

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
January 12, 2014**

Matthew 3:13-17

The Baptismal Journey

- 1. It begins at the font**
- 2. Jesus' Journey**
- 3. Blessings for Jesus at the Font**
- 4. Jesus' work gives meaning to your Baptism**
- 5. A gift to be used during the whole journey**

Hymns: 83 – 709 – 89 – 369

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"¹⁵ Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matthew 3:13-17

This (standing by the baptismal font) is where it all changed. Yet, for making such a great change, it is rather simple, isn't it? Simple water from a simple font applied in a rather simple way accompanied by simple words, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Despite its simplicity, what great change it accomplished! Before your head was lowered over this font, you were lost in the dark. You were in trouble because of your sins. Life was filled with uncertainty. But then, at this simple font, it all changed. The Holy Spirit came and He brought light to that darkness. He washed away the sin and guilt. He gave certainty in an uncertain world. It all changed when you were washed in the waters of baptism. That is what baptism does... it changes things.

For almost 30 years after that unique birth that took place in a Bethlehem stable and which was proclaimed by the angels, the life of Jesus settled down quite a bit. For those 30 years, Jesus lived in relative obscurity. For 30 years in the town of Nazareth, he was simply the son of Mary and Joseph; a young boy learning to walk and talk much like many others; a young teen going to school and synagogue much like many others; a young man learning a trade from his dad much like many others. For most of his first 30 years, the journey for Jesus didn't seem all that different than what any other person would travel. Even the four Gospels, with only one single recorded event from those years, might seem to back up the thought that the first part of Jesus' journey on this earth as a man wasn't all that eventful.

However as you think about this first stage of Jesus' life, don't be fooled. Though uneventful, it wasn't unimportant. In fact, this time was vitally important to his work as the Savior. Yes, he was living like you and me – people growing and experiencing life. However, he wasn't anything like you and me – sinners making mistakes throughout that life. When you think about Jesus' journey as your Savior, don't ever forget those 30 years that we hear little about in the words of Scripture. In those 30 years, Jesus was living the perfect life that each one of us has failed miserably to do. He was actively obeying the demands that God sets for every person born into this world. During those 30 years, he was doing exactly what he needed to do to make things right between sinful people and their God.

But then, when Jesus was 30 years old, something happened. In his Gospel, Matthew says, "**then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.**" About 30 years after Joseph and a very pregnant Mary journeyed south towards Bethlehem in Judea so that Jesus could become one of us, Jesus would make that same journey south. Out in the wilderness, in the waters of the Jordan River, Jesus came to be baptized by a man wearing camel's hair and preaching about repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

As Jesus approached him, John asked the logical question for us all. Why? Why would Jesus need to be baptized? John, just like you and I, knew that baptism was for the forgiveness of sins, and the Son of God certainly did not need his sins washed away because he had no sins. John was right. Jesus didn't need baptism for the same reasons that you and I and every other sinner needs spiritual washing. But Jesus did need change.

When John asked Jesus why he was coming to him to be baptized, Jesus replied, "**It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.**"

The baptism that Jesus came to receive in the waters of the Jordan River by John the Baptist marked a change in his journey as Savior; it signified a transition in his ministry. Living the perfect life that Jesus had been living for his first 30 years was important to his work as Savior, but it was only part of his work. It only fulfilled half of the righteousness that God demanded. In order to be the Savior of all mankind, Jesus needed to fulfill all righteousness. What does that mean? Jesus needed to actively obey every command of God, he needed to be perfect. However, he also needed to passively obey God's demands. He needed to humble himself, take the sins of the world on his shoulders, and be punished in the place of mankind.

That is why Jesus came to be baptized. Jesus didn't need to be washed of sins, he needed to take on sins. This baptism was a marker that this was now taking place. Jesus' baptism connected him with the people that he came to save. From here he would start the journey that would go to the cross. This baptism anointed him as the One who would now do the second part of what we could not do – he would go and die a sacrificial death.

When Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John, the final leg of the journey to atonement began. As soon as Jesus stepped out of that river, there would be no more quiet life in Nazareth. For three years, Jesus would make himself known as the One sent by God to be the Savior; for three years, Jesus would be attacked by Satan; in three years, Jesus would be called to the cross to finish the work, to fulfill all righteousness, for you and me. When the waters of baptism anointed his head, life changed for Jesus.

Jesus would not leave the font of the Jordan River to go to do that work on his own. At his baptism, Jesus was given blessings that would carry him forward in his arduous journey. First, he would receive God the Father's approval, "***This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.***" At this time of transition, Jesus would receive God's nod of approval for the perfection he had maintained so far in his journey, and he would receive God's assurance that what he would endure going forward was going to be worth it, that final difficult three years of the journey would fulfill all righteousness in God's eyes.

At his baptism, Jesus also received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Matthew says, "***At that moment, heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him.***" In the coming years, Jesus would be called to endure. As true man, there would be struggles that required perseverance, and there would be moments that would test the man Jesus Christ. Jesus needed God's help, and here at his baptism, Jesus was given the

Spirit, to guide, to comfort, to strengthen, and to push Jesus forward.

With that booming voice of approval, and the Spirit coming down and resting upon him, Jesus could be filled with confidence as he embarked on this second part of his journey. His baptism was a turning point in his life. His baptism would be something that he could remember each day as he woke up to new struggles and obstacles that would stand in his path to being the Savior that he needed to be. With that confidence that came from having God's approval, and that guidance that came from the Holy Spirit, Jesus would finish his journey, he would accomplish what he came to do. He would meet God's demand for perfection and would satisfy God's demand for sacrifice. He would fulfill all righteousness for you and me.

That is why Baptism is so important. Just as Christ was connected to us through his baptism, we also have been connected to Christ through our baptisms. Paul assures that if we have been united with Jesus through baptism into his death, we will also be united with him in life. Because of that connection, we are assured of countless blessings.

Through baptism, the Father makes us his own. Though the voice might not have come booming down from heaven, the Father was still there voicing his approval for each of his children, "***This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased.***" That approval was won for us by the perfect blood of Jesus shed for us. It continues to be heard whenever we confess our sins and hear that absolution. In that pledge of forgiveness, God is voicing his approval.

Through baptism, the Spirit is given. Though a dove did not come and rest upon our shoulders, the Spirit was still there, given to us as our guide and comforter on the journey to heaven, a source of help that never leaves us.

On the day of our baptisms, the journey changed, just as it did for Jesus. With the Father's approval, and the Son's perfection, and the Spirit's guidance, our baptisms have given us everything needed so that a journey that began in sin and death will end in perfection and life. At the font, under these waters, in the name of the Triune God, baptism worked in you, baptism changed you. Amen.

May the Father who created you, the Son who redeemed you, and the Spirit who called you, continue to keep you in your baptismal grace to life everlasting. Amen.