

Baptismal Identity

Luke 3:15-22

Introduction

Our identity, or who we are, determines everything about us, including how we live. When someone asks the question of me, “Who are you?” how should I answer? I could say, “I am Dale Hetherington.” But that’s just my name, a handle given to me by my parents to set me apart. It doesn’t say anything about me. I could say, “I am a man.” But that just tells you what I am. I could say, “I am a husband, a father, a grandfather, or a pastor.” But those are all vocations that God has called me to do. At my very core, who am I? Today, we’re going to answer that question for all of us.

God Gives Us Our Identity

There is a lot of talk today about identifying ourselves. Children are being taught that they can identify themselves as a male or a female, or something else. The truth is, we are born with a gender identity; it’s not a social construct, something that was given to us by society. We can try to act or look like something else, but we will always have the identity we were born with. The same is true of our racial identity and our species identity. We do not choose our identity—God gives it to us.

“You Are My Son”

“*You are My beloved Son*” (v. 22c). Though the words are obviously addressed to Jesus, Luke seems to indicate that they were heard by the people gathered around the Jordan that day. *The Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form, like a dove* (v. 22a); it was visible to the people. *A voice came from heaven* (v. 22b); it was audible. This experience revealed to the people at the river that Jesus is the Son of God. Folks knew Him as the son of Joseph the carpenter and his wife Mary. Now, a new identity was revealed to them. Jesus is God’s Son. But it wasn’t a **new** identity. As we say in the Nicene Creed, *He was begotten of His Father before all worlds*. This is His eternal identity. It was newly revealed to the people. Jesus is the Son of God because He is begotten of God.

“In the Name of ...”

What makes Baptism a Sacrament? Luther said that without the Word, the water of Baptism would be the same as bathkeeper’s water. When the Word of God is added to the water, it becomes the water of Baptism, a life-giving means of grace. What is that Word? “I Baptize you *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*” (**Matthew 28:19**). Being Baptized in the name of the Triune God means that we receive His name. We receive His name because, at Baptism, God the Father adopts us into His family. We become His children. He gives us a new identity. As Jesus retained His earthly identity, we also retain ours. We still have the same species, race, and gender identities. We are still the son or daughter of our earthly parents. We are still citizens of our country of origin. But along with all that, we have a new Baptismal identity—we are children of God.

Privileges of Sonship

What does this new identity mean? What difference does it make to be a child of God?

Forgiven

First, our sins are forgiven. We can't be in God's holy family with unforgiven sin. To bring us into His family, He cleanses us in the blood of Christ, taking away our sin, and clothing us in His righteousness. While we still have our sin nature, as God's children, we can choose the good. As His children, we can love Him. As His children, we can serve Him.

Family

When God adopts us as His children, He places us in His family. He makes us members of the body of Christ. He makes us members of His invisible church. This gives us a whole new family. "Blood is thicker than water." We are united in the family of God by the blood of Christ. That makes this the thickest family on earth. This is why Jesus tells us we are to love each other as He has loved us (**John 13:34**). Or, as Paul tells us in **Romans 12:10**, *Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*

Future

Being God's children means we have a new future. *The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23)*. Since we were all born in sin, we are all doomed to eternal death. But as God's children, we have new life in Him and a new future, a future of eternal life (Read **John 11:25-26**). Our future is that we are heirs of the Father and joint heirs with Christ (**Romans 8:17**). We have a heavenly inheritance waiting for us.

Means of Grace

While we're on this earth, as God's children, we receive the body and blood of Christ when we receive the bread and wine of Communion. Through the means of grace, He gives us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. All that from our **BAPTISMAL IDENTITY**.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
