesus does not. The Father is well pleased with Jesus because He is the sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world. In that you could not die for your sins and live, Jesus is able and does die for the sins of the world and lives again eternally.

So, Jesus enters the waters of the Jordan and is baptized by John, would who prevent it. But Jesus tells him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus must be baptized in order to be your righteousness.

First, the Word of God takes on human flesh and blood, and the Creator becomes one with His creation. He next identifies with His sinful creation in dipping in the same sin-filled water as the sinners who were receiving a baptism of repentance from John. It is just as you sang mere moments ago, Jesus was numbered with sinners; in fact, He identifies with sinful humanity in order to reveal Himself as sinful humanity's Savior.

So Jesus places Himself in the water, and I mean more than just going down into the Jordan to be baptized by John. In being baptized by John, Jesus places Himself in the water to sanctify the water for use in Holy Baptism. In the rite of Holy Baptism that we use, the Flood Prayer even states, "...who

through the baptism of Thy dear Child, our Lord Jesus Christ, hast consecrated and set apart the Jordan and all water as a salutary flood and a rich and full washing away of sins." In the baptism of Jesus, the Word goes into the water—the Word combines Himself with the water—so that, in your baptism, you are washed by the water and the Word.

Jesus your Creator is one with you, His creation. He identified with you as He received baptism by John. And He sanctified the water in which you were baptized as a rich and full—a lavish—washing away of sins. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Here is the beautiful mystery by which you are made a part of the Bride of Christ: you ARE baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, you are made a fellow son with Jesus Christ and coheir with Him of eternal life, and with you the Father is well pleased. You have been washed in the water and the Word, made clean in the blood of the Lamb, sacrificed for you on the tree of the cross. In that most salutary and blessed flood, your sins have been washed off of you and onto your Savior, Jesus Christ, who took them to the cross on Calvary to die with them, your propitiation. Jesus dies for your sins, and lives again, having been raised from the dead on the third day.

So, if Jesus has died for your sins, that means you do not have to. In fact, you have already died to your sins, as you have been drowned in that salutary flood of Holy Baptism—died with Jesus Christ as you were baptized and brought to newness of life as you come forth from the font. And the Father in heaven, now looking down on you from those waters proclaims of you, "This is My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

Why is the Father pleased with you? It is for nothing that you have done and for everything that Jesus has done for you! "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27) You are righteous, completely righteous, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who died and rose for you, that you may live and do so abundantly for eternity. "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption..." (1 Corinthians 1:30) "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

In the flesh, you still make of yourself a god unto yourself; you still place yourself over and above the fear, love, and trust in God. But in Christ, you are a new creation (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17), a sanctified and washed creation, a righteous creation. Jesus Christ was baptized to fulfill all righteousness for you. You are baptized into Him and have become the righteousness of God in Him. Through this salutary flood, and your daily life of contrition and repentance in it, you are forgiven for all of your sins.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.