

Sermon- John baptizes Jesus

Scripture: John 1:29-34

Nov 8th, 2015

Last Sunday we looked at the significance of the baptism of repentance. Where the Baptist got the idea for it and how it served to modify the Messianic expectations of the people and prepare for the coming of Jesus. Now as Jesus started his ministry he begins with getting baptized. And that is what we are going to look at today. As we examine our text for this morning I am going to start by clarifying the sequence of events for you. I am then going to focus specifically of the meaning of the Baptism of Jesus and then we can see what lessons from these events can be applied to our own lives. So let's begin.

When we look at our passage we see the phrase "the next day". What he means is "the next day after the temple authorities came for their interrogation of the Baptist". Which also means that those interrogators had left the scene, but other locals who were there the previous day who had heard the Baptist telling his interrogators about this much greater person than himself were still hanging around the Baptist. So in verse 29 when Jesus actually appears, He points to Jesus and says, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world". Now the Baptist also realizes that he is in an interesting position. Because his own ministry preceded Jesus ministry. When the Jewish people looked at God's work in the world, you see that the one who comes before is of greater importance because they laid a foundation upon which everything in the future gets build. This is true for Argentine Church. The ministry that we have now would not be possible if pastor Mervin had not done what he did and so on. So the older prophets always had greater honor than the newer or current ones. It is a little different in our world because in our world people we are only focused on what is new and current. But in the Jewish world, the greater esteem was always given to the old. So there was no way anybody could simply claim to be greater than some of the big names like Moses and Elijah because their work changed the course of history. Recognizing this fact the Baptist explains that Jesus' ministry breaks the pattern here because Jesus actually existed because all the prophets ever existed, in fact he existed before the world came into being.

OK so we got the importance of Jesus. But in verse 31 two verse after he says, Behold the Lamb of God, the Baptist says "I myself did not recognize the Messiah even though I have been baptizing people with water so that they might recognize the Messiah". Now when some people read this they say, how can John the Baptist say he did not recognize Jesus. Firstly, John was a close relative of Jesus and their mothers were pregnant Mary

stayed in Elizabeth's home for a few months. So it is quite possible that they knew each other as kids. In fact last week I even mentioned that the Baptist was given a special capacity to recognize the Messiah. So how can he now say that he did not recognize who Jesus was? That is where we have to unpack the Baptist's own faith story. We have to understand that even though John and Jesus quite possibly played together as youngsters there was nothing in Jesus' childhood where relatives would have known the true identity of Jesus. If you watched the movie, "The Passion of Christ" you may remember the flash backs that Mary was having of Jesus' childhood. In one of the scenes Jesus is playing with these clay pigeons and then he turns them into real pigeons and enjoys watching them fly away. Now let me tell you something like that makes a great movie scene but not only is that story not in the Bible, if you read the New Testament you will be sure that Jesus would never use his powers simply for his own entertainment. Also another thing we need to understand about Jesus, is that Jesus would never fall for the temptation of revealing his identity too soon. If you read about the accounts of Jesus early childhood, King Herod was after his life and so the family fled to Egypt only to return many years later. And even after they returned they were never sure about the new kings and so would have done everything to maintain a very low profile. So when the Baptist says he did not really recognize the Messiah what he meant was that even though his job was to spot the Messiah, he really did not see any signs that his cousin was it for all those years.

Then something amazing happens. As the Baptist was thick into his ministry of Baptizing people, one day, this individual comes along who wants to be baptized. Suddenly, the Holy Spirit manifests himself in a dovelike shape. You could see it as a flutter in the atmosphere and that flutter comes straight down over the head of this individual and stays there. Then a voice from heaven says "the one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit." At this point John the Baptist recognizes this individual to be the very Messiah that he was telling everyone would come. Ever since that moment the Baptist begins pointing out that Jesus was the Messiah. Ok so that is the chronological sequence of events related to Jesus' baptism.

Now I spent some time establishing the time line because it gives us clues to the meaning of the baptism that Jesus underwent. You see in the Gospels we see three kinds of baptisms. The baptism of repentance, the baptism that Jesus underwent and the Baptism in Jesus name that you and I undergo. Now given that there are these three kinds of baptisms, the question is, how do they compare with each other. Last week we looked at John's baptism of repentance. Now John's baptism was simply an acknowledgement that you have sinned and wish to make a uturn in your life. The

reason John's baptism was not sufficient is because it did not actually give you the power to make that Uturn in your life. That is where the Holy Spirit comes in. And the Baptist also did not have the authority to send the Holy Spirit. Only Jesus and the Father has that power. When you are baptized in Jesus name, Jesus is actually sending the Holy Spirit on a person who publically acknowledges him and that empowers the person to have a new spiritual existence. We will of coming back to this theme quite a bit in John's Gospel. But when you look at Jesus Baptism he was declaring a UTurn in his life. After all the Bible says he had no sin. He was not making a public declaration of his need for the Savior, because He was the savior himself. So what is Jesus baptism all about?

Well firstly, remember we talked about the fact that the Baptist was given the honor of pointing out the Messiah. Actually we saw today that like everybody else even when the Baptist looked at Jesus he could not recognize the Messiah except when God made it clear with two signs at Jesus' Baptism. First the Holy Spirit coming and second, the voice from heaven giving the interpretation of this sign and clearly declaring who Jesus was. So it was the sign and the interpretation of the sign that enabled John to recognize who Jesus was. So the Baptist was given two signs at the Baptism meeting the Jewish requirement of needing a minimum of two witnesses to establish a fact. So this is the first purpose of Jesus baptism. To enable the Baptist to recognize who the Messiah was.

But this leads us to question that people have been grappling with for a long time. If the Holy Spirit came on Christ at his baptism did he not have the Holy Spirit before his baptism? In fact there was a group of people called the adoptionists that believed that Jesus was conferred divinity at his baptism. This idea of course was completely rejected by the church. To understand the Holy Spirit question we have to look at an aspect of Jesus Baptist that is similar to our own. What is that? You see our Baptism in the name of the Trinity is a public enactment of a private event that happened in the past. The way it works is, when you accept Christ into your life, this is very private and personal because only you know what is going on in your heart. This is the point where you are "born again". But it is the activity of the Holy Spirit that enables you to be "born again". Then when you build the courage to tell the world about your "spiritual birth" the Holy Spirit once again comes on you in a different way to give you this courage to go public. Now if you look at Jesus' case, his spiritual emergence took place right at the point of conception and his physical birth was also his spiritual birth. Also you have to understand that without the Holy Spirit in Him, Jesus could not have lead a sinless life till he got baptised. In other words Jesus had the Holy Spirit in Him from the very beginning. But it was at his baptism that this relationship with His Father and the Holy Spirit was

being made public for the first time. So this is the second thing that is special about Jesus baptism. We see the unique relationship that Jesus has with his Father and the Holy Spirit. And what is this relationship. Well, what we see at his Baptism is that Jesus gets his authority to act from his Father and the Holy Spirit marks him out and is always with Him helping him do what he needs to do, including being in communion with his father. So the second function of Jesus baptism was to give the world a glimpse into the internal private relationship between the three persons of the Trinity.

Ok pointing the Messiah out to the Baptist and giving the world a glimpse of the Trinitarian relationship. Two purposes of Jesus baptism. There is a third purpose and we see that in the words of the Father. It is to explain to the world, the commission that Jesus was given. These are the words God the Father uses. "The one on whom you see the Holy Spirit descend and remain, He is the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit." John also declares Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. So Jesus' baptism signaled to the Baptist that Jesus was the Messiah. Secondly, Jesus' baptism showed the world that Jesus has in a unique relationship with both God the Father who is His source of authority and the Holy Spirit who is his helper. Finally, his baptism was a commissioning ceremony that signaled to the world, what Jesus' mission was.

So what lessons can we apply to our lives from Jesus' baptism? The first thing I want to point is what lesson to not apply. You see because Jesus Baptism is so unique except for the aspect of making his private internal relationship within the Trinity public, Jesus baptism should not be seen as a parallel to our Baptism. But if Jesus Baptism does not teach us specifically about our Baptism what does it teach us that we can apply to our lives? I am glad you asked.

I think there are three takeaways for our life. First, if God wants to communicate something to you he will make it really clear and not leave you guessing. We know this not just from the clear way the Father and Holy Spirit communicates who Jesus is to the Baptist, but if you look at all the important communication God has ever had with human beings, from the time of Abraham to Moses even to Mary and Joseph the parents of Jesus you find that the communication is very clear. God's servants are never left confused. So if God is trying to communicate something to you know that he will not be ambiguous about it. That is not how God rolls. Sometimes people come to me and say I think God is calling me to full time ministry or that I should get married to so and so person. And when I ask them why they think God is asking them to do that, they say they are not sure about it, or they tell me they had a dream about it or they opened a Bible verse one morning and that verse was telling them. But they are still not sure

about it. Well I can tell you from personal experience, if God is asking you to take a big step in your life, he will not just leave you with a vague message from a dream or Bible verse that you are not sure about. God will make what you need to do absolutely clear. And you can be sure that God will speak to you in multiple ways and multiple times. If God wants to communicate something to you he will make it absolutely clear.

The second lesson for us is authority. If God is calling you to something there is no need to be timid or afraid of anybody because our authority flows from God the Father to God the Son and directly to us. So if God himself has given us the authority to go do what he wants us to do, if we are afraid to talk to people, that reflects poorly on the source of our authority in the eyes of the people. And you don't want to make God look wimpy.

The third application for our life is to realize that we have the Holy Spirit or helper to accomplish our mission. The Holy Spirit not only helps us avoid sin, but in fact helps us to accomplish the mission that God has called you to do.

So remember this, Jesus' baptism was unique. It functioned to signal without any ambiguity who Jesus was, what authority he had and what his mission was. But each of us who are in Christ to have been commissioned for his service. So you too should have a clear sense of what your mission is, what authority you have to execute your mission and what help you have to accomplish your mission. May you be filled with clarity of mind, boldness of heart and the anointing of the Holy Spirit as you go forth to serve our Lord. Let us pray.