

Daniel Waldschmidt – Mark 1:9-11 – 1/8/2016

Why was Jesus baptized? Baptism washes away sins. But Jesus doesn't have any sins. Our passage says that the people were baptized by John as they "confessed their sins." (Mark 1:5) Jesus doesn't have any sins to confess. So why was Jesus baptized? Jesus wanted to be baptized, to associate himself with us. By going to be baptized, Jesus was saying, all of these people who are being baptized, they are my people. "These are my people," Jesus was saying. "I associate myself with them."

Sometimes when an athlete is involved in a scandal he loses all of his endorsement deals. Nike and McDonalds dissociate themselves with that athlete. They say, "Our name is not associated with this athlete because we don't condone his behavior." It would be very appropriate for Jesus to say, "I don't associate myself with them because of the things that they have done." Jesus knows all of the things that we've done. He knows all of the things that are in our minds and in our hearts to the point where we might think, "Jesus, you don't want to associate yourself with me." But with his baptism Jesus is saying, "Yes I do want to associate myself with you." Isn't that amazing? Jesus knows all our sins and yet he still wants to associate himself with us.

**"At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan River" (1:9).** By being baptized with all the sinners Jesus is saying, "All of these sinners, they are with me, and I am with them."

And the Father is well pleased that Jesus is willing to associate himself with sinners. **"You are my Son whom I love, with you I am well pleased." (Mark 1:11)** Jesus' baptism is the beginning of his public ministry and that ministry would end with Jesus dying on a cross to pay for our sins. And by raising Jesus from the dead, the Father said, "I am well pleased with this sacrifice." Your sins really are forgiven because the father accepted Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

So in his baptism Jesus makes it clear that he is associating with sinners. By being baptized he is also making it clear that he is the substitute for sinners. You are familiar with the concept of a substitute.<sup>1</sup> In a basketball game a substitute takes the place of one of the players. And all of the baskets that the substitute scores count for the team, just as much as if the original player would have scored those baskets.

You and I needed a substitute. You and I were supposed to love God with our whole heart and soul and strength and mind. And we did not. But Jesus, our substitute did love God with all his heart and soul and strength and mind. And since he's on our team, as our substitute, what he did counts for us. By being baptized Jesus is making it clear that he has our team jersey on. And the perfect life that he lived counts for the whole team, just as much as if you or I had lived a perfect and sinless life.

But that's not the only thing we needed a substitute for. We were supposed to be punished with death and the wrath of God. But God sent us a substitute for that too. On the cross Jesus suffered the full and terrible wrath of God as our substitute, and so you will never have to.

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<sup>1</sup> The next few paragraphs are adapted from a sermon preached by Pastor Daniel Preus.

So in his baptism Jesus associates with us sinners as our substitute. That's Jesus' baptism. What's the connection between Jesus' baptism and our baptism? Well, just like Jesus in his baptism identifies himself with us. When we are baptized, we are united to him. In Romans chapter 6, the Bible says that when a person is baptized he is united to Jesus so closely that it even says that the person baptized died with Christ and was raised to new life with Christ. Just like Jesus identified himself with you when he was baptized, In your baptism, you are identified with him so that you die with Jesus and come back to life with Jesus.

That means a couple of important things. First, your sinful nature dies with Jesus in baptism. That means that your sins are buried in the tomb with Jesus. They are gone. Your sinful nature dies with Jesus in baptism. So you can say, "The sinful me was the old me. I live a new life now. I don't need to be ruled by sin. I have power to fight against my sinful nature because it died with Jesus in baptism."

Second, you are given new life in baptism. You are given new spiritual life right now. And someday you will be physically raised from the dead just like Jesus was physically raised from the dead. Baptism is like a rope that connects you and Jesus. Imagine that two objects are connected by a rope and you bury them in the ground. If you pull up the first object from the ground and then you pull on the rope, the other object is going to be pulled up to, right? Well, Jesus burst up from the grave with a new and glorious body. Since baptism ties you to him like a rope, you are also are going to burst up from the grave with a new and glorious life.

Being united to Jesus in baptism gives you other gifts too. Gifts like the Holy Spirit. Our passage says, **"Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove." (Mark 1:10)** I heard a pastor once preaching on the baptism of Jesus and he compared Jesus and his people to a pyramid. Jesus is the King of his people, so he is the pinnacle, the top of the pyramid. But his people who are united to him are the rest of the pyramid. And the pastor said, "If you pour water onto the top of the pyramid then it will run down onto the rest of the pyramid." Here the Holy Spirit is poured out on Jesus and the Holy Spirit runs down onto all of us who are connected to Jesus, just like if you pour water onto the pinnacle of a pyramid it will run down onto the rest of the pyramid. And of course the Holy Spirit gives us faith and the forgiveness of sins and spiritual life and salvation.

What I've been trying to say in this sermon is that baptism unites you very closely with Jesus. Jesus identified with you in his baptism and you are united to Jesus in your baptism. And since baptism gives you union with Christ, when Jesus comes up out of the water and hears the voice of the Father saying, "You are my Son whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Since you are united to Jesus, God is also saying that to you. When you were baptized, God said to you "You are my child; whom I love. With you I am well pleased." Amen.