

## Baptism of our Lord

Mark 1: 4-11

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

Today, once again we get the story of John the Baptist and the preparation for the coming of Christ. The lectionary must pick these so often because it is important. After all we have heard this story of John the Baptist several times now, this exact passage once back in December and similar readings from the Gospels of Luke and John. So the theologians who pick these lessons must think it is an important passage to know. In this passage we get the entire Gospel Story, from the beginning to the end. From Creation to the Coming of Christ. From the beginning Humanity fell into sin and for centuries looked towards God for a way back into paradise, seeking to repent and turn back. Prophets pointed towards the one who would do come and Save us. After centuries and centuries, John the Baptist, just like the prophets of old, showed up in the wilderness and started to call all people to repentance. He preached that people needed to change their lives and to ritually wash themselves in the cleansing waters of baptism.

People from all over came to hear John, Even city folk from Jerusalem came and were baptized. They came to hear John preach and when he did he would point out that one more powerful than he was coming and he would baptize with fire and Spirit. Then one day cousin Jesus showed up at John's baptismal pool and he was baptized in that water. As Jesus came up out of the river the heavens opened up the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove would have floated down. And if that wasn't enough, right then God spoke from heaven and said, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." Then he went up out of the water and began his ministry and went about bringing in the Kingdom of God. Amen.

What a message.

But don't you think there has to be more. We have heard this Gospel reading a few times now and there has to be more. Its kind of a let down when we finally build up all this time for Christmas and now its over, epiphany has come and we move on. There has to be more. It would be like if you went to a concert of your favorite musician, the one you have waited months to hear, and the performer finally gets on stage and plays one song and leaves. What a let down, there has to be more. It is like how you would feel if a beloved family member, your mom or dad, your wife or husband told you they got you're the perfect Christmas gift and they hand you this perfectly wrapped beautiful box and you open up the lid of this nice box

anticipating something even nicer inside and it's empty. There has to be more. It is that same feeling many people get many times in their lives, you want to get older to be able to drive and get a job and money and be free of your parents, and when you do, you wonder there has to be more. Then you want to be in your own place and you know that will be perfect and then you get it with the bills and headaches and you wonder there has to be more. Then you find that perfect someone and you marry and you have a family and you begin to wonder is this it, there has to be more. Then you get that great job, invest that money, find that perfect financial number that says you made it, and then you sit back and wonder there has to be something more. Some search for that latest newest thing, that new excitement, that vacation, that retirement, that wow factor and once you get it, you begin to feel like there's got to be more.

There has to be something more to this text. There has to be something more to its meaning. The people of Jerusalem and all Judea had come to see John because they were looking for something more. They wanted something. They had lives, they had homes, they had families, they had jobs, businesses, hopes and dreams, but they wanted something more. So they came to hear his message. From the whole Judean countryside to all the people of Jerusalem, from rich to poor, from old to young they came looking for something more.

Even John knows they are looking for something more, because he tells them that something more is coming. That there is "one who is more powerful than I is coming after me, I am not worthy to stoop down and untie his thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." And if on cue the Son of Man came down to the waters and was baptized the heavens were torn apart and God spoke.

But there still has to be even more. Even God knew this. The Bible tells us that in the beginning the creation was formless void. And that the Spirit of the Lord swept over the void of darkness and made something more, God said, "let there be light" and there as light. Creation began, God said let there be land, let there be sky, sun and moon, animals and birds fish of every kind. God was creating and making more. Then God created humans in his image he created us, and talked with us and acted for us, and we know that it is not over, God is still not finished, there is still much more to come.

Paul knew that there was more also. Just look at the lesson from Acts of the Apostles today. A man named Apollos had just left Ephesus and traveled to Corinth. Apollos was a disciple of Christ and a passionate preacher. He spoke as Chapter 18 says, with "burning enthusiasm and taught about Jesus." He had that kind of presence that brought people to hear his word. But Apollos had one problem, he didn't know the whole story. He understood the scriptures of the Old Testament and he knew about Jesus and God, but he only knew about

John's baptism, and nothing about the Holy Spirit. So when Paul runs into these followers of Christ and they don't know about the Holy Spirit, he is astonished. They didn't know about the Triune Baptism; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They didn't understand that God claims us in baptism and makes us a part of his family guided supported and comforted by his Spirit throughout our lives. They just don't know about it all the more God had intended and is planning for us.

So Paul fills them in. There was more than just being baptized in water and getting that stamp and saying you're saved. His words move them so much that they seek to receive more, to become baptized in the full name and power of God, to be washed by the power of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They begin to realize that there is more that they wanted to grow in the faith, walk closer with God, be more connected with God and less connected to the worldly things. They become more, speaking in tongues, prophesying and deeper followers of God. They began to live in the something more.

Have you ever had that feeling there's got to be more? If you have you are right. There is more! There is more to life than the things that most people strive for. There is more than the fast car, big house, great job, latest computer gadget. There is so much more to living in God.

There is Jesus. But even then there is more. Even after we have surrendered ourselves to God in Christ and have been baptized into his death and resurrection, there is still more. There more through worship, prayer, devotion, praise, and song, through serving, and witnessing, through fellowship and caring for others. There is using the gifts God has bestowed on us for something greater than ourselves. For something that is more; to share the word, the faith, the love, the gift of God with others to serve God as stewards and helpers of all creation, knowing that through Christ we are given a love that will never end. That is more than enough, that is eternal and overcomes all the darkness and troubles of this world. That is the promise that fills us more and more, my you be filled with that glorious message this day and always, that God who loves you now and always gives you more and more in his eternal home. Amen.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come.