

*You are God's child, whom he loves; with you he is well pleased. Amen.*

You're shopping for gloves. How do you know when you've found the right pair? This one is too thick; you might as well be wearing mittens. This one is too thin; what's the point if they won't keep your hands warm? But then, at last, you find the one. Just the right thickness, just the right softness, plus they've got those special fingertips so you can use your phone while you wear them.

Maybe you're searching for something more serious. You're looking for a spouse. How do you know when you've found the one? Do you look at the face and consider only the face? Or do you look for something deeper, like someone who fears God and does what is right? How do you know when you've found the one?

And what about the most serious search of all? How do you know that **Jesus is the One**? How do you know that Jesus dealt with all of your sins and it's not up to you to deal with them? How do you know that Jesus is your Savior, and not just the Savior of first century Palestinian Jews or not just the Savior of white, American Christians of European descent? How do you know that **Jesus is the One**?

Because God said so. Yes, it is that simple. You heard it yourself. God's voice boomed from heaven: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Heaven tore open and the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove. God anointed Jesus. That's how we know that **Jesus is the One**.

It's easy to slip past this moment in Jesus' life and think his baptism is unimportant. But it's a big deal. Years after Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, Peter remembered the importance of Jesus' baptism.

He was in the home of a Roman centurion named Cornelius, and God has just taught him an important lesson: the good news that **Jesus is the One** is for everyone. **Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism<sup>35</sup> but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right" (10:34-35).**

That is a profound thought: **God does not show favoritism (10:34)**. Literally, "God does not pay attention to the face." God doesn't care what you look like. When Jesus said, "God so loved the world" (John 3:16), he meant everyone in the world, regardless of looks, nationality, skin color, talents, or even the sins they've committed. God does not have favorites!

How different from us. We do pay attention to the face. We all like to think that we would welcome any stranger into our midst and show them the love of Christ, but is that really true? What do your actions look like when you come to church? Do you go out of your way to welcome strangers, or do you gravitate to the people you know, the people who make you feel comfortable?

And forget church, what about any of the people in life who are different from you? How loving are you to the people who threaten you, to people who have gotten into serious trouble, who vote differently than you, or who have fallen into great and shameful sins?

Do you shun and look down on them, or do you look at them with the impartial eyes of Jesus? Do you remember that they need to be brought to repentance and faith; that Jesus died for them; that he wants them in heaven too?

God does not show favoritism, but you do, because your sinful nature causes you to look down on other people, especially people who are not similar to you. I do the same thing. We need to learn the full meaning of these words, **"God does not show favoritism" (10:34)**.

How do we do that? By remembering that **Jesus is the One**. God anointed Jesus, not to show favoritism, but to announce good news. Listen to Peter: **"You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all" (10:36)**.

Last month Christmas began with angels singing about peace on earth (Luke 2:9). But now Christmas is over. The decorations are down. The music won't come back until November. But that good news of peace is still here. Lasting peace. Eternal peace. Everything is okay between you and God (2 Corinthians 5:20-21).

God sent this message of peace to the people of Israel first, but Jesus is Lord of all and this good news is for all. It doesn't matter how you dress or how many piercings you have or whether you live in a shack or a mansion. You have peace with God through Jesus.

To create this peace, God crossed the greatest cultural chasm imaginable. He left heaven and came to earth. He left the angel hosts who were his servants and became a servant of human beings (Philippians 2:7). He became one of us (Hebrews 2:14). He became subject to his own laws (Galatians 4:4). And, after thirty-three years of perfect obedience, he let the human beings that he had created capture him and crucify him.

Jesus did that for each one of you, and the Lord has taken away your sin (2 Samuel 12:13). It didn't matter to him what race you are. It didn't matter how many times you make promises to him and break them. It didn't matter if you were the top of your class or the bottom.

None of those things that mean so much to us mattered to him. The only thing that mattered to him is that we were desperate and needed salvation. So here is good news of great peace for all people: Today in the River Jordan a Savior has been anointed for you, he is Jesus, the Christ.

**"You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—<sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him" (10:37-38).**

**Jesus is the One** because God anointed him. We don't say "anointed" very often, but we say "Christ" all the time. *Christ* means "anointed one" in Greek. *Messiah* is the Hebrew word that means the same thing. *Anointed* means that Jesus was *appointed* to do a certain job.

In the Old Testament, the leaders of God's people were publicly appointed to their office by being anointed with oil, that is, having oil poured on their head (1 Samuel 16:13). Kinda-sorta-like how a president is publicly appointed to his office on inauguration day, Jesus is publicly appointed to his office at his baptism, when he was **anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power (10:38)**.

It shows that **Jesus is the One**, the Savior that God promised at the dawn of time (Genesis 3:15). Seven hundred years before his baptism God said this is how it would happen! "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations" (Isaiah 42:1).

So today the Father loudly and proudly declared, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Then he tore open heaven and sent the Holy Spirit down on Jesus (Mark 1:10). Could the point be any more clear? It's like God said, "This man is more than a man. This is the One I have chosen to take the place of all sinners, without exception, without favoritism. Believe in him."

Yeah, Jesus' baptism is spectacular. But you know what? Yours is too. In fact, there is an amazing connection between Jesus' baptism and your baptism.

Jesus is anointed to be your Substitute, the One who takes your place. He is baptized, so that when you are baptized, God can say, "This is my daughter, this is my son, whom I love."

No, you are not the eternal Son of God who put on human flesh. But because the eternal Son stood in your place in Jordan River, and stood in your place throughout his life, and stood in your place at his death, the Father sees you standing in Jesus' place!

So without batting an eye, God looks at you and says, "With you I am well pleased!" Every day as the mud and filth of sin want to cling to you all over again, you can remember the fact that you are baptized. There you were washed; there you were cleansed (Titus 3:5). There God anointed you with power to leave those sins behind (Romans 6:1-4)! You are his child, whom he loves, with you he is well pleased.

How comforting is that? I mean, don't you sometimes compare yourself to others? You see people with a happy family, but yours is full of conflict. You see people with a ton of friends and wonder where yours have gone. You see people who have more talent in their little finger than you have in your whole body and you feel deprived. You see people who never seem to get sick and you practically live at the doctor's office. Why? Does God love them more than you?

No! **God does not show favoritism (10:34)**. Sure, in his infinite wisdom God distributes different blessings to different people. But that should never make you doubt his unfailing love for you. God does not have favorites. Because **Jesus is the One**, God loves you as much as he loves Jesus, his beloved Son!

Since the Father anointed Jesus as the Christ, there is almost no difference between the Christ and the Christian. Jesus is holy, and he has made you holy. Jesus is sin-free, and he has taken away your sin. Jesus is filled with the Spirit, and through baptism, so are you. Most amazingly of all, Jesus is loved by the Father, and you are too. Amen.