PM Luke 3:1-23 "The Holy Spirit and the Baptism of Jesus"

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Preacher: Rev Jonathan Watson

[0:00] To Luke's Gospel and chapter 3, we're going to read the first 23 verses, and that's found on page 1034 in the Church Bible.

Luke chapter 3. During the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness.
And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight.
Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways.
And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
[2:15] Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father.

For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now, the axe is led to the root of the trees.
Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. And the crowds asked him, What then shall we do?
And he answered them, Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none. And whoever has food is to do likewise.
Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, Teacher, what shall we do? And he said to them, Collect no more than you are authorized to do.
[3:24] Soldiers also asked him, And we, what shall we do? And he said to them, Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation.

And be content with your wages. As the people were in expectation, And all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, Whether he might be the Christ.
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 fire. 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. So with many other exhortations, He preached good news to the people. 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, Added this to them all, That he locked up John in prison.
[4:55] Now when all the people were baptized, And when Jesus also had been baptized, And was praying, The heavens were opened, 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.

Amen. Thank you, Mark and Luke, Each give us an account of the baptism of Jesus Christ.
From the way in which Luke words his account, It is clear that his main interest Isn't in Jesus' baptism itself, But in what happened at it.
So let's look at verses 21 to 22, Of Luke chapter 3, And see what I mean when I say that. Now when all the people were baptized, And when Jesus also had been baptized, And was praying, The heavens were opened, 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.

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Luke here places the emphasis, Not on the fact of Jesus' baptism, But on the things that accompanied it, Or followed it.
[6:53] For example, The opening of the heavens, The descent of the Holy Spirit, And the voice that came from heaven. And it's on the second of these, The descent of the Holy Spirit, That I want to focus our attention this evening.

But before we do so, I want to say something about Jesus' baptism. Not least because of the extraordinary event that it was.
Earlier, in the same chapter, Luke chapter 3, In which the baptism of Jesus is recorded, Luke tells us what kind of baptism Jesus submitted himself to.
Look at verses 2 and 3. During the high priest of Annas and Caiaphas, The word of God came to John, The son of Zechariah, In the wilderness.
And he went into all the region around the Jordan, Proclaiming a baptism of repentance For the forgiveness of sins.
[8:05] A baptism of repentance For the forgiveness of sins. In other words, John's baptism Was for sinners. His baptism was an outward Expression Of their repentance.

And it symbolized The blessing of forgiveness That repentance would bring. Why then Was Jesus baptized?
Jesus had no sins To confess. Jesus had nothing To repent of.
Jesus had no need Of God's forgiveness. And yet, He submitted himself To a sinner's baptism.
Why? Why was that? We may give a partial answer To that question Along the lines of What His baptism Allowed Jesus to do.
[9:16] And He tells Us About that Himself. You see, Had it been Left up to John the Baptist Jesus would never Have been baptized.

You remember how Matthew tells us That John Would have Prevented Jesus Saying I need to be baptized By you And do you come to me?
But Jesus answered him Let it be so for now For thus It is fitting for us To fulfill All righteousness.
In other words Jesus considered it His duty To be baptized. It was the will Of God For him. If his conformity To that will Was to be complete And that was something That was absolutely Indispensable For our salvation Then Jesus Had to be baptized It was to Fulfill All righteousness He had to be baptized And he was Baptized And then there is What Jesus' Baptism Allowed John To do God had said to him He on whom You see the spirit Descend And remain This is he Who baptizes With the Holy Spirit And when Jesus Was baptized It was the very
Thing that John Did see The visible Descent Of the Holy Spirit In the form of a dove And now John John Knew for sure That this Was the one Whose way He had come To prepare The one Who was Mightier Than he Was The one Who would Baptize With the Holy Spirit And not with Water And now He was able To bear Public witness To him And this is What John Did So the Bible Doesn't leave us In the dark It doesn't Shed some light On the mystery Of Jesus The sinless one Submitting To a sinner's Baptism But we need to Come back To look And to what Especially Was of interest To this gospel Writer It wasn't the Baptism itself But it was the
[11:57] Three remarkable Accompaniments And in particular The descent Of the Holy Spirit Jesus Is about Thirty Years old So it's been About thirty Years since Jesus' Conception By the Holy Spirit In the womb Of his mother Mary Which we looked At the last Time I was With you The same Spirit Who was so Intimately Involved In that Conception Is now Present And active In Jesus' Baptism When Jesus Had been Baptized And was Praying The Holy Spirit Descended On him In bodily Form Like a Dough Perhaps One Sunday Evening in the Future We'll think More about That thirty

Year gap Between These two Events Of the Holy Spirit The conception And his Coming upon Jesus After his Baptism by John in the Jordan And we Will see That the Spirit Who formed The human Nature of Jesus At the Beginning And then Descended on Him at His Baptism Was by No means Absent During During those Intervening Thirty Years On the Contrary The Spirit Was present And the Spirit Was active All the Way Through Those Thirty Years Especially In connection With Jesus' Growth In knowledge And in The Forming Of his Beautiful And holy Character But for our Purposes this Evening We shall fix Our thoughts
On the Spirit's Descent At Jesus' Baptism An event That was Considered So Important By God That there Is a record Of it In Three Of The four Gospels In fact In all Four Gospels Want us to

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Consider first Of all The Explanation For the Spirit's Coming down On Jesus So the First thing We need To try To do Is to Understand What's Actually Taking Place Here At Jesus' Baptism Why Did The Spirit Come Down And Remain On Jesus Well the Apostle Peter Gives us An answer To that Question You remember When he Went to The house Of Cornelius To tell
Them The gospel He says You yourselves Know what Happened Throughout All Judea Beginning From Galilee After the Baptism That John Proclaimed How God Anointed Jesus Of Nazareth With the Holy Spirit And with Power He Went About Doing Good And Healing All Who Were Oppressed By the Devil For God Was With Him So Here In Peter's Words To Cornelius And His House We Have The Explanation Of That Question Why Did The Spirit Come Down And Remain In Jesus So That He Might Have Power For Doing Good And Healing All Who Were Oppressed By The Devil This Was A Sacred Holy Anointing A bit Like The
Anointing Of Israel's Priests And Kings In The Old Testament Except In This Case The Anointing Was Not With Oil Like It Was In The Case Of The Priests And Kings Of The Old Testament But It Was With The Spirit Whom The Oil Of The Old Testament Anointings Symbolized And The Reason For The Anointing Lies In The Great Work That Was Stretching Out Ahead Of Jesus At His Baptism With Jesus' Baptism We're At The Great Transition Point In His Earthly Life For Thirty Years That Life Had Been Spent Largely Hidden In Out Of The Way Nazareth But Now That's All Behind Jesus The Time Has Come For Him To Step Into The Spotlight The
[16:59] Drama The Glory And The Suffering Of His Public Ministry And Ahead Of Him Are Challenges And Duties And Trials And Sorrows Greater Than Any That He Has Experienced Thus Far And It's In Order To Equip And Empower Jesus For These Things That The Spirit Now Descends Upon Him And That Is The Very Thing That Was Prophesied About Jesus In The Old Testament You Remember The Words Of Isaiah Hundreds Of Years Before Spoken In Isaiah 11 Verse 2 And The Spirit Of The Lord Will Rest Upon Him The Spirit Of Wisdom And Understanding The Spirit Of Counsel And Might The Spirit Of Knowledge

And The Fear Of The Lord And When You Think About It All Of These Things Characterized Jesus In His Earthly Ministry This Was What His Humanity Looked Like Wisdom Understanding Counsel Might Knowledge And The Fear Of The Lord And The Holy Spirit Was The Source Of All Of These Things It Would Be The Spirit's Presence In Dwelling And Empowering Him That Would Equip The Savior For Every Part Of His Ministry And This Isn't Something That Is Remote And Distant From Us As Believers We Know God In The Very Same Character As The God Who By The Holy Spirit Equips
And Empowers It's The Explanation For The Baptism Of The Holy Spirit That Was The Explanation Of Ours At The Beginning Of The Christian Life Why Did The Spirit Come Upon Us Not Just To Make Us Spiritually Alive Though That Is True He Gave Us New Birth But He Came Upon Us At The Beginning Of Our Christian Lives In Order To Equip Us And Empower Us For Christian Witness!
Service Just As He Did Our Lord Jesus Christ At The Beginning Of His Ministry And So We Are Able To Serve Christ In The Church We Are Able To Tell Others The Good News About Jesus Because Of The Descent Of The Holy Spirit Upon Us When We First Believed In Jesus And That's Not The End Of The Matter Either In The Book Of Acts We Read The Account About The Day Of Pentecost And What Do We Find The Very Same Spirit Who Filled The Disciples Then Filled The Disciples Again And Again And Again And That Is Something We Too May Expectantly Look For When Face To Face With Fresh Challenges And Duties And Trials And Sorrows To Expect To Pray That The Lord Would Endue Us With Just The Measure Of The Holy Spirit's Help That We Need To Get Through That Difficulty To Get Through That Trial To Face That Challenge That Experience Surely Brings Us Very Close To The Savior It Brings The Savior Very Close To Us Because There's A Need That We Both Share He Had A Need In His Earthly Human Ministry For The Help And Strengthening And Empowerment Of The Holy Spirit Because He Was Human Just Like Us And Like Him We Need The Spirit's Help And That Shared Need Leads To A Shared Experience As The Same Spirit Who Helped Him Helps Us As Well Jesus Wasn't Some Kind Of Superman He Was Made Like His
[21:36] Brothers In Every Way Except Without Sin But Being A Human Being He Needed To Depend And Rely And Trust In The Empowerment Of The Spirit Of God And Upon His Resources That's What He Did And In So Doing He Has Set Us An Example That We Might Follow In His Steps And Then Secondly Let's Think About The Significance Of The Spirit's Descent I Suppose

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We Need To Tackle The Big Question That The Spirit's Descent Raises We Are Merely Human And Human And No More But When We Think About Jesus We Think Of Him As The Divine Son The Son Of God Jesus Was And Is And

The Divine Son Is What He Remained Even After Taking Our Human Nature God How Could He Be In Need Of The Spirit When He Was Himself God And The Question Brings Us To The Significance Of The Spirit's Descent away away away The Spirit's descent was a sign.
A sign of something. The Spirit's descent points us to something very important.
Very humbling. Very marvelous. And that is the acceptance by Jesus of our human condition.
Our human way of living. Is what Jesus accepted when he became incarnate. He became one of us as I said a few moments ago.
[23:48] A few weeks ago when we looked at the incarnation. We thought a little bit about the genuineness of Jesus' humanity. The human nature that Jesus assumed and took to himself.

Was a true, real human nature. And now we take things a step further. Jesus, we have to say, would not be truly human.
If he didn't live as humans do.
He would not only be human. But he would do and live as a human being. Ought to live and do. And what does that entail?
Well for one thing. It would mean submission to the Father's will. If Jesus is going to be truly human. Then he must submit to his Father's will.
[24:59] He had come into the world as the Lord's servant you remember. And as such he would walk in a prescribed way.

Obedient to the Father. Even to death. Even to death on a cross. What a very different life on earth he lived from the life that he experienced in the bosom of the Father.
From all eternity. The Bible tells us that he was born under the law. And that meant that he was born as a real true human being.
And we are all under the law. And the Lord Jesus cheerfully lived in that human condition.
He entered fully into the human position. Submitting himself willingly.
[26:11] To all the Father's will. But not only was he in submission to his Father's will. But he was also dependent as a human being upon the Father.

To be dependent on our maker is inescapably part of what it means to be a human being. And Jesus accepted that too.
For the accomplishment of our salvation. Jesus became a dependent man. And this is why he needed the Holy Spirit.
How would he do the work that he had been sent to do? Not by drawing on the infinite resources of his Godhood. Rather he would do it as a spirit anointed man.
Drawing daily upon the spirit's resources. Hugh Martin, the Scottish theologian, put it beautifully like this. The second person of the Godhead.
[27:24] Humbling himself in human flesh. Did not draw directly on his divine resources. But suffering his humanity to feel all its own insufficiency.

As a weak dependent creature. He drew all his strength from God through the Spirit. That is the significance of the Spirit's descent.
Jesus had entered fully into our human position. He humbled himself to be as dependent upon God as you and I.
And now he has this great work ahead of him. He's going to go about doing good. He's going to heal the sick. He's going to preach good news to the poor.
And at the end he's going to offer himself unblemished to God. And how's he going to do it all? And how's he going to do it perfectly? Only through the Spirit.
[28:43] Who descends on him in power at his baptism. It was the very thing of which the Lord had spoken about long before.

Isaiah 42 verse 1. Behold my servant whom I uphold. I have put my spirit upon him. And doesn't that truth bring the Lord Jesus Christ near to us?
You might be tempted to say. What a great distance between Jesus and me there is. He is God and I am human.
He is sinless and I am sinful. And that is true. All true. But this is also true. The need for God.
The dependence upon God. With which we are so familiar. Jesus as a true man. Experienced too.

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[29:57] He knew what it was to need God. For all the tasks and the challenges and sufferings that lay ahead of him. Just as we do as well.

Then let's think about the Spirit's descent. And how that took place. When Jesus was praying. Luke links the descent of the Holy Spirit. Not merely with Jesus' baptism in these verses in Luke chapter 3. But you also notice he links it with prayer.
For he says when Jesus had been baptized. And was praying. And was praying. The Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove.
You might think to yourself. I wonder what he was praying about. Well since Luke doesn't tell us. We have to be careful when it comes to attempting. To supply an answer.
[31:05] For ourselves. But it does seem safe. Surely. To assume. That the descent of the Holy Spirit. Was part of the answer.

To whatever he was praying about. While he was praying. The Holy Spirit. Descended upon him. And if that is so.
Then. What more likely. Thing. Than. That it was for the gift of the Spirit. The descent of the Spirit. The anointing of the Spirit. That Jesus was asking his Father for. He was. After all. The Christ. The Messiah. The anointed one. And now he has come. To that phase of his work. For which a special.
[32:06] Anointing. Is needed. And how natural. That he should make it a matter of prayer. That he should plead the promises of God's word. It's the very thing.

It's the very thing that we are. Supposed to do with the promises ourselves. Isn't it? Promises should stimulate prayer. Rather than stifle it.
God has given these precious promises to us. Precisely that we might petition him. Precisely that we might petition him for the thing that he has promised. That his promises might be fulfilled.
Think about this in connection with the promise of the Holy Spirit. That Jesus has given to us. Further on in Luke's gospel. Luke chapter 11 verse 13. He says. If you then. Who are evil. Know how to give good gifts to your children. How much more.
[33:06] Will the heavenly father. Now isn't it interesting. The other gospels say. Give good gifts. To those who ask him. But in Luke's gospel.

It says. Give the Holy Spirit. To those who ask him. Jesus. Is here.
Speaking. From experience. He had asked. His heavenly father. For the Holy Spirit. While he was praying.
The spirit. Descended. On him. In bodily form. While he was praying. So. Jesus is here. Speaking. From experience. He had asked. And had.
Received from the father. The Holy Spirit. And he encourages. Jesus. If you. Being evil.
[34:02] Know how to. Give good gifts. Give good gifts. To your children. How much more. Will your father. In heaven. Give the Holy Spirit. To those who ask him. I know. I know it's true.

Because. That was my experience. He would say to us. And more. Moreover. As John. Tells us. In John chapter 3.
Verse 34. The father. Gave. Jesus. The Holy Spirit. Without. Limit. Or measure. For more. And in view.
Of the. Greatness. Magnitude. Of Jesus's task. The spirit. Was his. In absolute. Fullness.
And in the confidence. Of Jesus's promise. We may ask. For the Holy Spirit. To. For more.
[34:57] And more. Of the spirit's ministry. That's a legitimate. Prayer request. So also. Is it to ask God.

For the spirit. To work in our hearts. With ever. Greater. Power. And for the spirit. To do. With increasing.
Fullness. What he is there. In our hearts. To do. And for the father. To give the spirit. To us. In growing measure.
Ask. Says Jesus. And keep on asking. Ask. Seek. Knock. Jesus.
From his own experience. Would say to us. Such prayers. Will not be in vain. And then.
[35:57] Luke. Tells us. About. How the spirit. Descended. Visibly. In bodily form.

Like a dove. He says. And he draws our attention. To this. As. Various. Suggestions. Have been made. As to why. The Holy Spirit.

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Should have assumed. Such a shape. But. I don't really want to get into those. This evening. Want to think instead. About this striking fact. That the coming down.
Of the spirit. Upon Jesus. Was visible. And that had. Its importance. For John the Baptist. As we have seen.
Because he had been told. He on whom you see. The spirit. Descend. And remain. This. Is he. Who baptizes. With the Holy Spirit.
[36:53] But the descent. Was visible. For Jesus. As well. Matthew. And Mark. Both tell us.

That the spirit's descent. Was something. Jesus. Himself. Saw. He saw. He saw. The spirit of God. Descending like a dove. Says Matthew. And resting on him. The spirit's descent.
Was visible. To the eye. Of Jesus. And that. Must have. Given him. A visible assurance.
A visible pledge. Of the spirit's presence. And ministry. With him. Now we don't know.
How the savior felt. As he came. To his baptism. But we do know. What he saw. He saw. The spirit. Whose empowering. He so needed.
[37:51] For the days. Ahead. The spirit. Had come. And he had seen him come. And therefore.

Jesus. Could enter. The climactic phase. Of his life. On earth. With absolute. Confidence. That all. The resources. That he needed. For the completion.
Of his work. Were his. Now with ourselves. Of course. It is different. We walk by faith. And not by sight.
It's not God's normal way. To give the spirit. Visibly. He did so. In the case of Jesus. And he did so again. On the day of Pentecost. In the tongues of fire.
That appeared. To the disciples. And rested. In each of them. But these were special instances. They do not represent. The norm. But if we do not have.
[38:45] The sight. Of the spirit. Or even the feeling. Of his presence. We do have. The sure. Word. Of God.

The sure. Promise. Of Jesus. We do not. Ask the father. For the spirit's. Help. In vain. As new chapters.
In life's history. Begin. Or as we face. New days. And new challenges. New duties. New trials. New sufferings. We are to.
Ask our savior. For the spirit's. For the spirit's. Help. And that.
Spirit's. Help. Has been assured. To us. In the promises. Of God's word. And then.
[39:42] The final thing. To notice here. Is the voice. The voice. That came. From heaven. And that. Accompanied.

The spirit's. Descent. We read. When Jesus. Also had been baptized. And was praying. A voice came from heaven. You are my beloved son.
With you. I am well pleased. In. Frail. And dependent. Humanity.
The divine son. Was about to embark. On what was. Far and away. The most difficult. The most challenging. The costliest. And most important work.
That had ever been done. On the face of the earth. As never before. He needed. The assurance. Of the father's presence.
[40:41] And the father's love. And the father's help. And in the visible descent. Of the spirit. And in the voice. From heaven.

That accompanied it. Those were the very things. That were given. In drawing our thoughts.
Then. To a close. This evening. We need to touch. On something. That this event. Reveals. In an almost. Incidental way.
And that is here. In this beautiful picture. By the Jordan River. Of Jesus' baptism. We.
See. The three persons. Of the Holy Trinity. Working. Together. See what we have here.
[41:40] We have the son. And he's praying. And we have the spirit. And he's coming down. Upon the son. And we have the father in heaven.

Who is speaking. All three persons. Of the Godhead. Are brought. As it were. Together. Into the same.
Photo frame. And it's not by way. Of formal. Doctrinal. Teaching. But simply. Through. The description.
Of this. One event. And nor is that all. That we have. The same event. Is a pointer. Not only to the being. Of the Trinity.

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Father. Son. And spirit. And three. Distinct persons. But one God. But we. Have a pointer here. To the working. Of the.
[42:38] Three persons. Of the Trinity. Remember. What is going. On here. With Jesus's. Baptism. A huge. Step. Is being taken. Toward. The accomplishment.

Of. Our salvation. And all. Three persons. Are in this. Great work. Together. The father. Is anointing.
The son. With the holy spirit. So that. In his humanity. Jesus. Might be equal. To the whole. Awesome. Task. Of being our savior.
And that. Continues. Right to the very end. It is the son. Who alone. Is incarnate. It is the son. Only. Who dies. Upon the cross. In due course. But he is not alone. As he does so. He is always.
[43:38] Upheld. By the father. Through the spirit. And now. That same. That same. Triune God. Who is.

In the man. Christ Jesus. Accomplishing salvation. Speaks to us. In the gospel. And presses.
That salvation. On us. All three persons. Together. Each. Of the three persons. Separately. Think of the father.
What does he say. To you this evening. He says. I gave up my son. To the death. Of the cross. So that salvation.
Might be freely. Offered. To you. I want you. To receive it. Receive it. The son. What does he say.
[44:35] In the strength. Of the Holy Spirit. I offered myself. Unblemished. To God. Come to me. For the benefits.

Of salvation. And the spirit. What does the spirit say. By the gift. Of the father.
I so strengthened. The son. That for sinners. He won. Eternal life. Believe in him.
So that that eternal life. Might be yours. God is speaking. Father. Son.
And Holy Spirit. Will you not listen. To what our gracious. Glorious. Triune God. Is saying. To you.
[45:32] In the gospel. May he. Bless. His word. To us all. Let us pray.

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