*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

February 13 - 18

“The Life of Jesus: Baptism”

**Monday, February 13 Matthew 3:11-17**

*“It must be done, for it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness”*

The baptism of Jesus is difficult to understand. Why did the Son of God need to be baptized? John the Baptist’s call was a call to repentance in order to be prepared to enter into the Kingdom of God. When Jesus came to the Jordan and asked John to baptize him, John tried to dissuade him. John stated that he needed what Jesus could give him rather than that Jesus needed anything from John. Jesus had nothing for which he needed to repent.

For thirty years Jesus had lived in Nazareth, awaiting the time when the Father would direct him to begin his public ministry. His act of being baptized by John was a complete and full identification with the Kingdom of God that John was announcing. Jesus’ baptism was his own symbolic act of participation in the Kingdom. Jesus’ use of the word “righteousness” to explain why he must be baptized shows that his baptism was a witness to the rightness of his relationship with God and with his followers in the Kingdom of God, all of whom are baptized in the name of Jesus to show their right relationship with God.

*Thank you, Lord, for showing us the way to the Father. Amen.*

**Tuesday, February 14 Mark 1:1-11**

*“One day Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River”*

John has been announcing the need to be baptized for the repentance of sin. Now, Mark brings Jesus on the scene. It is not a triumphal entry. Rather, in a matter-of-fact style, Mark brings a man with a common name from a common town to participate in a common experience with thousands of others who have been baptized by John. Thus, Jesus’ baptism is an experience in which he shares our common humanity, quietly, lovingly, humbly.

While the entry of Jesus onto the scene shows his identification with common people, his exit from the water is anything but common. The Spirit of God descends on him like a dove, and a heavenly voice declares that he is the Son of God with whom the Father is fully pleased. All we need to know about our relationship with God is summed up in these words from heaven. God affirms his Son: “I claim you, I love you, I am proud of you.” How simple! How basic! *To belong, to be loved, to be lifted up*. Nothing more is needed in our relationship with God. When God claims Jesus as his Son, he sets the stage for claiming us through his Son.

*I am yours, heavenly Father, for by faith I am in your Son. Amen.*

**Wednesday, February 15 Luke 3:21-23**

*“As he was praying, the heavens opened”*

Luke, with his special interest in Jesus’ prayer life, tells us that Jesus was praying as he was being baptized. In our own prayer life, much of the time we are asking for particular answers for ourselves or praying for other people. But, ultimately, the purpose of our prayers is the same as that of Jesus: we want to keep in relationship with the Father. The most important gift that God has given us is himself: a relationship in which we belong to him and he is our Father. Prayer, though it includes specific requests, is basically a means of affirming the relationship. We find Jesus in this kind of prayer at his baptism.

As Jesus was praying, the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove came down from heaven, the physical expression of God’s affirming power and presence. With this heavenly vision, a voice was heard saying, “You are my beloved Son.” Jesus was baptized in the same manner as any other convert, but God, through these supernatural happenings, indicated Jesus was unlike anyone else who has ever lived.

*Like your Son, heavenly Father, I stay connected with you in prayer. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

February 13 - 18

“The Life of Jesus: Baptism”

**Thursday, February 16 John 1:29-34**

*“I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove and resting on him”*

On this occasion when Jesus comes toward John the Baptist, he has already been baptized by John. The details of the baptism itself, spoken of in the other three gospels, are not what this gospel writer chooses to focus on. Instead, he moves directly to the wonder of Jesus’ true identity as it is revealed in the baptism. It is as the Spirit descends on Jesus that the truth about Jesus is fully revealed to the Baptist: this is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The Jewish feast of Passover celebrates God’s mighty deliverance of his people from captivity in Egypt. At the center of this joyous occasion was the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb. This must have been in the Baptist’s mind as Jesus came to him that day. Although, as far as we known, John did not know the details of how Jesus would be crucified so the sins of humankind might be forgiven, he knows that it will be through this One whom he baptized that salvation will come to all people. Jesus as the Lamb of God becomes our substitute, dying in our place. This will be a theme throughout John’s Gospel.

*I praise you, Lord Jesus, for dying on the cross for my sin. Amen.*

**Friday, February 17 Acts 2:37-41**

*“Repent and be baptized”*

When they cried out, “What shall we do?” Peter was ready with a three-part answer: “Repent, be baptized, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” In a way, all three were gifts of the Holy Spirit working in the people who heard Peter. To repent means to change one’s mind, to perceive after a mind-changing truth and to act on that perception. In this case it means the Holy Spirit inspired action of turning from a sinful life and embracing a godly life.

Baptism was used for initiation into Judaism or a radical reconsecration of one who needed forgiveness for sin. It was the latter that Peter meant, calling for them to publicly declare through a physical act what they had committed to in their spiritual relationship with God. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus convinces us of our need for him. Having prepared a place for himself in our lives, he moves in and lives in us through the Spirit. It may seem that it is our choice to repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit, but behind that choice is his work causing us to be willing to receive.

*I believe, Lord, and by your Spirit you have made your home in my life. Amen.*

**Saturday, February 18 Galatians 3:26-29**

*“In baptism, we have been made like Christ Jesus”*

Baptism involves a dual movement: the believer has moved to God by professing faith in Jesus Christ, and God has moved to the believer by accepting that faith and giving the believer the Holy Spirit. In these verses Paul tells us that baptism means that we have been immersed in Christ’s character. We need to be careful here not to think that to be made like Christ Jesus is a matter of our successful imitation of him; this is not our doing. This is a work of grace, the result of a new birth that has made us into a new person – Christ’s person.

Paul’s reference to baptism in this context serves the purpose not only of relating it to becoming like Christ, but to helping us understand what it looks like to live like Christ. All who have been made like Christ are one – there is no longer room for human distinctions between races and nationalities (Jews and Greeks), social classes (slaves and free), or on the basis of gender (male and female). No matter who we are, and regardless of how society labels us, our common humanity is found in Christ.

*Being made like you, Lord, I now seek to live like you. Amen.*