

The title for today's message is: **Before He Walked On Water He Walked Into Water**

Mark said: a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Of all the miracles Jesus performed, one I'd really love to see replayed is his walking on water over a windswept sea.

You'd click on that video if it came up on YouTube wouldn't you? And what do you suppose you would see?

Jesus clearing white-capped waves like an Olympian hurdler? Or Jesus deftly sliding from one wave to the next as if on a skateboard?

I've always pictured the water where Jesus stepped becoming calm so that it looked as if our Savior was peacefully walking down a garden path.

However he did it, it sure impressed the disciples. But do you realize that before Jesus walked on water he walked into water?

That's what happened when he waded into the Jordan River at the beginning of his ministry to be baptized by John. So what?

Well at this event all heaven broke loose. Let's take a closer look so that we can make sense of Jesus' baptism and learn what it meant for him and what it means for us.

Jesus was thirty years old when he made his way to the Jordan River where his cousin John was baptizing.

John had been waiting for Jesus, for God had told John that he was going to reveal the Messiah to Israel through his baptizing.

You can imagine his excitement then when John finally spotted Jesus in the crowd. Here, in the flesh, was the one about whom John had been saying:

***“After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit”.***

Imagine John’s confusion then when Jesus asked to be baptized. What? How could John baptize Jesus when he had been telling everyone that he wasn’t even worthy to stoop down and untie Jesus’ sandal straps?

Imagine bragging to your friends about your rich uncle who was coming over for Christmas, the uncle who was sure to bring you lots of presents.

But when he arrives, he asks if he could borrow fifty bucks from you to put gas in his car.

Could John have been wrong about Jesus? No. Jesus assured John that while he didn’t need to be baptized.

He wasn’t a sinner in need of forgiveness like everyone else getting baptized that day, it was the right thing to do for it would ***“fulfill all righteousness”***.

But what does that mean? Was Jesus saying that he wanted to be baptized to set an example for the rest of us to follow?

Certainly baptism is God's will for us but not in the sense that this is the Eleventh Commandment: "Thou shalt get baptized!"

When a friend says, "Come over for dinner tonight," you don't take that as a command but as gracious invitation.

Likewise baptism is God's gracious invitation to us to have our sins washed away.

But Jesus didn't need his sins washed away because he didn't have any! So why did he insist on being baptized?

Well, when a friend grabs the check at the end of a restaurant meal and tucks it under his plate while you finish your coffee and after-dinner conversation, what does it mean?

It means that he intends on paying the bill. When Jesus stepped into the water of the Jordan River, it was his way of letting the world know that he was picking up the tab for all of our sins.

The payment of that bill came due on Good Friday, three years later and when it did, it cost Jesus everything.

But we shouldn't think that Jesus' baptism was his way of getting his feet wet to be our Savior. No, that work had begun the moment he was conceived.

That truth is revealed in what happened immediately after Jesus' baptism. Mark records that as Jesus was stepping out of the water God the Father spoke from heaven saying:

“You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased”. When the Father said that he was well pleased with Jesus, it wasn’t just because he was a “chip off the ‘ol block.”

No! God the Father was pleased with Jesus because, although he was already the sinless Son of God, he was also the sinless son of Mary.

A perfect human being as Adam had once been and as God expects us all to be...or all hell will break loose...really.

But now by stepping into line with those sinners waiting to be baptized at the Jordan, Jesus had said to them and to us: “I will become what you are:

A lazy student, a worry-wart, a dirty old man, a unruly child, a whiner, a grudge-holder.

I will become this when I let God the Father collect all your sins into his heavenly waste bin and dump them all on me at the cross.

Meanwhile you will go free and will be declared to be what I am, a faithful child with whom the Father is well pleased.

As if to punctuate this truth, the heavens tore open at Jesus’ baptism for with the Messiah’s arrival the wall that had separated God from sinful people would be ripped up.

Indeed there was another violent tearing when at Jesus’ death the curtain shielding the Holy of Holies in the temple was shredded in two by unseen hands announcing that there is now no barrier between God and us.

The Father's voice, the tearing open of the heavens, it should have been enough to convince John and the others standing around that Jesus was the God-man for the job of saving the world.

But the Holy Spirit too put his mark of approval on Jesus when he made an appearance, not as a flashing tongue of fire as he would on Pentecost.

But arriving in the form of a gentle dove, drifting down from heaven and alighting on Jesus.

Can you think of another time in the Bible when a dove made an appearance? Sure, Noah sent out a dove from the ark to see if the flood waters had receded.

By alighting on Jesus in the form of a dove it seems as if the Holy Spirit was proclaiming that Jesus is God's olive branch to us, for in Jesus we have peace.

Wow! What an event Jesus' baptism was. But do you realize that your baptism was quite the event too?

When water was poured over your head and God's name was pronounced, all heaven broke loose as the Holy Spirit descended on you to create or to strengthen faith and God the Father proclaimed: "This is my child whom I love."

The holy God can claim us sinners as his children because baptism really washes away sin.

The forgiveness we receive there is as real as the baptismal water dripping down the forehead, for that is God's promise.

Baptism brings great comfort when Satan questions our status before God. After getting us to fall into sin, Satan will point to our grumpiness.

He will denounce our lustfulness, and he will condemn our greediness and then ask how we can claim to be God's children?

We can claim to be God's children because that's what God declared us to be in baptism.

So am I suggesting that our baptism gives us the green light to act any way we want to?

I mean if all of our sins are forgiven in baptism, even the future ones we will commit, what difference does it make how we live?

When Satan tempts us to think that way we need to remember John the Baptist's message.

He preached a baptism of repentance not recklessness. That's why when the Sadducees and Pharisees came out to John to be baptized.

Even though they weren't sorry for their sins and had no intention of giving them up, John said to them: "You brood of vipers!

Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance".

If these religious leaders were truly sad about their sins and desired the forgiveness God offered in baptism.

They would have turned away from their wickedness. Since they had no intention of doing so, God's judgment remained on them.

So it is whenever we excuse our backtalk to our parents or insist on our right to grumble about each other.

When we act this way we turn our back on God's forgiveness and won't benefit from Jesus' death if we keep excusing away our sin.

But that's why God brought you here this morning. He wants you to listen to this message.

Because through it the Holy Spirit is working to turn you away from those attitudes and to remind you of who you are through baptism:

God's child, not Satan's. So, are you still keen on seeing video footage of Jesus walking on water?

I am. But I also hope that there is tape of Jesus walking into water to be baptized by John.

For that day's events revealed Jesus to be the Son of God, a perfect human being, and the one who picked up the bill to pay for our sins.

But then again you don't need to see video footage to be convinced of this. The Holy Spirit whom you received at your baptism is convincing you of these truths.

Thank God for your baptism – the day on which all heaven broke loose and poured out on you.

Amen

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the fellowship of