

Epiphany Wk 1

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[0:00] Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him saying I need to be baptized by you. And you come to me. But Jesus answered him. Let it be so now for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Amen. So, what a wonderful opportunity we have today to celebrate the baptism of Jesus. This is particularly fitting that as we celebrate the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ, we'll also be baptizing little Rose this morning.

Baptizing one of our little ones is always a joyous occasion, isn't it? I'll tell you now, I'm going to do my best not to get choked up, but I can never make any promises on that front.

In today's sermon, I want us to think about a couple of questions. Why was Jesus baptized?

[1:34] That's our first question. Our next question is this. Why are we baptizing this little girl this morning?

I want us to think about these questions and for us to think about how they are related questions. Why was Jesus baptized?

That is a bit of a puzzling question, isn't it? After all, when we start the baptismal portion of the liturgy, we're going to begin with these words.

Dearly beloved, Scripture teaches that we were all dead in our sins and trespasses, but by grace we may be saved through faith. We were all, by nature, dead in our sins and trespasses, but Jesus, of course, was not.

He was without sin from the very beginning. He lived a sinless life. It gets even more puzzling when we stop to consider that the Scriptures specify that John's baptism was a baptism of repentance.

[2:55] It was clear why most people who went to John's baptism were there. They had sins to repent of. But Jesus, of course, did not have any sins to repent of.

So what is He doing in our Gospel reading for this morning? John the Baptist realizes the tension that's inherent in this situation.

John was inclined to refuse to baptize Jesus. Our Gospel reading says that he would have prevented Him. And that John said, I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?

But the answer that Jesus gives provides us with a clue as to what is happening here. Jesus says, Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.

Jesus obviously had no personal need to repent. But all of us certainly do. And Jesus saves us by identifying with us.

[4:14] As our Savior, Jesus stands as our representative and our substitute. What does that mean? Well, of course, all of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory.

So for us to be saved, for us to be able to stand in the presence of a holy God, we need Jesus as our representative. So first, Jesus lived a perfect life on our behalf.

He did fulfill all righteousness for us. As those who have sinned, we need His perfect life on our behalf, because we are separated from God due to our sin.

So Jesus, as our representative, lived the perfect life that we have failed to live. And that means that sinful people can become children of God through faith in His Son.

When we have faith in Jesus, His perfect righteousness is given to us freely, so that we can indeed know God and enjoy Him forever.

[5:30] But that's not all. Jesus died for us as our substitute. He took our sins upon His shoulders.

He died the death that we deserve. He took the penalty for us, so that all who know Jesus as Savior are, in the eyes of God, declared not guilty.

The debt has been paid, why? Because the Son of God identified with us, fulfilled all righteousness, and washed away our sins with His own blood shed for us on the cross.

For us to be saved, again, it was necessary for Jesus to fulfill all righteousness on our behalf. And He has done just that. We see it at His baptism. We see it in His perfect life. We see it in His death.

[6 : 37] We see it in His resurrection. And the end result is what? That all who trust in Him are given the free gift of salvation, forgiveness of sin, and eternal life.

After all, our reading from Acts this morning says this of Jesus. To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.

So what does this have to do with what we'll be doing this morning as we baptize Rose?

Well, Jesus identified with us in His baptism. When she is baptized, she will be identified with Jesus.

As Anglicans, of course, we believe that the Scriptures teach that God has a special claim on the children of believing parents.

[7 : 52] Like Rose as the child of Joe and Stephanie. Oh dear. I know.

I know. When we baptize Rose in a few minutes, part of what we will be doing is welcoming her into the church, this family of which she will be a part, where we know God as our loving Father and Jesus as our blessed Savior.

In addition, when we talk about the sacraments, we often talk about them as visible words. they are a visible enactment, a sign and seal of the promises that God extends to us in the gospel.

In a few minutes, what we are about to see will be gospel promises extended. And our prayer is that looking back on this day many, many years from now, Rose will even then see the promise of God's grace extended to her.

We pray that this grace will have shaped the whole of her entire life when she looks back. as Rose goes under the water in a few minutes, here is the promise that we will witness being extended if we were to verbalize it.

[9 : 35] Jesus was born for you. Jesus died for you. Jesus rose again for you. Jesus reigns at the right hand of God for you.

The little one, of course, will not understand any of that yet, but that's okay. After all, if we love God, it is only ever because He loved us first.

Jesus was born for her, died for her, rose again for her, and has been reigning in heaven for her long before she was ever born. if we know God's grace in Jesus Christ, it is because His grace came to us when we were helpless, like the precious little one that's going to be baptized in a few minutes.

If we know God, it is only because we have been claimed by His grace. But she will be called to respond all the days of her life, to the promises extended to her this morning.

First, as our liturgy will remind us in a few minutes, Rose must come to put her faith in Jesus as her only Savior from sin and death.

[11 : 02] And she will be called to a lifetime of following Jesus as His disciple. after she is baptized, she will be marked with the sign of the cross.

And I will say this, Rose, receive the sign of the cross as a token of your new life in Christ, in which you shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, to fight bravely under His banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to continue as His faithful soldier and servant to the end of your days.

Amen. What we are praying for today is that this day will mark the beginning of her lifelong trust in Jesus and a life of service to Christ as His faithful servant for all of her days.

And of course, we are committing to supporting her. Joe and Stephanie are of course committing to do all in their power to ensure that Rose knows Jesus and follows Him.

And all of us as a church are committed to doing all in our power to teach Rose by word and by example to know the voice of Jesus and to follow His voice.

[12 : 35] So what are we doing this morning? The Anglican writer J.I. Packer had this to say about what we are doing when we baptized one of our little ones.

And honestly, he says it better and more concisely than I did. Here's what Dr. Packer says. In infant baptism, we consecrate young children to God, commit them by proxy to thorough going adult Christianity, ask God to bring this about, and administer to them God's own covenant sign, seal,

and bond of this full adult relationship.

Believing that our actions accord with His will, and that He is a faithful, loving, prayer-answering God, we trust that He has now received the children covenantally, and in some way started the work in them that we have asked Him to do.

And so we finally pray that the children will be led on from regeneration thus begun into the fullness of faith and faithfulness. He is a loving, faithful, prayer-answering God, isn't He?

So when all is said and done this morning, we will be right to trust that He has received this precious little one into His church, and has started His work in her with the expectation that she will grow into mature faith in Jesus.

[14 : 15] forgiveness. So little one, I'm looking at you now. I want to tell you this morning that Jesus was baptized to fulfill all righteousness for you, to identify with you in order to be your Savior, and this morning His promises are extended to you.

Little one, may you always know the greatest gift of all, the gift of knowing Jesus. Look to Him, trust in Him, and follow Him all the days of your life.

And may we, who witnessed this morning's baptism, be reminded of God's faithfulness to us and His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.