

Baptism of our Lord

January 8, 2012

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This is the Second Sunday of 2012.

It is celebrated as the Festival of The Baptism of Our Lord, and there are two references to Baptism in our texts for today.

In the Gospel Lesson from Mark, we hear about John baptizing in the wilderness and of Jesus being baptized by John in the River Jordan. As Jesus comes up out of the water he sees the heavens torn open, the Spirit descending on him like a dove, and he hears a voice from heaven saying, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

In the Second Lesson from Acts, we hear of Paul asking some disciples he found in Ephesus what Baptism they had been baptized into. They tell Paul, *Into John's Baptism*. Paul tells them, *John baptized with the Baptism of Repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus*. These disciples are then baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit came upon them and the Spirit's presence was made evident.

Of this Baptism Martin Luther writes:

This is the difference between the Baptism of Christ and that of John: John neither gives nor brings forgiveness of sins he only points people to Him who does bestow it. In John's Baptism forgiveness of sins is promised; in Christ's Baptism forgiveness of sins is given.

John's Baptism of Repentance was a call for people to make **a thorough going change** that would be fitting for **The Coming Rule of God**.

John called people to make a **True Repentance** which meant he called them to become **New Minded**; he called them to turn their **self-centered will** in a completely **New Direction**.

John's call for **True Repentance** is more than **making penitence**.

It is more than being **remorseful**.

It is more than **admitting mistakes**.

It is more than saying **I've been a fool**

It is more than saying **I am sorry**.

True Repentance is a **MORAL** and a **SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION!!!**

And to **Genuinely Repent** is one of the hardest things in the world for people to do.

To **Genuinely Repent** calls for a complete surrender of **PRIDE**.

To **Genuinely Repent** calls for a complete surrender of **SELF-ASSURANCE**.

To **Genuinely Repent** calls for a complete surrender of **PRESTIGE**.

To **Genuinely Repent** calls for a complete surrender of **SELF-WILL**.

As Marks Gospel says; *John appeared proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins* and that forgiveness of sins was something that would come from the One whose sandals John was not worthy to stoop down and untie.

Now **SINS** is a strong word.

In fact it is so strong a word that **modern-day progressive religious leaders** want to substitute other words for it, such as injustices or mistakes. Those words do not carry the negative connotations that the word **SINS** does.

Besides, we humans can correct injustices by ourselves, and we humans can fix mistakes by ourselves.

But SINS, **SINS** only God can truly deal with successfully and only God can TRULY FORGIVE **SINS!!!**

So to use the word **SINS** means we have to admit our need for **True Repentance**, we need a complete surrender of SELF to God's **MORAL** and **SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION!!!**

John said, *After me comes He who is mightier than I...*

Questions for us to consider:

1. Does our life carry **even** a slight suggestion of *One mightier than ourselves*?
2. Does our life **ever** remind others that *Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior*?

When we were baptized into Christ Jesus we received the Holy Spirit and the gift of the Holy Spirit works to bring about **Inner-Transformation**, the gift of the Holy Spirit works to reach into the secret places of our lives to bring us **Cleansing**, to bring us a **New Heart**, and a **New Will** fit for **The Coming Rule of God**.

I am going to ask you to do something that is a little out of the ordinary for the Festival of The Baptism of Our Lord.

I want you to turn to hymn # 279 in the Red Hymnal and I want us to sing O Little Town of Bethlehem.

Now that we have sung this Christmas Hymn, did you catch the tie-in to the sermon???

How silently, how silently **the wondrous gift is given!**
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming; but, in this **world of SIN**,
where meek souls will receive Him, **still the dear Christ enters in.**

Faith in Christ Jesus as our Lord and Savior is FIRST and ALWAYS a **FREE GIFT** from God, wondrously given.

God invites us to COME.
God invites us to RECEIVE.

How silently, how silently **the wondrous gift is given!**
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven.

No ear may hear His coming; but, in this **world of SIN**,
where meek souls will receive Him, **still the dear Christ enters in.**

Christ enters in to empower us with that which we need to meet the **MORAL** and **SPIRITUAL DEMANDS** of **TRUE REPENTANCE.**

And even though we may feel that our life is in a dull, boring setting in this world, or that our life is in a deep, dark and dreary valley, if we catch the reflection of the Glory of God, which is in the face of Christ Jesus, our life will be a burning and shining light to others who are in those places with us, and that reflection of the Glory of God in us will allow them to see **ONE MIGHTIER THAN THEIR SINS!!!**

Amen.