**United With Christ in Baptism**

Based on [Matthew 3:13-17](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt3.13-17)

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The Baptism of Our Lord

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

Baptism is the most important moment of a Christian’s life. You might say, for an adult, it is the moment of faith; but who knows exactly when and where that is. Certain Christians ask things like “when did you decide to follow Jesus.” I can honestly say I never decided any such thing. When Jesus was shown to me, I believed. Faith may have happened in a moment in time, but it’s blurry. And we can have struggles and doubts, as a man once said, “I believe, help thou my unbelief.”

But Baptism is different kind of sign than faith. Baptism is not something that happens in the sanctuary of your heart. It happens to you. Faith is in the heart, but can be assaulted by doubts. Baptism is something that never fluctuates. You can fall away from faith and lose it; but even if you fall away from your baptism you always have it to return to. Baptism is where Jesus washed away your sins and clothed you with his righteousness. Faith needs something to cling to, a promise. Baptism is a promise that your sins are forgiven, that you have salvation, and God keeps his promises.

Someone might say, “Baptism doesn’t save, Jesus saves”. That sounds like a faithful thing to say. But it’s blasphemy. First of all, how would it sound if I said, “Faith doesn’t save, Jesus saves.” Faith and Jesus aren’t opposed to one another. Faith is in Jesus. So too, baptism is in Jesus. Baptism is Jesus for you.

Jesus Christ took on our human flesh to so that he could die for us. He took on the form of a servant so we could receive him by faith. He also took on our sins to carry them to the cross. And when he died with our sins, our sins died with him, but he was raised from the dead, having conquered sin and death. Romans 6 says

**Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4We 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.**

**5For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.**

Our baptism is the thing that unites us to Christ through faith. And Jesus Baptism unites him to us in order to fulfill all righteousness.

**13Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. 14John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” 15But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented.**

John the Baptist had been preaching in the wilderness and urging a baptism unto repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the people were coming out to him to be baptized. Because they needed the forgiveness of sins. But Jesus did not. He needs no forgiveness, he is the source of all forgiveness. So John falters and says as much, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” I need your forgiveness, and you want me to forgive you?

But Jesus baptism isn’t for his forgiveness, but for yours. His baptism is an anointing, an ordination, and installation. When Jesus submits to John’s baptism, he is submitting to his Father’s Call to carry the sins of the world and be the lamb of God who takes them away.

“Surely he bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows.” … and “Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace.” (Isaiah 53:5). and “He himself bore our sins, in his body on the cross.” (1 Peter 2:24).

This was what the messiah was sent to do, to give us his righteousness in exchange for our sin. And the day of his baptism is the day he took up that mantle, answered that calling, submitted to the baptism of John, and willingly took upon himself the burden of saving the world, beginning his ministry, through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, that he would bear for three years and offer his life for on Calvary.

**16And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; 17and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”**

Two more thoughts on the Baptism of Our Lord as it connects to your life today. First, if Jesus—the perfect son of God—will submit to be baptized by John; you can submit to be baptized, communed, and forgiven by a called and ordained pastor. The office of the holy ministry is the calling whereby God sends men to preach and administer his sacraments in his stead and by his command. John was a sinner, Jesus was perfect, and yet God used a jar of clay such as John in order to anoint his son with water and the spirit. So too, he uses jars of clay, ministers today until the end of the age to do the same.

Second, Baptism is not just a symbol, but it effects the gift of the Holy spirit. When Jesus was baptized, immediately the heavens opened up, the Holy Spirit came to Jesus and God declared him to be his son in whom he is well pleased. We confess the same thing happens everytime a person is baptized according to Christ’s institution. We don’t see the rending of the heavens and the spirit, but we know it happens by faith.

You were saved by grace through faith, and that grace comes in the form of holy baptism, water and the word. This is because Jesus first entered the water, and sanctified it and instituted it for our use. We are united with Christ and one another, not because we have the blood of Abraham, but because through the water with the word, we share in the righteousness of Christ.j