Matthew 3:13-17 (EHV)

1/12/20

Christ's Baptism Is Yours

1. He carries your guilt
2. You share his status

It may have been another sunny day along the banks of the Jordan. Another day of the crowds coming to hear the voice of one calling in the wilderness, dressed in coarse camel's hair with only a leather belt. Another day of John baptizing with water in river as the people confessed their sins - a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Just another day - until Jesus came – to be baptized.

Why would Jesus come to be baptized? That puzzled John. In fact, he tried to talk Jesus out of it: I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me? John knew his own sin. He needed the Messiah to bring him forgiveness. Why, then, did Jesus come to be baptized? What sins did he have that needed to be washed away?

No doubt you remember from Sunday School that Jesus was sinless and holy. Peter described Jesus as a lamb without blemish or defect. All his thoughts, words, and actions were pure all the time, perfectly in line with God's law, perfectly righteous. Even unbelievers will often talk about how good Jesus was.

But are you ready for the secret truth? Even as the world praises the goodness of Jesus, they are blind to this truth – it is so secret. I don't mean to gossip here, but let me tell you what Jesus was really guilty of.

He was guilty of disobeying his parents and talking back. He was guilty of losing his temper and lashing out with his words. He was guilty of loving money, envying what others had, trusting health and wealth for happiness. He was guilty of indecent thoughts, mean-spirited words, loveless actions. He was guilty of neglecting God's Word and of misusing God's name. He was guilty of laziness in prayer and slowness to speak God's truth. He was guilty of dishonoring God, not holding him in the highest reverence and regard.

Does that list sound familiar? It should, because it is your sins and mine that I have listed here. That is what Jesus was guilty of: the sins that you and I have committed. I do not mean that he did the same sins we do. He did not. He himself never sinned. But all our own sins were charged against him - and not only ours – but everyone's sin was charged against Jesus. He was guilty of eating the forbidden fruit, of naked drunkenness, of adultery with Uriah's wife, of betraying the Son of God. Yes, the sins of Adam, Noah, David, and Judas. He was guilty of genocide and mass murder, the sins of Hitler, Stalin, Bin Laden and the worst criminals and tyrants. Every sin was charged against Jesus. That is why Jesus came to be baptized, to wash away all the sins of the world, yours and mine included.

Yes, what you learned about Jesus in Sunday School is correct. Jesus is holy. He did not sin, not even once. He was not a sinner. But he was guilty of all the sins of the world, for they were all charged against him. That is what Isaiah declared: The Lord has charged all our guilt to him. That is what the apostles preached: God made him, who did not know sin, to become sin for us. That is what we believe because God has revealed that to us in his Word and the Holy Spirit has convinced your heart that all your sins were charged against Jesus. He carried your guilt to wash it all away.

What a tragedy that so many do not believe. Many who have been baptized have turned away from Jesus. They still know about him and often claim to have faith. But what they retain is simply empty facts. But faith trusts Jesus. Faith is a living, moving power that changes our heart, will, and mind - moving us to live for Jesus and serve him, gladly hearing and learning his Word. Without faith, sin damns to hell whether you have been baptized or not. How
dreadful such a death!

But look and see Jesus at the Jordan. See him baptized with water. His baptism is yours. He has stepped to your side; he has come to take your place. He is the Christ, the anointed One, come to carry the sins of the world, including all of yours. Believe that your sins were charged against him. He carried your guilt. So his baptism is yours. In his baptism you have been washed clean.

His baptism is yours, for you, too, have been baptized. Just as water was put on Jesus, so also you have been baptized with water. As you contemplate your baptism, your faith sees that water stained red with Jesus' blood. Only his blood poured out for you from his wounds on the cross, only his blood gives baptism its cleansing power. The Bible says: The blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sin.

Only the life-blood of God the Son can wash us clean. Jesus' baptism publicly shows God's Son taking our place all the way to the cross, suffering our hell as he hung there, dying our death. So see the water of baptism dyed red with his blood, the cleansing flood that washes you clean and rescues you from death. Christ's baptism is yours. He carried your guilt.

Yes, Christ's baptism is yours. And now, what did you see and hear happening at Jesus' baptism? Heaven is opened. The Holy Spirit comes descending like a dove and landing on him, and a voice out of the heavens said, This is my son, whom I love. I am well pleased with him.

Christ's baptism is yours. Since those things happened at his baptism, they happened at yours, but not in that outward, physical, visible, audible way. But that does not make it any less real or true. At Jesus' baptism, God sent these signs for physical eyes and ears to see and hear, so that at your baptism the eyes and ears of faith would know they are happening just as surely.

Yes, since Jesus' baptism's yours, when you were baptized, the Holy Spirit came down into your heart. No one could have videotaped it, for God works this marvelous miracle, not as a spectacle for people to gape at, but as a promise for faith to grasp. The Holy Spirit came down into your heart through the water and Word of baptism and gave you rebirth. Yes, you who were born dead in sin from the sinful flesh of your parents handed down from Adam, you were born again of water and the Spirit, for you were baptized in his name, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Don't listen to those who say you need a different baptism to really get the Holy Spirit. They have twisted the truth. Simply see what happened when Jesus was baptized with water. There the Holy Spirit came down. So also he came down upon you when you were baptized with water, just as Jesus was. For Christ's baptism is yours.

And just as the Father spoke from heaven at Jesus' baptism, so also your faith heard him say at your baptism: This is my son, whom I love. I am well pleased with him. In baptism, you, whether male or female, you were reborn as a son of God with all the rights and privileges of sonship. You became an heir of heaven with heaven opened for you. The Father's love pours over you as he cares for you day after day. He even declares: With you I am well-pleased.

But how can that be? Didn't we begin life, corrupted by the sin we inherited from Adam, empty of all good? Aren't you and I still sinners even after our baptism. Don't we daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment? Or are we lying each time we come here and confess our sins? No, we are not lying. We are sinners who have earned death and hell.

But just as Jesus carried your guilt, so also through baptism you share his status. For Christ's baptism's yours. At your baptism the Father declared: This is my son, whom I love. I am well pleased with him. Of course, Jesus is uniquely the Son of God, of one essence with
the Father. He is the Only-begotten. He is the Son from all eternity. We do not become divine through baptism, but he does share his status with us, his status of righteousness before God. That is why he, the eternal Son, also became flesh and as the God-man was baptized in the Jordan. So his baptism is yours. You share his status.

So when the Father looks at you who continue in your baptismal faith, he sees the holiness of Jesus. That is why your faith still hears him saying: I am well-pleased with you. That does not mean that he in any way likes our sin. But you have been washed clean in the blood of Jesus. You share his righteous status in God's sight.

Now, when our heart of faith hears those words from the Father, it is only the old self lingering in us that wants to use it as an excuse to indulge our sinful desires or put off growing in faith. But your new heart, generated by the Holy Spirit, rejoices in that Good News, daily cherishing this precious message God's Word and sacraments bring.

What a reason for us to say no to sin and to live for God! He calls you his own dear son. He makes you an heir of everlasting life. Death has been drowned in the waters of baptism. Heaven is opened. The Holy Spirit, poured out on you. So what if following Jesus brings earthly pain or lose? You are God's son and heir. What earthly treasure would we not be ready to sacrifice, since our Father's love will not fail to take care of us, his dearly loved sons? And what hope we have even in the darkest, loneliest times! For the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are with you. You have been baptized into his name. For Christ's baptism is yours. Amen.

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