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*Sermon Text: Mark 1: 4-11*

*The Baptism of Our Lord*

## What is yours is Mine, What is Mine is yours!

Our Gospel lesson doesn't give us a single word Jesus spoke that day at the Jordan River, and yet our Lord's baptism, like our own baptisms, has so much to say to us! When the Son of God stepped into the Jordan River to be baptized, His actions spoke loudly and still say to us: "What is yours is Mine, What is Mine is yours."

Jesus certainly didn't need any of baptism's blessings for Himself! Not when our lesson reminds us what baptism is all about: John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Just like the Christian baptism Jesus would later command for all nations after his resurrection, John's baptism was all about repentance—Holy Spirit worked sorrow over sin *and* Spirit worked faith in God's forgiveness--full and free.

John's baptism was for the forgiveness of sins, the same thing Acts 2 says about Christian baptism: Be baptized... in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins (38). And again in Acts 22: Get up, be baptized, and wash away your sins (16).

In Ephesians 5, the Bible defines baptism as a washing with water in connection with the Word (26). God sent John to preach the Word and combine it with water as he baptized sinners in the water of the Jordan River, the only easily accessible water in the dry Judean wilderness.

The main difference between John's baptism and ours, is that while Christian baptism points us back to and connects us to all Jesus accomplished, John's baptism pointed forward to what He would do and signaled the Savior had arrived: (John preached), "One more powerful than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals!"

It's no surprise that Jesus should show up at this time, since He was the more powerful One John was preaching about! But what is *shocking*—is that Jesus... was baptized by John in the Jordan!

After all, Jesus has no need of repentance. He has no sin to be sorry for, no evil to confess, no wrongs that needs forgiveness. We just celebrated His miracle conception by the Holy Spirit and birth of the Virgin Mary that makes Him the holy one, the sinless Lamb of God without any blemish or defect.

The Bible gives us few details about Jesus' life between His birth and this day thirty some years later when He stood in the Jordan River. But God the Father does tell us what we need to most about that time when He says: "You are my Son... I am well pleased with you."

Now the God who says, "Be holy, because I am holy" (Leviticus 11:45) is pleased only by total perfection. So the Father puts His seal of approval on Jesus' entire life as God pleasing. His childhood, his relationship with his mother, step-father and siblings, his hearing and learning God's Word, his work as a carpenter, his eating and drinking and everything else all done flawlessly to God's glory and in love to His neighbor!

But that brings us back to the question... why does Jesus come to a baptism... for the forgiveness of sins?!

This is after all the Son of God, who with the Father and Holy Spirit He is the one true God. He is the Lord who 1400 years held back the water of the Jordan River so Israel would cross into the promised land on dry ground!

What is *He* doing on a muddy river bank? And what kind of a God gets baptized *anyway*?!!

The answer—oh blessed answer!!—is because He has come to do this for us. He has come to quite literally get his hands dirty to save us. More than that, he has come to be filthy with sin, with your sin and my sin, to save us from it.

The Bible says: God made Him, who did not know sin, to become sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). So this sinless Jesus stands alongside sinners in the Jordan

River since will become worst sinner of all! (Not because He ever did anything wrong, but because He takes on himself your sin and mine, the guilt and shame of this entire rebellious world!) But because He says: What is yours is Mine...

And we need this desperately! Unlike Him, we were tainted with imperfection from the moment our lives began in our mothers' wombs and it's only gone downhill from there.

We prove it when we see trouble in the world and start to panic, as though God had never told us to expect such things in this broken world and has given us countless promises to take care of us and deliver His people!

There is nothing in us naturally that could ever please God, but only imperfection that earns His eternal judgment. So the Son of God came to the sinner's side in the Jordan to save us! He comes to be numbered among the sinners He has come to save! He is the one who takes our sin and its punishment on Himself, just as the prophet wrote: He was pierced for our transgressions... the punishment that brought us peace was upon him... the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:4-6).

On three different occasions, when his twin brother was in prison, unknown to the authorities, a man named Donald Anderson switched clothes with his brother Ronald and took his place in jail.

In an infinitely greater love, Jesus took our sinful prison clothes upon Himself.

*What kind of a God needs to be baptized?* The God who loves us with an undeserved love. The God who stepped into our flesh and blood to take our guilty verdict. The God who claimed for himself our guilt and carried our shame all the way to a blood-strained cross and then would rise victorious to set us free! The God who takes the place of sinners and says: "What is yours is Mine."

And then He even gives us what is His! His Word tells us: God made Him, who did not know sin, to become sin for us, *so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

When you were baptized, when God made you His believing child, Jesus placed the treasure of His righteousness into our spiritually empty, beggar's hands. That is, He gives us the credit for his blameless life in every word, thought and deed from the beginning of his life to the end. What is His, becomes ours, including this:

As Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

Naturally, heaven should stand torn open for Jesus, that's where He came from, that's what His holy life deserves. Because He gives you what is His, heaven is open for you and all who have been brought to trust in Him. He has prepared a home for you in the Father's mansion, giving you an eternal inheritance.

Well what difference does that make with all the trouble and turmoil and stress of this past week?

It makes all the difference now and in the world to come. If you are deeply disturbed by all that happened in the Nation's capital and the division in our land, praise God that your true home is not in this uncertain world. Jesus gives you what is His: an eternal and unshakeable kingdom, that no unrest, illness, disaster or death can take away from you.

But it's still hard to live through such times. True. So Jesus gives us what is His, sending the Holy Spirit like a dove of peace to comfort and strengthen us.

The Holy Spirit was already there in the God's gospel promise of forgiveness at your baptism to create or strengthen faith in Christ, to personally claim you one of His redeemed people!

This very day the Holy Spirit comes down to us as we hear, learn and remember God's Word, as we recall God's enduring promise in baptism and as we eat and drink our Savior's body and blood and forgiveness in the Lord's Supper. Through these means of Grace, the Holy Spirit gives us the Peace of Christ, peace beyond understanding, peace that will last forever as it blossoms into eternal joys!

A voice came from heaven: You are my Son, whom I love. Jesus gives us this too! The Bible says: In fact, you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Indeed as many of you as were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:26-27).

Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, the Son of God with a 'capital S, and He makes us 'sons of God' with a little 's', clothed with His perfection. He is the *Christ*, he has made us *Christians* wrapped up in His forgiveness.

He is the King of kings and our Great High Priest, and He has made us to be a royal priesthood with access to God, able to imitate His love as we give up our rights to serve others in gratitude for how He gave Himself to save us!

And yet we fail to do this, fail to serve Him and others as we ought as we struggle and stumble because of our sinful nature.

So how amazing it is that Jesus gives us His own holiness, so that despite our imperfections, weaknesses, brokenness and the guilt and shame that may haunt us, yet because of Jesus, your God looks on you and says: I am well pleased with you. The only one whose opinion truly matters, your God is thoroughly and utterly pleased with you.

What glorious reasons to celebrate Jesus' baptism today! What glorious reasons to remember each day you are baptized into Christ!

Just think, He ruled all of human history to bring you to a baptismal font where He gave that promise full of eternal implications: "What is yours is Mine, What is Mine is yours." Amen.

Allow me to close with a prayer of praise to our Savior, written by Martin Luther which encourages us see ourselves as the desperate sinners we are so that we gladly and gratefully cling to Jesus!

"Lord Jesus, You are my righteousness, I am your sin. You took on you what was mine; yet set on me what was yours. You became what you were not, that I might become what I was not." Amen.