

Sermon for the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord

'And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:'

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Christmas is over. No longer think of the time of Our Lord's birth. Think now upon his death.

It is in the Son that the *Lord is well pleased*.

The Lord has approached the Jordan. Now the Lord has entered the waters. The other Gospel writers speak of how St. John the Baptist tried to convince Jesus to turn away from his baptism, for his baptism, John's baptism, was one of repentance. And Jesus had no sin, he had nothing of which to repent.

St. Mark does not record any account of Jesus and John bickering over whether or not Our Lord should be baptized. He does not waste our time. Rather, it is written: *'And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in the Jordan.'*

Christmas is over. No longer think of the time of Our Lord's birth. Think now upon his death.

St. Mark need not waste his time recounting how John bickered with Jesus over his baptism, so I need not waste time bickering with you over your baptism.

You know what your baptism is, it is a baptism into life out of death. Even as God said *let there be light: and there was light, in the beginning*, so God created light within you in the sacrament of your baptism, *and there was light, and God saw the light, that it was good*. In your baptism, God separated whom you must be in him from whom you would be without him. He separated the old hellish Adam from the new heavenly man within you. *'And God divided the light from the*

darkness.’ ‘And behold, the Lord saw that it was good.’

You know what your baptism is, so you know what your Lord’s baptism is. If you were baptized into life out of death, he was baptized into death out of life.

Did you think that your sin was of no consequence? Did you think that you could get away from it all for free? Nothing is free. Everything has a price.

I will not attempt to enumerate your sins. I will not count them. If man cannot count *the number of sand upon the shore, or the stars in the sky*, then I cannot count the sins that you or I have committed; the lies, the shames, the guiles, the secrets, the hatred, the bitterness. *‘If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?’*

None shall stand, and so Our Lord shall not stand, but shall be beaten until his legs have no need of breaking, his knees no need of shattering, and his body no power of standing. For he too, is a thief on a cross. In his baptism, he has taken that which was not his own. He took your sin. He took your shame, and guile; your secrets and hatred; your bitterness, *like a thief in the night.* *‘O Lord, who shall stand?’*

Christmas is over. No longer think of Our Lord’s birth. But think of his death. For in this, his baptism, he has married himself to the death that you warranted; to the murder that you deserved; to the damnation you demanded.

If you were baptized into HIS life out of death, he was baptized into YOUR death out of life.

St. Mark does not waste our time in his account of Our Lord’s Baptism. And neither will I waste yours. Before you get carried away, wondering ‘why Lord, why?’ I will answer. It is simple: *‘that you may live unto God.’*

Think now upon his death.

Our Lord, your savior, was cursed and lied about. And why? That in you God may *be well pleased.*

Our Lord, your savior, was betrayed and handed over to the heathen. And why? That in you God may *be well pleased.*

Our Lord, your savior, had his blood poured out like a choking lamb, he had it cast upon the ground like a sacrificed beast. And why? That in you God may *be well pleased*.

Our Lord, your savior, was crucified upon a cross of wood. With his eyes did he look up into heaven, even as his body sank in weakness; even as his arms gave way in paleness. And why? That in you God may *be well pleased*.

Our Lord, your savior, died. *'Then the soldiers came to break the legs of those that were crucified. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs.'* For *'If you, O Lord, should iniquities, O Lord, who should stand?'* For he did not stand, for he bore your iniquity, the iniquity of all mankind, *'knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not fear sin, for he that is dead is freed from sin.'* That, being freed from sin, in you God may *be well pleased*.

Think now upon your death, and do not waste any time. Do not become sentimental. Do not become nostalgic. Think like a Christian. Better yet, think like Christ, and hear those words spoken of Christ, spoken to you; for he was baptized that you might hear these words. For you he was crucified that you might hear these words. Whether it is tomorrow, or in thirty years, you, in your baptism will hear those words that Christ heard in his. The words which for him spelled death; the words which, for you, spell life. Those words, that in your death, spell eternity:

'Thou art my Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Genesis 1:1-5; Romans 6:1-11; Mark 1:4-11.