

A Voice, a Man, and a Dove

Mark 1:4—11

Introduction

During my sojourn in the Baptist church, I tried to institute the use of the Christian calendar. To the average Baptist, the “Christian calendar” consists of one day of celebrating Christmas and one day of Easter. The idea of seasons, colors, and minor feast days is foreign to them. To be fair, in my interview with the pulpit search committee, I informed them I would be doing this. They called me anyway. After the third Baptism of Our Lord service, one old Deacon said as he shook my hand, “I just don’t get what the big deal is about the Baptism of Jesus.” After explaining it and preaching a sermon on it three years in a row, I was dumbfounded. Not knowing what else to say, I asked him, “Was your Baptism important to you?” “Of course, it was,” he replied. “Who do you think is more important, you or Jesus?”

What Jesus’ Baptism Conveys

There are so many things to say. 1) Since He was sinless and John’s Baptism was one of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, Jesus was identifying with us at His Baptism. 2) As Paul said in our Epistle reading in **Romans 6**, we are united with Him in Baptism, united in His death and resurrection. 3) Jesus is revealed to be the Son of God at His Baptism, which is why it’s the first Sunday after the Epiphany. 4) We have a clear witness of the Trinity at Jesus’ Baptism. That’s what we want to examine today.

The Witness of the Trinity

Here we see the witness of the Trinity (read **Mark 1:10—11**). All three were present. We have the Voice, the Man, and the Dove, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each one present, acting as one.

The Voice of the Father

Here’s one reason to celebrate the Baptism of Jesus. Has anyone else heard a voice from heaven when they were baptized? Did God say to you, *“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased?”*

The Voice of Yahweh

In **John 12**, Jesus publicly prays to the Father, *“Father, glorify Your name” (John 12:28)*. The Father answers, *“I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”* The people standing there heard the voice but said *it sounded like thunder (v. 29)*. But here, we have no explanation like that, so we see that the people by the river heard and understood the Voice. God has spoken before. He spoke to Moses to give him the Law on Mt. Sainai, and from the burning bush to call him into service. He spoke to Abraham to stop him from sacrificing Isaac. But before all that, He spoke creation into existence. God only speaks like this when it’s important.

Identifies the Son – Psalm 2:7

Another time a voice from heaven identifies Jesus as God’s Son is on the Mount of Transfiguration. There He says, *“This is my beloved Son” (Mark 9:7)*. He is addressing the three disciples

who came up the mountain with Jesus, Peter, James, and John. Here, the Voice is addressing Jesus, referencing **Psalm 2**, a royal Psalm. *You are My Son; today I have begotten You (Psalm 2:7)*.

The Father Is Pleased

Not just to identify Jesus as His Son, the Father also says that He is pleased. The Son is off to a good start. The Father is pleased with Jesus' childhood. That's important. For Jesus to be sinless, he had to live His whole life without sinning. Can you imagine raising a child like that? The last thing we read about His childhood is: *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52)*.

The Man Jesus

Just who was this being baptized? He was Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Mary and Joseph, the carpenter. At least, that's how everyone knew Him at the time. Except for being perfect, He had lived a fairly ordinary life so far. But now, things were going to be different. He was beginning the next chapter of His life. He was preparing to go into public ministry.

The Dove – The Holy Spirit in Physical Form

That's where the Holy Spirit comes in. He comes upon Jesus in the form of a dove.

Peace with God

The first time we see a dove in the Bible is in the Flood story. Noah sends the dove out to see if it's safe to leave the ark. The second time, the dove returns with an olive branch in its mouth, showing that God is healing the earth. There's dry ground, but not enough to live on. Since that time, the olive branch and dove have been symbols of peace as God was making peace with mankind, although it was a temporary one. Through Jesus, people will finally have complete peace with God.

Jesus Anointed for Ministry

Prophets, priests, and kings were publicly anointed with oil to show that they were being anointed with the Spirit of God for their service. There is no symbol here. The Holy Spirit Himself comes and lands on Jesus, signifying His three-part office of Prophet, Priest, and King and anointing Him for ministry.

Our Baptism

This is why Jesus tells us to *"baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19)*. We are being baptized, or immersed, into our **CREATOR, REDEEMER, and SANCTIFIER** (Luther's sections of the Apostles' Creed in the **Small Catechism**), the **VOICE, THE MAN, AND THE DOVE**. We receive all that to live our journey of faith, to follow Jesus in service, death, and resurrection.

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