

The title for today's message is: ***Jesus was Baptized too***

John said: ***"I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."***

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

On this "Baptism of Jesus" Sunday we might very well ask what John asked. Why did Jesus need to be baptized?

Like John it is also good for us to see our need for baptism by Jesus too. John the Baptist. That name brings powerful images to mind.

Camel's hair clothes held together with a leather belt. Grasshoppers dipped in wild honey for a sweet and crunchy meal.

Saying the morally right thing at the socially wrong time. John was the one who called the people who came to hear him preach a slimy gathering of slithering snakes.

How is that for winning friends and influencing people? "Repent," he shouted, "for the kingdom of heaven is near!"

In spite of his outward strangeness and his directness in condemning sin he also baptized thousands for the forgiveness of their sins.

He also preached the good news that God had pity on this planet and was sending a Savior.

Although John didn't care what people thought of him and he seems to have never been at a loss for words.

There was one time in John's ministry when he almost came unglued. Jesus, the Lamb of God himself, came to John to be baptized.

Now, we're told in Matthew's gospel chapter 3 that John tried to stop Jesus, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

From what John knew about Jesus, baptism didn't seem to fit him. Jesus was the sinless Son of God. And Baptism was for sinners.

John also knew that he himself was a sinner in need of God's love and forgiveness. What right did he have to baptize Jesus?

It made much more sense for Jesus to baptize John instead of the other way around.

John the Baptist's statement about his own need for baptism and his question about Jesus' need for baptism.

Are certainly two thoughts that would be appropriate for us to consider this morning.

On this "Baptism of Jesus" Sunday we might very well ask what John asked.

Why did Jesus need to be baptized? Like John it is also good for us to see our need for baptism by Jesus.

The Word of God that will lead us to a better understanding of both points is our gospel lesson from Luke chapter 3.

So let's use the amazing truth expressed by Luke in verse 21 for the theme of today's message.

Luke says that: "Jesus was Baptized too". Yes Jesus was baptized like a sinner, and yet to serve as Savior.

Jesus' life story is like stories that "flash ahead" in time. Perhaps you have seen a movie that began with a powerful scene of some kind.

But then in the very next frame of film, you read a subtitle that said, "30 years later."

If we were watching the life of Jesus played for us like a movie our gospel lesson for this morning would be just such a jump ahead in time.

Two weeks ago we celebrated Jesus' birth. Today we hear about him when he is around age 30.

Other than one report about Jesus when He was twelve years old, the bible is silent about Him from the time of His birth to His baptism.

Our gospel lesson for this morning takes us to that turning point in the written history of Jesus' life.

"When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying,

Heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove.

And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'" Yes, Jesus was baptized too.

Now that statement brings us back to the question John the Baptist expressed. Why did Jesus need to be baptized?

It also leads us to see our unworthiness and our need for a baptism provided by Jesus Himself.

As Lutherans we answer any question that we have about one part of the Bible by looking at the rest of the Bible for answers.

Why was Jesus baptized? The logical answer would be that he needed it. He was in need of forgiveness.

But does that answer fit with the rest of Scripture? No. Hebrews chapter 4 tells us that Jesus was “tempted in every way, just as we are.

Yet, unlike us, Jesus was without sin. He appeared and was Baptized in order that He might take away our sins.

1 Peter chapter 1 tells us that Jesus is the lamb of God (the sacrifice for sin) “without blemish or defect.”

So if Jesus wasn't a sinner and didn't need baptism then why was he baptized? If you looked in a mirror this morning you saw the reason.

As you look at me and I look at you we see why Jesus was baptized. It was to join us in our sinful, helpless, pitiful condition.

Jesus' baptism with sinners marked Him as the substitute for sinners. By being baptized like a sinner Jesus showed His willingness to be our Savior.

2 Corinthians chapter 5 explains the reason for Jesus' baptism in this way, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

The great exchange where God swaps the holiness of His Son for the sinfulness of our fallen race is pictured at Jesus' baptism.

Yes, “Jesus was baptized too.” Look, that short phrase penned by Luke says so much.

At the Jordan River two thousand years ago the Son of God received the same baptism as the prostitutes and tax collectors.

The same water that was used to baptize those separated from God because of their sins was used to baptize the one who brought sinners back to God.

The baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins that soldiers and farmers, husbands and wives, young and old received was also given to Jesus.

And although we are living many years after John, his baptizing we can see ourselves in the crowd that came out to him.

Like them we have broken God's Commandments. Like the soldiers who came to John we have not always been content with what we receive in life.

We have grumbled about our job and complained about our pay. The cheating by the tax collectors has been reproduced in us through similar actions.

Look, anytime we receive pay for less than our best we are guilty of cheating another.

Yes, we too have been like the prostitutes who came to John the Baptist by our sexual sins through our thoughts, words, and actions.

We have even harbored the pride and arrogance of the Pharisees who rejected John's baptism.

Yes, my friends in Christ, we too stand at the Jordan River with the stream of sinners called humanity.

When Jesus was baptized like a sinner it marked the beginning of his public work as Savior.

Although Jesus began living as our substitute when He was conceived in the virgin Mary He didn't present Himself as the sacrifice for sin until he was in His thirties.

And it was at His baptism that He openly showed His willingness to go to the cross. So we can understand what happened after He was baptized.

The Holy Spirit confirmed that although Jesus was baptized like a sinner, He and only He was their and our Savior.

God the Father declared to all the sinners who were baptized with Jesus that He would accept His sinless Son as their substitute.

And for us today these verses still confirm our faith in the work of Jesus. Because "Jesus was baptized too."

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.