

Matthew 3:13-17

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/07/2009

The Baptism of Jesus

Prayer

Father, we do praise You and we do thank You. What a glorious thought, what a glorious truth that our sins are as far as the east is from the west, that You have redeemed our lives from the pit through Christ. We thank You so much for Your son Jesus. And Father, as we look into Your Word today, and we look at and see His ministry on earth, may we see it rightly, may we understand it rightly, may it change our view of Him, may it cause us to give Him glory and honor and reverence. May we recognize who You are pleased with, that You are pleased with Your son. And we thank You that He brought about for us forgiveness. Lord, I pray You would help us to understand Your Word, You would open our minds to understand the Scriptures, and that we would rightly divide Your Word, that You may be greatly glorified as it is proclaimed. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sermon

When people look at the ministry of Jesus on earth there are many different responses. Some people focus on miracles, some looking for a miracle around the corner. Some look at His doing of good, helping the poor and so on. And some look at the casting out of demons, they focus on that. Now Jesus did do these things; He did also speak with stories or parables as He would say. Some focus on the fact that Jesus led a quote-on-quote "good" life, and we should live by example His life- that is why we have the testament of His ministry on earth. But I believe we are going to see today through the baptism of Jesus what His ministry was all about. As I believe we are going to see that King Jesus begins His earthly ministry, it is about the person of Christ and the work of Christ. So if you would turn in your Bibles with me to Matthew 3, and we are continuing our look at the book of Matthew, and we are going to look at verses 13-17. And I want to briefly go through the context with you for the book of Matthew.

Matthew is the presentation of King Jesus. He is the King of the Jews, and we see the presentation of the King in the teaching concerning the Kingdom. And we saw in chapter 1 the genealogy of Jesus Christ which revealed that He was rightfully King. And we saw the birth of Jesus Christ; we saw the miraculous conception, that God was taking on human flesh to save His people from their sins. And then we saw three different responses to the birth of Jesus. We saw the murderous hate of Herod, we saw the fearful agitation of the Jews, and we saw the desire to worship from the Gentile magi.

And then we saw three prophecies fulfilled in Jesus Christ. That Jesus Christ fulfills the redemptive promises we see, that He is our only true hope in the midst of great sorrow because of sin. And that although He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, He would be despised and forsaken, that He would be counted as nothing.

Matthew 3:13-17

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/07/2009

And then in chapter 3 we saw, and we have been looking at what we are to do to receive King Jesus. And remember first of all we saw the ministry of John the Baptist to prepare the way for Christ, as he shared "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." We looked at repentance, it was a change of mind which would lead to a change of behavior, it is a turning from sin to God. And the only way to receive Christ by faith is to have repented of your sins. It is one and the same - as I trust in Christ, I am turning from my sin. And then we saw that we should respond rightly to the Word, that we should heed the warnings concerning superficial, hypocritical repentance. We saw the Pharisees coming to be baptized by John. They were not coming to repent; they were coming to be baptized, and John calls it as it is. He says, **"You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" [Matthew 3:7b]** And he warned them that the axe is at the root of the tree, that judgment is almost there.

And we saw three baptisms. We saw the baptism of John, pointing to ultimately the baptism that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. And we looked at that in depth last week. We looked in depth at the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We saw that Jesus would use His Spirit through the Word of God to place people into the body of Christ, receiving the Spirit as a pledge. That we are baptized into Christ when we believe. And we also saw there is a baptism of fire. In context, contrary to what some believe, it was not a good baptism but a bad baptism. It was an identification with fire. You see there are two things that Jesus will do to you. One, you will be placed into the body of Christ, you will be saved from your sin. Or you will be placed into fire in judgment. And we saw in the context it spoke of, not purification, but unquenchable fire. Therefore there are two possibilities when confronted with Christ: either we are identified with Him through faith in Christ, or we are identified and placed into fire if we reject the work of Christ.

And then that moves us to our portion today, in which we will see the baptism of Jesus specifically. So would you turn in your bibles with me to Matthew 3. Now today we are going to see Jesus arrive from Galilee to be baptized by John and John attempting to prevent His baptism. Then we are going to see Jesus' response and then the response of heaven, which reveals the purpose of Jesus' baptism. So Matthew 3:13, first of all notice Jesus arrives from Galilee, verse 13

¹³ Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him.

¹⁴ But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" [Matthew 3:13-14]

Notice first of all, Jesus arrives, the passage says then, "Then Jesus arrived..." The context is clear. John the Baptist is baptizing in the Jordan river; the people are coming out to be baptized. Some are confessing their sins- they are identifying with the fact that they need to repent. The Pharisees were coming out, they were hypocritically wanting to do the outward symbol; and John called them on that, as we saw. And then at this point Jesus arrives from Galilee at the Jordan, coming to John to be baptized by him.

And this is the first account we have of Jesus coming onto the scene in the book of Matthew. Certainly we saw His birth and the response to His birth, but here we see Christ coming onto the scene. And we

Matthew 3:13-17

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/07/2009

know from the book of Luke He is about 30 years old. And we see also that besides this portion in Matthew, the book of Luke gives us a little bit of a little glimpse into the life of Christ before this time. And I am going to read a couple passages for you there.

We see a statement in Luke 2:40, you can turn over a little bit, ⁴⁰ ***And the Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. [Luke 2:40]*** And then we have the account of a very familiar account to some of you, of Jesus being left behind in Jerusalem as a boy. Luke 2:41,

⁴¹ ***And His parents used to go to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when He became twelve (so we have this account when Jesus Christ was 12 years old), they went up there according to the custom of the Feast; ⁴³ and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. And His parents were unaware of it, ⁴⁴ but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵ And when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, looking for Him. ⁴⁶ And it came about that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. ⁴⁸ And when they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You." ⁴⁹ And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" ⁵⁰ And they did not understand the statement which He had made to them. ⁵¹ And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. [Luke 2:41-52]***

And that is the last we have of Him at 12 years old, and then we have Him now coming on the scene at 30 years old, coming from Galilee, from Nazareth most likely, coming out to be baptized by John. And what was John's response? He says, verse 14 back in Matthew 3, " ¹⁴ But John tried to prevent Him (or literally John continually tried to prevent Him), saying, 'I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?'" [Matthew 3:14] In contrast here, he says, "I am the one basically who needs to be baptized, Jesus- not You." Now we need to ask this question, did John know Jesus before this time? Did John know that He was the Messiah? This is a difficult question. How much did John know at this time? Now every other gospel has an account of the baptism of Jesus, which will help us answer this question.

Let's turn to John 1, and we will see one of these accounts. John 1:26, and this is a very difficult passage to interpret; and I cannot say I know it exactly, but I think I have an idea what is going here. John 1:26, and John is answering the Pharisees at this point, John the Baptist, John 1:26,

Matthew 3:13-17

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/07/2009

²⁶ John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. ²⁷ It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." ²⁸ These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. ²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John sees Jesus coming to him, and he says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." And he is saying this before he baptizes Him, it appears. And then he says) **³⁰ "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" (Well we know that John the Baptist was born before Jesus by six months, but he is declaring truth concerning Christ, "He existed before me, He is the Eternal One.") ³¹ And I did not recognize Him, but in order that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water." ³² And John bore witness saying, "I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. ³³ And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." [John 1:26-34]**

So this is very interesting, because it seems somewhat contradictory, because John sees Jesus and says, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world;" and he is also trying to prevent Jesus from being baptized. But yet we have this statement that it says in verse 31 and 33, "and I did not recognize Him." And then we have the declaration by God, "He in whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining, this is the one who baptizes in the Spirit." How do we resolve this conflict? Did John know He was the Messiah before He came? I think He did, because he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" at this point. And he said that He existed before him and was of higher rank. And I believe that was confirmed and witnessed by John as the Spirit descended upon Him and remained at His baptism.

Now obviously John knew Jesus most likely as a child. They were cousins. But I think when he said, "I did not recognize Him," he was speaking of that time before, that he did not realize that He was the Messiah. And now we have him seeing Him who has come to be baptized; he says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Now obviously John's knowledge of Jesus brought him to try to prevent Him from being baptized. Back to Matthew 3, "¹⁴ But John tried to prevent Him..." Some say it was just because John understood that Jesus was a good man; he had probably never seen Him do anything wrong, because He did not do anything wrong. And it was maybe morally he was wanting Him to be prevented. But I believe he understood He was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And John is saying here, in essence, "You do not need to be baptized; You are sinless. You are the Lamb of God, the spotless Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. I am the one who needs to be baptized." And folks we need to recognize in Scripture clearly it is declared and made sure that Christ was sinless. And I want to read a few verses for you concerning the sinlessness of Christ. 1 Peter 1:17,

Matthew 3:13-17

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/07/2009

¹⁷ And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work (if you recognize He is the judge), **conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth;** **¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers** (You see we inherit a futile life because we are in sin, but we are redeemed by Christ, and he says we were redeemed), **¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.** [1 Peter 1:17-19]

1 Peter 2:21,

²¹ For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, **²² who committed no sin** (it's really clear, Christ committed no sin), **nor was any deceit found in His mouth.** [1 Peter 2:21-22]

1 John 3:5,

⁵ And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. [1 John 3:5]

Second Corinthians 5:21, and a wonderful verse,

²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. [2 Corinthians 5:21]

John the Baptist has a problem here: the sinless, spotless Lamb of God is asking to be baptized by John's baptism which is a baptism that identifies with repentance. John's baptism was a baptism that identified those who were confessing their sins and repenting. And his response is, "No way! I need You to baptize me." Now it is interesting to note that John tried to prevent the Pharisees and Sadducees earlier because they did not recognize their need to repent, and here he is trying to prevent Jesus from being baptized because He did not need to repent.

So what is Jesus' response to John? Verse 15, **¹⁵ But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him.** [Matthew 3:15] Now notice in this response of Jesus, I believe we are going to see one element of the purpose of why He was baptized. He says, "Permit it... it is right for us to fulfill all righteousness." We have a contrast in verse 15, "But Jesus answering said..." John is trying to prevent Him. He is the sinless, spotless Lamb of God who is wanting to be baptized in a baptism that identifies with repentance, but He is sinless. And John is trying to prevent Him. And here we see Jesus said, "Permit *it* at this time (or really literally "permit it, let it happen now, let it happen now, John; now is the time," and then explains with the word "for"); for in this way (speaking of this identification, this baptism) it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." [Matthew 3:15]

Matthew 3:13-17

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/07/2009

Now John obviously understood and accepted the reason Jesus give Him because we have the statement in the end of verse 15, "then he permitted Him." But what is the reason? I do not quite understand, "...in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." What does He mean by that? What does He mean by "in this way"? I believe He is speaking of first of all of John baptizing Him. It is fitting, it is suitable, it is proper. "It is the right thing for us to do, to fulfill all righteousness." Well what does He mean by that? I think the key to understanding this passage first of all is to understand, as we looked at in the past few weeks, that baptism speaks of identification. The baptism of John was the identification with the fact that one was repenting, and thus they were being baptized.

But how does this relate to the sinless Lamb of God? I think first of all we need to recognize that Jesus did not need to repent. So what is this baptism, what is it about? I believe we will see it was an identification of the sinless, spotless Lamb of God with sinful man. The first act of Jesus' ministry was to identify Himself with those He would come to save. It was an identification with sinful man, what an amazing thought. He says here, "Permit it, for it is the right time and the right way to fulfill all righteousness."

Now we need to understand about righteousness, or being right in God's sight. That man has a problem, that everyone is unrighteous. That we are sinful by nature, that we do not do the right thing. We have passages of Scripture which reveal to us, as Paul is laying forth the case against mankind in Romans 3, we see his final argument in this case. Romans 3:9,

⁹ What then? Are we better than they? (are we Jews better than the Gentiles?) Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; (the pagan is under sin, the religious externalist is under sin) ¹⁰ as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; ¹¹ There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; ¹² All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one." ¹³ "Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving," "The poison of asps is under their lips"; ¹⁴ "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness"; ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood, ¹⁶ Destruction and misery are in their paths, ¹⁷ And the path of peace have they not known." ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes." [Romans 3:9-18]

If you are an unbeliever today there is no fear of God before your eyes. You do not wake up in the morning fearing God, you do not fear His retribution, you do not fear His wrath. There is no fear; you do what you want because you are your own god. And he says, "There is none righteous." There are none righteous. That is man's problem, that is our problem that we are unrighteous; but God is a holy God, and a righteous God. And God's plan was to bring forth righteousness to the unrighteous through the person of Jesus Christ. That righteousness would come through Jesus Christ, fully identifying with sinful man, and taking on the sin of man.

We see in the book of Hebrews that He had to take on human flesh. Hebrews 2:14, **¹⁴ Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He**

Matthew 3:13-17

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/07/2009

might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. [Hebrews 2:14] Second Corinthians 5:21 as we have read before, “²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to *be* sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” [2 Corinthians 5:21] We receive the righteousness of Christ, and the first step of what Christ would do to fulfill all righteousness, to bring about the completion of what He would do, would be to identify with sinful wicked man. The sinless, spotless Lamb of God who knew no sin, would become sin on our behalf.

It was fitting, it was right, that His first act of public ministry was an identification with sinful man. Jesus Christ came to save sinners. He came to save you and I. Well not only was His act, I believe, an identification with sinful man, (not because He was sinful, but because He would save those from their sin), but ultimately we see, (I believe), the purpose of His baptism is also revealed in the response from heaven. Verse 16,

¹⁶ And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, ¹⁷ and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased". [Matthew 3:16-17]

He said, “You need to do it, it is fitting, it is the right time,” and John permitted Him. So John then baptizes Jesus and it says, “And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, (look and see) the heavens were opened.” And it is interesting, in a parallel account in Luke we see that at this same time Jesus was praying. Luke 3:21, ²¹ **Now it came about when all the people were baptized, that Jesus also was baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened. [Luke 3:21]** So as He came up from His baptism, He was praying and heaven was opened. The heavens were opened. I wonder if we will ever find out in heaven what Jesus was praying that time.

So then Jesus immediately comes up from the water, and behold the heavens were opened. Now just on a side note, there are a lot of debates on the mode of baptism, whether it is sprinkling, or dipping, whatever it is. And here we obviously see that Jesus came up from the water, immediately. Now concerning this baptism, immediately He came up, and what happened? Behold, the heavens were opened. And I believe first of all we will see that there was a visible anointing of Jesus by the Spirit. And I believe we will see for His redemptive work.

Verse 16 again, “¹⁶ And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water (and He was praying); and behold, the heavens were opened, and he (and we need to see which “he” that is there) saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, *and* coming upon Him.” [Matthew 3:16] Now I believe the “he” most likely is John because John is the one who witnessed it. He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon Him. Remember what we read in John 1, that he witnessed it. John 1:32 “³²And John bore witness saying, ‘I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.’” [John 1:32] John saw this happen.

Now with this in mind what is the significance of the Spirit descending as a dove upon Jesus? There is a lot made about doves. There are denominations that have doves everywhere. So what is this about?

Matthew 3:13-17

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/07/2009

What is this about? Notice first of all it says, "...descending as a dove..." He did not say it was a dove, but "descending as a dove." In some manner or fashion God manifest His Spirit "as a", or "like a dove," visibly for John to see, descending and coming upon Jesus. And we need to ask the question, "What is the significance of a dove?" In Genesis 8, Noah released doves after the flood judgment. And when they did not return, having found dry land, it signified that judgment was over. And in the Song of Solomon, doves were used by Solomon in his language to speak of beauty. Jesus speaks of doves as symbolizing innocence, Matthew 10:16, I will read this for you, as He is sending out the 70 disciples, He says ¹⁶ **"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves."** [Matthew 10:16] Beauty and innocence.

And lastly we see doves in Scripture, or turtledoves, prescribed in the Law as the most humble offering. In Leviticus 12:8 if one was too poor to offer the appropriate offering for a new born child, they were allowed to offer the most humble offering, which was two turtledoves, or two young pigeons. And that is what Joseph and Mary did for Jesus we see in Luke 2:24, when He was born. And also note the money changers in the temple, Matthew 21:12, what were they selling? Well one of the things they were selling were doves. Doves symbolized beauty, innocence, and they were the most humble sacrifice. And I think it is not hard to see the symbolism applying to Jesus Christ in Scripture. We see in Isaiah 4:2 the branch of the Lord, speaking of Christ, will be beautiful and glorious. And also listen to Psalm 27:4, ⁴ **One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to meditate in His temple.** [Psalm 27:4] Beautiful.

But certainly we know that Jesus Christ was the sinless, spotless Lamb of God, innocent and righteous, He who knew no sin. But more than this, I think this symbolism points to a humble sacrifice. The Spirit of God was descending and remaining upon Christ, pointing to the fact that He would by the power of the Spirit, as we see in Scripture I believe, be a humble, innocent beautiful sacrifice for our sins. The Spirit remained on Him, to anoint Him in His ministry, which His ministry was to go to the cross and to die for us.

Listen to what Isaiah prophesied, which was applied to Christ in Luke 4:17,

¹⁷ **And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him** (speaking of Jesus). **And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written,** ¹⁸ **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are downtrodden,** ¹⁹ **To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."** ²⁰ **And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him.** ²¹ **And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."** [Luke 4:17-21]

The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him to do the work of the ministry which would go to set people free, by dying for them for their sins. And John the Baptist saw the Spirit of God descending on Him and remaining upon Him. This anointing of the Spirit of God on Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to do the work

Matthew 3:13-17

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/07/2009

of God, which is salvation. The Scripture made it clear, the Messiah would be completely empowered by the Holy Spirit, to bring about His Messianic work to completion.

Now there are some significant things we need to note about this concerning the Spirit of God visibly coming upon Christ. First of all I believe it foreshadows the Spirit's work in His life, which I have shared, which would bring about His humble sacrificial death of the innocent, spotless, beautiful Lamb of God. Secondly, it was an outward confirmation as we saw, and a witness to John that Jesus was the Messiah. Again, John 1:32 " ³² And John bore witness saying, 'I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.'" [John 1:32] He remained upon Him. And he said there earlier in that same passage, that He was the Son of God.

And lastly I believe it was a visible symbol of the ministry which was beginning as we see in Luke 3. Luke 3:21,

²¹ Now it came about when all the people were baptized, that Jesus also was baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased." ²³ And when He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age. [Luke 3:21-23]

It is the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ, the King who would bring redemption for our sins.

Now before we run out and will for ignorance, and write songs about the Holy Spirit descending on us, and falling on us, we need to recognize as we saw last week we have been baptized, placed into, the body of Christ by the Spirit of God, we have received the Spirit as a pledge. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have received God's Spirit. And folks if you do not have the Spirit, and you are crying out for the Spirit, then you are not His. Romans 8:9, "But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."

Now this in our passage was a visible confirmation that Jesus was the Messiah, the suffering servant, that He would deliver Himself up for us. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Now just a side note too, if Christ would not minister apart from the Spirit of God empowering Him specially for that ministry, we see throughout the book of Matthew, why would we ever try to do anything apart from Christ? Why would we ever try to do anything apart from His Spirit empowering us? Why would we be so arrogant, if Christ humbled Himself and relied on the Spirit of God, He trusted completely in the Father in His humanity? Why would we rely on ourselves? If the living God in Human flesh did not minister apart from the Spirit of God working through Him, how can we be so arrogant to ever attempt to do anything apart from Christ?

So then Jesus identifies with sinful man, the sinless Son of God, and He comes up out of the water as He is praying and the heavens are opened. And John sees the Spirit of God descending upon Him as a dove, and remaining, indicating He was the Son of God, that He is the Messiah, and thus we have the beginning and affirmation of His public ministry.

Matthew 3:13-17

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/07/2009

Now secondly we are going to see not only was the ministry affirmed, the ministry of redemption in Christ, we are going to see that Christ was affirmed. Verse 17, he says “¹⁷ and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.’” [Matthew 3:17] Now not only was the redemptive ministry of the King affirmed, we see the King Himself was affirmed from heaven. “And behold, a voice out of the heavens saying, ‘This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased...’”

We have this voice out of the heavens, “This is My beloved Son,” it is the Father’s affirmation audibly of the person of Jesus Christ. And what does He say first of all, He says, “This is My beloved Son.” And think about this for a moment. The Son is the object of the Father’s affection – “This is My beloved Son.” He is pointing out the incarnate Christ, Christ who humbled Himself, becoming a man, that this Jesus is the Son, He is the Son of God, and He is beloved.

The term “Son of God” refers to God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. God is one, but revealed in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And His affirmation of His sonship was an affirmation that Christ was the Messiah the King, the Son of God.

We see this in Psalm 2, if you want to turn with me to Psalm 2:6, He says,

⁶ But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain. ⁷ I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, “Thou art My Son.”... (He is the King, He is the King. Down to verse 11) ¹¹ Worship the LORD with reverence, And rejoice with trembling. ¹² Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him! [Psalm 2:6-7, 11-12]

John 20, we see the reason why the book of John was written, John the apostle shares this in John 20:30,

³⁰ Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ (that is the Messiah), the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. [John 20:30-31]

“This is My beloved Son,” the Father says publically, audibly. In the beginning of His ministry there is an affirmation of the person of Jesus Christ, there is an affirmation of the ministry of Jesus Christ of redemption, and there is an affirmation of the person of Jesus Christ, the person and work of Christ. This is My beloved Son.

Hebrews 1, speaking of the Son in verse 5, ⁵ **For to which of the angels did He ever say...** (“He, Christ is not an angel,” he is saying in contrast. And going on he says in verse 8 of Hebrews 1)... ⁸ **But of the Son He says, “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.” [Hebrews 1:5a, 8]**

Matthew 3:13-17

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/07/2009

When He says “this is My beloved Son,” He is speaking of the fact that He is the King, He is the Messiah, He is the living God in human flesh. Thy throne oh God, this is My beloved Son. Now on a side note we see here that the Trinity is involved in the coronation of the King, we have the Father, the Spirit and the Son. This is no phony ventriloquist act as the Oneness Pentecostals would say, who reject the doctrine of the Trinity. Here we see a visible anointing of the Spirit of God and the Father’s affirmation of the Son, we see the Trinity involved in the work of what Christ would do.

And next we see He was well-pleasing. Verse 17, Matthew 3, “¹⁷ and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.’” The Father loves the Son, He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He is the Messiah, He is the one who will save His people from their sins. And here we see the Father says, “...in whom I am well-pleased.” The Father is making it clear to everyone publically, He is well pleased with the Son, whom He loves. It is His Son, Jesus Christ who is pleasing to Him. And by the way we have this same statement in the transfiguration in Matthew 17 where the Lord was transfigured before Peter, James and John. And we have the same declaration here with the additional statement “listen to Him.” We also have this same declaration recounted in 2 Peter 1, “this is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.” And we see in Matthew 12:18 Jesus fulfills the prophecy that Isaiah had made. Skip up to Matthew 12, and we will look at verse 18. Matthew 12:18,

¹⁸ ***"Behold (take a look, look at it, behold), My Servant whom I have chosen; My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles. ¹⁹He will not quarrel, nor cry out; Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. ²⁰A battered reed He will not break off, And a smoldering wick He will not put out, Until He leads justice to victory. ²¹ And in His name the Gentiles will hope."*** [Matthew 12:18-21]

In Christ, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.”

Well how does this apply to us? Well first of all, apart from Christ God is not pleased with anything you do or say. Because apart from faith in Christ it is impossible to please God, we will see in Hebrews 11:6. God is not pleased with your attempts to earn His favor, God is not pleased with your good works, God is not pleased with your religiousness, God is pleased with Christ. God is pleased with Christ, He is well-pleased. And the only way He can be pleased with you is if you are in Christ. For as Jesus would say in John 15:5, “Apart from Me you can do nothing.”

What does the writer of Hebrews say in Hebrews 11:6? It is impossible to please God apart from faith. And who is that faith in, who is our faith in if you are a believer? James 2, “My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.” Galatians 2:20, who is our faith in? Paul says, ²⁰ ***I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I live now in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. [Galatians 2:20]*** “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.”

The only person and work the Father is pleased with is the work of the Son. It is impossible to please God apart from faith in the Son, in whom He is well-pleased. Concerning salvation your work apart from

Matthew 3:13-17

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/07/2009

Christ is not pleasing to God, it is an abomination. Anything you do to try and earn salvation is an abomination. For us believers, concerning sanctification, being made like Christ, anything apart from Christ is an abomination. It is only when we abide in Christ that He is well pleased with us. And because of His sacrifice and death for us, we can rest in Christ, we are in Christ. And we can learn now from the Word what is pleasing to the Lord.

So then what do we see here, first of all in our passage, a short passage, we see Jesus' baptism was an act of identification with sinful man which ultimately would bring about His death and our righteousness. And secondly we see the response of heaven. You see it was a witness, it was a public visible anointing for His redemptive work, and an audible approval of God upon Him. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." So then we have the baptism of Jesus, we have Jesus the King of Kings, the sinless Lamb of God, identifying with sinners. We have the affirmation from above of the person and work of Christ, that God the Father is well-pleased with Christ. Thus we have the introduction and the beginning of the ministry of Christ, where God emphasizes what is really important, which is the person of Christ, and the work of Christ.

That is what the ministry of Christ is about. If you do not have His person right you are in trouble. If you do not understand who Jesus really is, you will not be saved. If you see His work merely as just being a good man, or someone who did things right, or cast out demons, or whatever it might be, you have missed it completely because His work was to come to die for us. Public introduction where He would identify with sinful man. And this is amazing to think about, that God the Son, the Lamb of God, this perfect, perfect God in human flesh came and identified with us sinful, wretched man. Sinful, wretched men. Matthew 3:13;

¹³ Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him.

¹⁴ But John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?' ¹⁵ But Jesus answering said to him, 'Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he permitted Him. ¹⁶ And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, ¹⁷ and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.'" [Matthew 3:13-17]

I shared earlier about the focus of many people concerning the ministry of Jesus. Many focus on miracles, many focus on His works; but as we have seen here in this passage, although these things did happen and affirm who He was, the focus we see here was that Christ first of all was His beloved Son, well pleasing. And that He is the Messiah who identifies with sinful man; gracious God incarnate who would identify with us sinners and bring about our redemption.

So how does it apply to us, this simple passage? A couple things. First of all, dead denominations and wicked theologians and do-gooders and those who seek signs focus on elements of Jesus' early ministry to the exclusion of person and redemptive work of Christ. May we never see Christ apart from who He

Matthew 3:13-17

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/07/2009

really is, God the Son, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. May we never see ministry apart from what He would do, which was saving His people from their sins.

Secondly, what can we learn here? For those of you who are in your sins, who have not repented, Jesus Christ came to save you. He came to die for you. You are not righteous in God's sight, you will not stand before Him in the judgment, you cannot stand, because your deeds in His sight are like filthy rags. God demands righteousness from you, but you cannot provide it. But He provides that righteousness in Christ. Permit it, for it is right to fulfill all righteousness. He provides that righteousness in Christ.

"²¹He made Him who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." [2 Corinthians 5:21] And non-believing friend, I want to share one other truth with you. That God the Father was pleased to crush Jesus too. He was well pleased with Jesus, but He was also pleased to crush Him. Isaiah 53:4,

⁴ Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. ⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. ⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living, For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due? ⁹ His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. ¹⁰ But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. ¹¹ As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify (or declare righteous) the many, As He will bear their iniquities. [Isaiah 53:4-11]

He was pleased to crush Him. Jesus came to be crushed, He came to die for your sins and God is only pleased with His work. He is not pleased with your religiousness, He is not pleased with your going to church, He is not pleased with whatever you do apart from Christ.

And lastly, what about those of us who believe? Do we recognize that God is pleased with us when we abide in Christ, when we trust Him and obey Him? The only way for Him to be pleased with us is to abide in Christ. Do we recognize that, do we trust Him, do we abide in Him, do we rest in Him? Christ is the one that the Father is pleased with. And I want to ask you, is He pleased with you? And why would He be pleased with you? "And behold a voice out of the heavens saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" [Matthew 3:17]

Matthew 3:13-17

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/07/2009

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You that You declared who You are pleased with, that is Christ. I thank You that His first act of public ministry was to identify with those He would save. That He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Father, may we not forget the grandeur of the living God taking on human flesh, humbling Himself, coming to seek, to serve, not to be served, to give His life a ransom for many. Lord, I pray for anyone here who does not know You, who thinks what they do pleases You, who thinks they can do certain things to make You happy. May they recognize apart from Christ, they can do nothing, that You are well-pleased with Him, that He is Your beloved Son. And for those of us who know You, may we rest in Christ, may we not attempt to do anything apart from Him. May we trust Him completely in our everyday walk, in our everyday situations, may we try to learn what is pleasing to You in Christ. Lord, thank You for Your Word, thank You for Your son, and it is in His name we pray. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.vancouverbible.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2013 Vancouver Bible Fellowship

You may reproduce this sermon transcript in its entirety for
non-commercial purposes in accordance with

Vancouver Bible Fellowship's Copyright Policy (<http://www.vancouverbible.org/copyright.pdf>).