



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Watertown, WI

“With You I Am Well Pleased”

Luke 3:15-22

Rev. Steven Geske

15 As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, 16 John answered them all, saying, "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 with fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." 18 So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. 19 But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, 20 added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison. 21 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

**The Baptism of Our Lord
January 12-13, 2013**

Collect of the Day

Father in heaven, at the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River You proclaimed Him Your beloved Son and anointed Him with the Holy Spirit. Make all who are baptized in His name faithful in their calling as Your children and inheritors with Him of everlasting life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We want to be sure to be “in good graces” with those around us. We want to be especially sure to honor and obey our parents and get along with spouse, children, and family. We want to be sure to please those around us. When we know that we have failed in this in some way, large or small, we may feel life a failure, and sometimes we may even feel like this before God. We are not left this way – we have a God who speaks to us even when we are in our weakened state.

There was a feeling of great expectancy when John the Baptizer was preaching and Jesus began His ministry. Here we are not a couple weeks after Christmas, but Jesus is about 30 years old already. He had to wait until then because that was the age set by law that someone could start as a Rabbi. He fulfilled the law in every way on our behalf. Except for the account where He is in the temple discussing the finer points of theology with the scribes and Pharisees, we are not given much else about His childhood, teen years and young adult years. The important work begins at the appropriate age of 30.

The people wondered if John himself might be the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, the One

Chosen by God to do God's work. John answered, "I baptize you with water" – This was a common practice of repentance and new beginning from the Old Testament on. It was not surprising that someone was espousing baptism. It was not surprising that someone was encouraging a baptism for repentance. What was unusual was that John was in the custom and manner of the prophet Elijah. This was a major reason that people thought that maybe he was the One.

But John continues, "One more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." People wore sandals everywhere. It was a slaves' job to wash the feet of those who entered the house, whose feet were dusty or muddy. In doing this, they also had to untie the sandals. John is saying that he is not worthy to even begin being a slave to the One who he is the forerunner to. The One who is coming after John is Greater than He because He is also Before!

"He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire." This happens at Pentecost – both the Holy Spirit and tongues of fire are poured out on the believers, and this only through the work of the one chosen by God to do this work. The work of the Christ is more than a water baptism of repentance. It includes that but is also much more than that. The work of Christ is a life-changing experience that is not merely a rededication, but a complete redirection and connection to God.

When prophets would ask that people be baptized for repentance, it was an outward sign that they wanted a new life. But when the Christ comes, "His winnowing fork is in His hand to clear His threshing floor and to gather the wheat into His barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

This is no ordinary prophet! This is The Prophet spoken of in Deuteronomy 18, the one they were to expect and listen to. He will make a difference and judge the hearts of people. He has the authority from the Father to handle business, to differentiate between those who are part of the kingdom and who are not. The winnowing fork was used to separate the usable fruit of the wheat from the unusable chaff. The wheat kernels are stored to be used, but the chaff is burned so it's not in the way. The One coming after John is not messing around, but means business.

“With many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them.” These words are not recorded for us, but we get the general understanding of what John’s message was about. He was preparing their hearts and minds to receive Jesus. And now Jesus is here, about to begin His ministry!

An aside in the text – “But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother’s wife, and all the other evil things he had done, Herod added this to them all: He locked John up on prison.” And of course Herod later had him beheaded. This is a flash forward in the text. No prophet usually has an easy life, as those in charge don’t care for what they have to say about what they are doing. And John had said that it was not lawful for Herod to be living with her, as she was the wife of his brother Philip, another tetrarch. The kingdom of Herod the Great (slaughterer of the innocents, guider of the wise men) was split into four smaller pieces, and these brothers each had a piece. This is the same Herod whom Jesus is on trial before three years later.

So we jump back to Jesus being baptized. Not for repentance, but as Israel reduced to One. As He

was praying, heaven opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came, "You are my Son whom I love. With you I am well pleased." As the Father says to him at His being chosen as the Messiah, so He says to each of us baptized into Christ: "You are my child, whom I love; With you I am well pleased." No matter what has happened in your life, God looks at you, sees His Chosen Christ, and says, "WITH YOU I AM WELL PLEASED." Now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus from now until you reach life everlasting. Amen.

GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH

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