



The Baptism of Our Lord (observed)

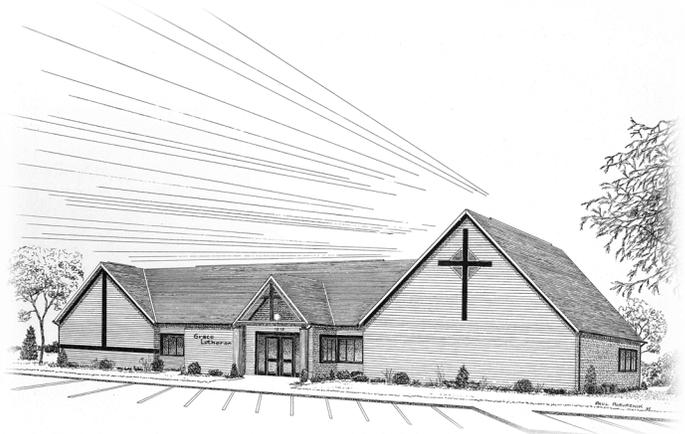
January 17, 2021

Pastor Daniel Naumann

Mark 1:4-11

MEET CHRIST:

GOD'S SON, OUR SAVIOR



January 19, 1986. This is probably not a day that any of you find particularly memorable. I doubt whether any of you could remember exactly where you were or what you were doing on that day almost 29 years ago. And of course, some of you weren't even born yet. I'll admit that even I was only 7 days old. It's not a date that I celebrated too often myself as I was growing up, at least not because of the date. But what happened on that day changed my life forever. On January 19, 1986, God made me his through Baptism. That day I died and I was buried with Christ into death. And that very same day I rose to life as a child of God, a believer, a son and heir of everything Christ has won for me. January 19, 1986. I wish I would celebrate it more than I do.

You all have your own baptism day—your own January 19, 1986. For many of you it was probably as a baby, though for some of you it may very well have been as adults that you were baptized into God's family. Do you celebrate that day? Do you remember it each year it rolls by? Or do you let it slide as though nothing very important happened? Or maybe you don't even remember exactly what day it was at all. Maybe you just know that you were baptized. But you know, it doesn't really matter on what specific day you were baptized, or whether you remember the date or not. It doesn't make the fact that you were baptized any less significant if you can't put the numbers down on paper. Every day is a day to celebrate your baptism. In fact, you

were called to do just that at your baptism, weren't you? You were called to the life of a believer. And the life of a believer is one of constant repentance. The life of a believer is a life lived every day with that same dying—as we drown our sinful nature—and rising—as we celebrate the new person God created at our baptism. Every day is a day to celebrate your baptism and what happened on it. It's the constant life of repentance that every believer is called to.

That was the focus on the days leading up to Christmas, wasn't it? We focused on John's message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!" In fact, on Monday morning as I sat down to translate this Gospel text from Mark 1, I quickly realized that I had just preached on this text 5 weeks ago for the Second Sunday of Advent. We focused on John coming to prepare an unprepared world to meet their Savior. We talked about repentance, and how we too need to repent. We focused on that topic of repentance, of confessing our sins and recognizing that they're wrong, and then turning to God in faith in eager anticipation of Christmas that was fast approaching. John's message is the introduction to our text today. Listen to it again as John prepares us to meet our Savior. "And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River."

This was our focus, and as we just talked about, this is the focus every day of the life of every baptized believer. We are called to a life of constant examination, constant scrutiny to judge whether we have lived up to that preparation. I am to see if I've

lived up to the name that God placed on me at my baptism. And when I'm not living up to that name then I repent and I admit guilt and turn to God for forgiveness. That's exactly what John taught in his message, isn't it? John preached "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." And that's what the people did, didn't they? They prepared to meet their Savior by confessing, by repenting and examining and changing their lives. "Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River."

So, Christmas has come and gone, and as you can see we still have our Christmas decorations up just a few days after Epiphany. Well, after all this preparation to meet our Savior, I suppose it's a good time to reflect and ask ourselves: Have we prepared? Did we prepare enough? Are we still repenting, examining, judging properly, and making the appropriate changes in our lives? Do we live every day celebrating our baptisms and the miracle that happened there? Or do we simply let the days roll by and forget about who we are and what we were called to do? Have we made the necessary changes that follow true repentance, or do we let the sins slip by unnoticed too? Advent and Lent are two times of the year that we call "penitential seasons". That means that we humbly remember who we are and our standing with God apart from Christ. We repent of the sin we were born with and the sins we constantly commit. But every day is a day to remember this, not just through Advent and Lent. That's why we start almost every service with a confession and absolution. And if you're anything like me, too often the first sin I have to confess during those confessions is that I have spoken the words thoughtlessly without really thinking about the sins that I have and do commit. Just like too often I let my baptism thoughtlessly roll by without giving it proper attention and truly understanding what I was called to.

And then of course there are those times when my preparation, my repentance, turns totally into

something that I do. It turns into a rote rite that is spoken thoughtlessly as though I get credit just for doing it. Or I turn it into an endless mind game where I constantly wrestle with the question, "Am I sorry enough? Have I suffered enough?" —as though my repentance, and the forgiveness that follows, are dependent on just how sorry I truly feel. You see, even in this God-given plan of living our baptism and repentance, our sinful nature still tries to turn it on us and make it all about ourselves. Dear Christian friends, let us confess our sins, our self-centeredness, our focusing on us, and even the sins that we have trouble understanding, and lay them at the foot of our Savior who came that first Christmas, who was worshipped by the Magi that first



Epiphany, and who revealed himself to us, to believers, when he was baptized in the Jordan River. Dear friends, after proper preparation in true baptismal repentance, let's meet Christ!

Meet Christ, declared by the Father to be God pleasing to the Father! Meet Christ, baptized to identify with us—with sinners! Meet Christ, baptized to give baptism its power! Meet Christ, the reason our hearts are changed in repentance! Meet Christ, the glory of God for the salvation of all who believe! Meet Christ, your Savior!

We are given another glimpse of him here in the Jordan River at his baptism. We are given a glimpse of who this truly is—our Savior who is really God's Son. "At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'" Meet Christ, dear friends, at his baptism, where is declared with power to be the Son of God! Here at his baptism, as we celebrate it so soon after Christmas and Epiphany, we rightly remember who exactly Jesus is. He is God himself who dwells with us and who dwells in our place. That's why he came to be baptized at the Jordan River, isn't it? He came there

to identify with us and to take our place. Think about it, why were you baptized? Because you needed it to wash away sins! But Jesus didn't have any sin of his own to wash away. He came to be baptized because we had sin that needed to be washed away. He came to fulfill our baptismal need, to fulfill our need to have a Savior who took the place of sinners to do what they couldn't do and to offer himself as an acceptable offering and sacrifice to God.

And was he an acceptable offering to God? He absolutely was, unquestionably, an acceptable offering to God! Meet Christ, our perfect substitute, and hear the very words of God himself proclaim who this was. "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." What an endorsement for this perfect offering to God. Think about what that meant for Christ's life! So many people wonder what was Christ doing up until his baptism when he first started to preach and teach publicly? We aren't given details, at least not many of them. But whatever he was doing—living as a faithful son, a faithful brother, a faithful friend, a faithful carpenter perhaps—he was doing it perfectly. And his perfection was acceptable to God in our place. Listen to God's proclamation of it: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Jesus takes our place on this earth, walking among us because he was true man, and he offered his perfect human life to God in our place. And was it acceptable? It was, because this wasn't just a man, this was God himself, revealed as such by God the Father himself!

Meet Christ, the perfect substitute for you and for me, who took our place all his life to live perfectly, and then offered that perfect life to God for us as a perfectly acceptable offering to win our forgiveness.

And remember, as you meet Christ you meet yourself and the glory that you have been given because of him. Meet Christ, the Son of God and your very own brother. He became what we are so that we would become what he is. The same proclamation that God the Father proclaimed over Jesus is now spoken of you at your baptism. "You are God's son whom he loves, and with you he is now well-pleased." How can you say that? Because Christ, your brother, gave to you his perfect life that he lived every day. Now, every time you remember

your baptism—every time you repent of your sins and remember what Christ has made you—you can remember that God put his name on you and forgave your sins and killed your sinful nature and created a new person who is now a son and heir of everything that belongs to Christ. Christ reigns supreme in heaven, so do you! Christ is holy and perfect before God, so are you! Christ is pleasing to God and is a testimony to his power and glory, and so are you! Christ is God's own Son whom he loves, and so are you! Yes, Jesus is God himself, the Son of God in a way that we are not, but he shares his glory with us as he makes us also properly God's children and heirs of everlasting life with him.

So, do you remember your baptism day? It's ok if you don't, because God does. He knows when it happened, and he remembers when he made a promise to you that day. He remembers speaking through a schism in the heavens those marvelous words that he spoke over Jesus, "You are my son whom I love; with you I am well pleased!" Meet Christ, God's Son, our Savior, who has made us also to be children of God. Amen.

