

Daily Discipleship

The Baptism of Our Lord (A) – Matthew 3:13-17 Jan 8, 2017

Discipleship: *Following God's Son*

Focus Question: *What does it mean to you to follow God's Son?*

word of life

“And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.’” Matthew 3:17 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 3:13-17

The Gospel of Matthew uses its first three chapters to establish the identity of Jesus by 1) tracing the genealogy of Jesus back to Abraham, 2) describing the conversation of God's angel with Joseph, 3) naming the infant Emmanuel and Jesus, 4) recounting the wise men search as well as the finding of the King of the Jews, and 5) recalling the words of John the Baptist as he prepares the people for the Messiah. But the baptism of Jesus identifies Jesus most clearly and fully as God's own Son.

Despite John the Baptist being fully convinced of the coming of the Messiah and his efforts to prepare people for that event, John becomes hesitant in the presence of Jesus. John perceives himself unfit to baptize God's anointed one, but fervently desires Jesus to baptize him.

1. *What might be other reasons for John's hesitation to baptize Jesus?*
2. *If Jesus is without sin, why would he need to be baptized?*
3. *If Jesus is baptized by John, does that make John better than Jesus? Explain.*

The early church had problems sorting out the need for Jesus to be baptized as well as the role of John the Baptist. Jesus offers a short reply to John the Baptist's questions and explains his own understanding behind his baptism. Jesus simply states, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” (Matthew 3:15 NRSV) Yet there is no Old Testament reference to support the fulfillment of the promise of baptism. Being right with God and living a righteous life is a theme throughout the Gospel of Matthew. Out of obedience to God, Jesus is willing to be baptized because he believes God desires it.

4. *What does it mean to you that Jesus would be baptized?*

John the Baptist consents to baptizing Jesus. He does so in his own effort to be obedient to God and act in a righteous manner.

5. *In what ways did John the Baptist try to live a righteous life?*
6. *How easy or difficult was it for John the Baptist to live a righteous life?*

When Jesus rises out of the baptismal waters, the heavens open and Jesus sees the Spirit of God descend upon him. A voice from heaven proclaims Jesus as God's own Son. This voice is the voice of God declaring pleasure with Jesus. God even chooses to call Jesus “the Beloved”. This claim by God of Jesus as a Son is undeniable. Jesus is a special recipient of God's affections.

7. *How do you picture the baptism of Jesus? Describe.*
8. *What does it mean to be God's “beloved”?*
9. *What does it mean for Jesus to be called God's Son?*

The baptism of Jesus launches his ministry and mission with a public affirmation by God of his identity and connection to God. Jesus willingly chooses to stand with sinners in the waters of the Jordan River as he prepares to reach out to those very sinners with saving grace.

word among us

Billie loved baseball. He loved to hit the ball, catch it, run after it, and throw it. Rarely was Billie seen without a baseball. His parents signed him up for Pee Wee Baseball at the local park. Much to the surprise of the family, Billie wasn't very good at the sport. He simply wasn't athletically gifted, but he tried. His love for the game did not wane. No matter what, Billie had a grin on his face. No matter what!

Finally, at the last game of a very long season, Billie caught his first ball. When he saw the ball coming to him, he held up the glove high in the air. But because of the sun, Billie closed his eyes, tilting and twisting his head towards the ground. Despite it all, Billie somehow caught the ball. No one watching the catch could figure out how the ball stayed in his glove. His parents stood up and yelled, "That's my son. We love you. We are so proud."

1. *Recall a time in your own life when you heard someone cheer you on. Or recall a time when you were able to cheer someone else.*
2. *What does it feel like to be praised?*
3. *In today's society, who tends to be praised a lot?*
4. *In today's society, who tends to be ignored?*

When Jesus is baptized, the focus is not on John the Baptist, the Jordan River, weather, or the crowd. Jesus is the focal point of the attention of God as God lavishes praise and support. God is delighted! God's beloved is pleasing. It is as if God is smiling upon Jesus and blessing him. Yet, Jesus is not a stranger to God, but this is God's own Son.

5. *What difference does it make to you that Jesus is connected to God as a Son?*
6. *What attributes of the Father does the Son have?*
7. *How is Jesus different from his Father?*
8. *How much are you like your father?*
9. *What attributes would you hope a child might learn from you?*

The baptism of Jesus is a mountain-top experience for him. The heavens open up, the Spirit descends upon him and he hears God's own voice. God's presence is real. The blessing of God is tangible. Good thing. Not all days will be easy for Jesus. Not all people will be as accepting and pleased. Some will run him out of town. Others will plot for his death. Jesus will need to put this baptismal blessing by God deep in his memory and call upon it during the trials and tribulations of this life.

More than getting the approval of the people on earth, Jesus desires to continue to please God and to live a righteous life. Jesus is obedient only to God and invites his followers to do likewise.

10. *Whom do you try to please?*
11. *What would it mean for your life to try to please God at all times?*

Prayer

Gracious God, come and work in my life so I might bring you delight. Thank you for claiming me in baptism and helping me to grow in the image of Christ. Amen

Dig Deeper

Isaiah 42:1-9

last word

Prayerfully make a list of your traits
which might delight God.

Ask God to bless the list and expand those traits in your life.



Daily Discipleship

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

Copyright © 2007 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

May be reproduced for local, non-sale use provided the above copyright notice is included.

www.elca.org/evangelizingchurch/dailydiscipleship

Baptism of Our Lord (A) Page 2 of 2