



In today's Eucharist, we celebrate the Baptism of our Lord. Today we remember that our Lord Jesus Christ was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. Why is he baptized? It is because he wants to identify completely with us. He even wants to identify with our sin.

Why is this event important? Why does the church take time in its liturgical cycle to remember this event?

It is important because our Lord's baptism marks the beginning of his public ministry. Now he begins to preach, teach and heal. Now begins a three year journey that will ultimately lead him to Jerusalem where he will suffer and die on the cross for us and for our salvation. It all begins with his baptism.

Today I want to take a moment to focus on the final verse of our Gospel reading, "You are my Son, the beloved; with you I am well pleased." These words were spoken by God to the Lord as he came up out of the Jordan River after being baptized. The text implies that only our Lord heard these words. So why does St. Mark the Evangelist let us in on this very personal moment? I think it is because St. Mark wants to teach us something important about our own baptism into Christ.

As Lutherans we talk a lot about baptism. When we talk about baptism we use images like: forgiveness, cleansing, incorporation into the church, dying and rising with Christ. In addition to all this; St. Mark implies that in our baptism God says to each and every one of us, "You are my beloved child; with you I am well pleased." Can there be anything more encouraging or supportive?

Let's take a closer look at these words, "You are my beloved child; with you I am well pleased." First of all let's look at "You are my beloved child." Do you always feel like a child of God? Let's face it. There are times when we do not feel or act like we are children of God. And of course we have every reason to feel that way because we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. And yet in spite of all that, in baptism God says to each and every one of us, "You are my beloved child!" You are my child on account of Christ!

There was a father who was asked which of his children he loved the most? He replied that he used to say that he loved them all the same, but one day he realized that wasn't exactly true. "I don't love them all the same," he admitted. "I love most, the one who is hurt, or the one who is lost, or the one who is discouraged, or the one who is angry." And that's how it is with God. In

precisely the moment we feel most unlovable, he loves us most. He loves us on account of Christ.

And then in baptism God says to us, “I am well pleased with you.” Now this requires a bit of interpretation, because those words in English sometimes imply some reason for pleasure. So we say “I’m pleased with you because you cleaned your room, or did your chores, or did well in school.” But that’s not what is meant here. The Greek word here means something like “delight.” The Father says to his Son that he delights in him—not because of what he has done but simply because of who he is!

What parent has not watched their child sleep at night with a sense of absolute joy and delight?—not because of what the child is doing or has done, but simply because that is my child and I delight in her or in him. That’s what it means here. The Father finds joy and delight in the Son, not because of what he has done but because of who he is. And so it is with us. In baptism, God says to us that he thinks we are wonderful! He delights in us! He takes joy in us! He loves us! And it is all unconditional. It doesn’t depend on what we do or how we behave; it doesn’t depend on anything about us. It’s just how God feels about us on account of Christ!

It is important to remember our baptism into Christ. Baptism is the foundational sacrament of the Christian life. One of the ways we can remember our baptism is when we come up to receive the Sacrament at the altar. When you pass by the baptismal font you can dip your fingers into the water and trace the sign of the cross over yourself.

So the next time you are discouraged, or sad, or wonder if life is worth all the trouble, or if you are filled with doubts, or misgivings or an awareness of sin and how you have not acted like a child of God—remember your baptism into Christ. Remember that in your baptism God has said to you, not to humanity in general, but to you, “You are my beloved child; with you I am well pleased. You are my child on account of Christ!”

And this is why the church will continue to pray until the end of time, “Make all those who are baptized into Christ faithful in their calling to be your children and inheritors with him of everlasting life” (Prayer of the Day for the Baptism of Our Lord). AMEN.

**+Christo Gloria in Ecclesia +**

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