

Mark 1:9-11 (The Baptism of Our Lord—Series B)
“Into Christ”
Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield, CT
January 10, 2021

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text is from the Gospel recorded in Mark 1:

⁹And it happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. ¹⁰And immediately, as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens splitting open and the Spirit as a dove descending into him. ¹¹And a voice came from the heavens, “You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.”

On the 1950s television show *Dragnet*, Sgt. Joe Friday, played by Jack Webb, didn’t get to be a sergeant by beating around the bush. He wanted to get right to the heart of the matter, hence his famous catchphrase: “Just the facts, ma’am.” Except maybe his reputation precedes him because apparently, he never said those exact words! The closest he came was “All we want are the facts, ma’am.” Be that as it may, “just the facts” is really what we get from the Evangelist Mark here in chapter 1. Mark’s account of Jesus’ Baptism is short and right to the point. (The way you hope this sermon will be!)

Where: In the Jordan River

Who: Jesus

What: Baptized by John

Case closed.

Well, not quite. We do get the wondrous revealing of God the Son, the One anointed by God the Spirit as the Messiah, with whom God the Father is well-pleased. Here the entire Godhead of the one, true God in three divine persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is revealed to be at work bringing the reign and rule of heaven to Israel and the nations in the person and work of Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee. This Jesus is no mere man. He is the

divine Son of God who became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). The voice of the Father Himself testifies about Him here at the Jordan River, "You are my beloved Son, with you I am well-pleased." And the Father demonstrates that pleasure by fulfilling His BC Scriptures that we read in Isaiah 42, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations" (Is. 42:1 ESV). At Jesus' return to Nazareth, Luke records that "[Jesus] went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing'" (Luke 4:16–21 ESV). And as Peter taught Cornelius and his household in Acts 10, "Beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:37–38 ESV).

At Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan, the incarnate Son of God takes upon Himself the role of the Servant of the Lord promised by Isaiah. This is confirmed by the descent of the Spirit into Him. Yes, that's right, "into" Jesus. The Holy Spirit didn't just descend onto Jesus, but Mark uses the word "into" Jesus. We can say that Jesus is "possessed" by the Holy Spirit in Mark's Gospel as He takes on the role of the Servant of the Lord, as He takes on the

role of the people of God, and as Jesus assumes the role of humanity itself before God. Jesus, at His baptism, identifies Himself with the children of Israel and us. He became one with us in our standing before God. He identified with humanity's sinful condition. John proclaimed a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus, by undergoing John's baptism, "confesses" as it were, our sinful condition as if it were His own. 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For our sake [God] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in [Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21 ESV).

Could we not say, then, that in His baptism, Jesus was "baptized" into our sin? Jesus was baptized to step into our shoes, or rather, our shackles. Jesus didn't wait until His crucifixion to take on the sin of the world. Already in this baptismal bath, He was taking it on. Our idolatry, hypocrisy, hate, lust—you name the sin—that make up the sewer inside each of us is cast into the water and soaked up by our Lord. Jesus was baptized for us. All our transgressions cascaded to Him. He was "baptized" into our sin that we, in turn, might be baptized into His goodness, His holiness, His purity. In exchange for our sewer, Jesus gives us the fountain of everlasting life through the forgiveness of our sins.

Jesus identified with sinners so that He might be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. In order to be the Messiah who removes the curse of sin from Israel and all humanity, Jesus had to take that sin upon Himself as if it were His own. The Spirit who came down upon and into Jesus then led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. The Spirit who came down upon and into Jesus ultimately brought Him, not to the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem, but to a Roman cross outside of Jerusalem. There, Jesus, laden with the sin of the world suffered God's the Father's punishment of death and hell so that all people would be set free from the bondage of sin and death. Isaiah 53 tells us again about the

Servant of the Lord: "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?" (Is. 53:4–8 ESV).

Baptized and anointed by the Spirit to be the substitute before God . . . for you. Stricken, smitten, and afflicted . . . for you. Bearing the sins of the world, every thought, desire, word, and action contrary to God's Word to the death of the cross . . . for you. As the hymnwriter penned it, "Now rise, faint hearts, be resolute; This man is Christ, our substitute! He was baptized in Jordan's stream, Proclaimed Redeemer, Lord supreme" (*LSB* 405:6).

Because of Christ's saving life, death, and resurrection, you have died to sin in God's sight. When Christ died on the cross and rose again for you, you died to sin and everlasting death. When you were baptized **into** Christ in your Baptism, you died to sin and were raised up individually, personally. Your Baptism plugs you into Christ, into His perfect life lived for you, into His death died for you, and into His resurrection life for you. In Baptism, you also received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit now dwells "in" you. "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God" (1 Cor. 6:19 ESV), Paul writes in 1

Corinthians 6. You are “possessed” by the Holy Spirit. You are in Christ. Christ is in you by the means of the Spirit (1 Cor. 1:30), His Word and Sacraments.

The Holy Spirit now dwells in you as a gift from the Father and the Son. You are new creations in your Baptism where God worked the forgiveness of sins, rescued you from death and the devil, and gifted you eternal life. In Baptism, you have been adopted as children of God and are made one with Christ and incorporated **into** His body, where we continue to receive all that our Lord has promised to His holy people.

These are truly “the facts.” They are the truth of God’s revealed Word to us. “Baptism is God’s work, and what He does is sure and certain. Nothing is more certain in all the universe than the name that God has placed on us in Baptism—the name by which God reveals Himself to us. Baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we have God’s own pledge and promise in Baptism that He has forgiven our sins and delivered us from death, hell, and the devil. In times of doubt, temptation, or failure—especially in the face of death—we can boldly say, “I am baptized **into** Christ” (bold, mine).¹

Case closed! Amen.

¹ *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 296.