

Baptism of Our Lord 1/10/21
Mark 1:4-11 B

AND A VOICE CAME FROM HEAVEN, "YOU ARE MY BELOVED SON; WITH YOU I AM WELL PLEASED."

"In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan" (v. 9). And Jesus was the first, nor the only one to go down to the Jordan to be baptized by John. The Bible tells us "all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem" were going out to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

The Scriptures tell us the Pharisees and Sadducees and the scribes and the tax collectors and the soldiers were going down to the Jordan to be baptized by John. That's a whole lot of people. That's a whole lot of sin. They were going to John because this was an honest-to-goodness baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. This was a water and Word means of grace. These people were going down to the Jordan to receive the forgiveness of sin and, well, they needed it.

The Pharisees and Sadducees are doing down to the Jordan. Yes, they are the religious leaders of Israel, but they need repentance and forgiveness. They are not merciful and forgiving, reflecting God; they're walking around all holier-than-thou. They're just itching, ready, to condemn anyone who is not as good as they are. They set themselves up as god, so yes, they need to repent and receive forgiveness.

The scribes are going down to the Jordan. These are the guys who are learned in the Scriptures, but they are doing a terrible job of following God's Commandments, especially loving their neighbor as themselves. That's why the Evangelist Luke tells them that whoever has two tunics to share with their neighbor who has none. And likewise, with food. They

were ignoring their neighbor in need, so they needed to repent and receive forgiveness.

The tax collectors are going to the Jordan because they have sinned against God, chiefly His Commandment that says, "You shall not steal". Tax collectors worked for the Roman government and they collected a little more than the person was required to pay. You know, little something for Rome, a little something for them, to fill their pockets, to make them rich. They were thieves, cheaters, liars who needed to repent and receive forgiveness.

And the Roman soldiers are going down to the Jordan. And, they need to because they are stealing from their neighbors. And, they're using their vocation as soldiers to do it with threats and accusations. They were not content with their wages, the daily bread God has given the, so they stealing from their neighbor with what we could call "strong arm" robbery, so they need to repent and receive forgiveness.

These are the people who come down to be baptized by John in the Jordan River. Quite the assortment and quite the allotment of sinners. They are admonished by John to get into the waters to have their sins washed away because, well because, they need the forgiveness of sins.

All that sin goes into that water. That's a lot of sin.

This morning, I invite you to take a look at that water. Go ahead. Take a good, long look at that water. What do you see? Your sin. You are called to be kind, merciful, patient, forgiving towards your neighbor, a reflection of Christ to your neighbor, but you haven't been. You've looked down you're your nose at your neighbor, setting yourself up as being better than them. You couldn't wait to condemn them, just so you will look all the better and feel better about yourself. You've ignored your neighbor in their

need. You've hoarded, more and more for yourself and your neighbor remains in need. You've coveted. You are not content with the daily bread God has opened His hand to give you. You want more. And, you've done more than that. You have not believed the promises of God's Word; you've lusted, been angry and resentful, lied, gossiped. You have not done a very good job of following God's Commandments. You need to repent and receive forgiveness.

Take a look at that water -- yuck! – it's a cesspool. It's icky, gross, filthy. Who would want to step into that water?

Well, along comes Jesus. They've all been in that water – sinners of every assortment and allotment, including you. And that water is filthy dirty with sin. And, Jesus steps right into that water.

Jesus, Jesus is a completely different story. He is “very God of very God” in the flesh; born of virgin mother. He has no sin. He perfectly loves God and His neighbor. But, He comes to the Jordan to be baptized by John. He steps into that filthy water to absorb the sin of every sinner unto Himself. The Bible says it this way, “For our sake [God] made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him [Christ] we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Co 5:21).

We become the righteousness of God in Jesus because He washes and cleanses us, not with water, but with His crimson blood, that flows from His hands, His feet, His head, His side. “He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities” (Is 53:5). He suffers and dies for you, so that you are forgiven.

The third day, He rose again, because sin and death cannot hold Him. And, the Good News for you in that, Dear Child of God, is that sin and death cannot hold you because you have traveled to the forgiving flood

of Baptism. Baptism into Christ means that you are one with Him in death and life. St. Paul says it this way in our reading,

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his (Ro 6:3-5).

Because you have been baptized into Christ, you are God's beloved son, His beloved daughter.

Which is good for us. The chaos we witnessed in our nation's capital this past week was yet another stark reminder that we live the valley of the shadow of death. When the Turkish armies were at the gates of Vienna in 1528, Martin Luther exhorted pastors to call their congregations to repentance and prayer. In the midst of such madness, as the caretaker of your soul, I call upon you to repent and pray.

Repent one and all! Do not remain lazy and lax, and do not think that you are one of the 99 that has no need of repentance. See your great and countless sins, see your ingratitude, plead God's forgiveness for the sake of Christ, and your need to reform and change your sinful life. Confess your sins and plead with God for grace to live a better life. Turn from your evil to do good, good to all your neighbors.

And, pray! Such workers of evil are servants of the raging devil. The devil and those who do his bidding not only destroy and grieve your neighbor's property and income, marriage, reputation, but we must never lose sight that their chief aim is to lay waste to the Christian Church and our dear Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The devil is a spirit, and cannot be beaten with arms, and guns, and men. Which is why our Lord teaches us to pray,

“They will be done on earth as it is in heaven”. In praying these words, we pray God would “break and hinder every plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature...and strengthen and keep us firm in His Word and faith until we die” (cf. *Luther’s Small Catechism*, Meaning of 3rd Petition).

Pray, as did Abraham. The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was grave, so grave that God decided to destroy them. But, Abraham interceded that if there were but five righteous with the wicked, God would not destroy the cities. Pray, as did Elijah. The Bible tells us that King Ahab did more evil in the sight of the LORD than all who were before him (1 Ki 16:30). To call Ahab and the nation to repentance, God allowed drought to afflict the land for 3 and a half years. Elijah prayed, and the rain fell. We must never think of our prayers lightly. We do not doubt, but have firm faith that God will hear and answer in the way and at the time He knows best.

Dear Saints of God, the events of the past, the events of the present, the events of the future cannot keep Christ from the cross or dead and buried in the tomb. Christ has been crucified; Christ has been raised. You have been baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ. God says of you, “You are My beloved!” Take heart, and be of good cheer.