

The title for today's message is: **The Wonder Of Jesus' Baptism**

Jesus said about His baptism: ***"Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."***

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

A little girl wanted to get baptized but her mother wanted her to attend some classes first to make sure she knew what she was committing herself to.

After one of the classes, her mother asked, "Honey, what does baptism mean?"

Thinking hard, the little girl finally said, "Well, it isn't the water that makes you clean. The mother thought, "Yes, she understands."

Then smiling brightly, her daughter quickly added, "...It's the soap." Obviously, that little girl didn't quite understand what baptism meant.

Does anybody here know what baptism means? Some say its forgiveness, a gift of the Holy Spirit, clothing ourselves with Christ, or death/burial and resurrection.

Now, all those things are true. And all those things are wonderful things that God does for us when we accept His gift of love by our Faith, Repentance, Confession of Jesus as Lord and the sacrament of Baptism.

But here in Matthew chapter 3, we have this odd story about baptism. John the Baptist was down at the Jordan river all day baptizing people for the forgiveness of their sins.

Isaiah had declared that John was to be ***"A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"***

That's right, John was sent to prepare all people for the arrival of a man by the name of Jesus and His ministry.

And how did he do that? Well he was telling people that they were all sinners and have fallen short of the glory of God.

Who were these people? Early on Matthew said regarding John that "People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan.

All those who came to hear John and were confessing their sins were baptized by John yet when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming, John said;

"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.

The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

Now John warned all the people there that a time of judgment was coming. That there was indeed a coming wrath from God.

"The ax had been sharpened" and God was going to cut down some trees. Here again, John was preparing the way for Jesus.

The people needed to realize they were all sinners and that they needed Jesus and what He came to offer them.

Then along came a man named Jesus, the one for whom John was preparing the way for. Yet John seems to be confused by Jesus' request.

Jesus requests to be baptized by John, "But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?'"

This wasn't what John had expected. This wasn't in accordance with the instructions John thought he'd been given.

But Jesus responds to John: ***"Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."***

In other words, Jesus is telling John: "This is what you were sent to do. This is the fulfillment of your mission."

But again John seemed to be confused. His baptism was for the "forgiveness of sins." So why would John think Jesus needed baptized?

Well, there is a good reason for Jesus to be baptized, and by John. By doing so it signaled the start of Jesus' ministry.

Mark said this about Jesus' baptism, that it is; ***"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"***

So what we have here is a couple of reasons to be baptized in Jesus' day. First there was the baptism for repentance. But Jesus didn't sin.

And second a baptism for conversion. Conversion was for people wanting to convert to Judaism, but Jesus was born Jewish.

There was only one other reason for Baptism. The law back then dictated that Priest, especially the High Priest was to be washed with water. The Temple even had pools set aside just for that purpose.

Now, after Jesus was baptized God the Father anointed Him with the Holy Spirit as it descended on Him in the form of a dove.

God the Father then put His mark of approval on Jesus by loudly declaring: ***"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."***

This was the beginning of Jesus' ministry as High Priest to all believers. That's right Jesus is our High Priest?

Indeed He is! Hebrews tell us: ***"...we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God..."***

Look, from the day of Jesus baptism by John, until His death on the Cross, Jesus prepared for the ultimate sacrifice for our sins.

A sacrifice worthy of forgiving one of his or her sins. A sacrifice worthy of forgiving the world of sin. His own body and blood on a cross.

This was why John the Baptist had been sent. This was ultimately why John was baptizing down at the Jordan.

This was so important to God, that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus and the voice from God thundered down from heaven.

Jesus said: ***"Let it be so now."*** At once. Immediately. Without delay. But why this sense of urgency?

Well it was an acceptance of God's free gift of salvation. It was something that had to be done now.

And just as God honored Jesus by having the Holy Spirit descend upon Him at the Jordan, when we're baptized into Christ, we too receive His Holy Spirit

Peter told the crowd at Pentecost in Acts chapter 2: ***"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ..."***

for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

When we're baptized into Christ, God gave us His Spirit as a sign that He has adopted us as children of God.

And Jesus said: ***"Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."***

Amen.

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