



Friday January 8, 2021

Prepared for you by

Pastor Mark Ditmanson

Gospel: Mark 1:4-11

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." ⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

On this Sunday as we celebrate the Baptism of our Lord we consider this an excellent time to meditate on our own baptisms. You were baptized into Christ. There is something awesome and life re-defining about that fact. This is what I mean: being accepted by God is part of the message of this sacrament, forgiveness of sins is part of the promise of this sacrament, but there is so much more. The baptism we share, is more than just a washing away of sin. You come up out of that water, robed in the righteousness of Christ, you come out of that water wrapped around by more than acceptance, defined by more than divine tolerance for all your quirks, or with an unconditional positive regard for your humanness. You come out of that water, reborn, not just refreshed, you are a new creation.

Our baptism into Christ is way beyond moral fortitude, and far beyond discipline. Moral fortitude and discipline are good for any Christian to have, but they are not the whole picture, and in fact when they come to appear to be the whole picture they have obscured the real

thing. The baptism into Christ is something that the most astute and highly regarded spiritual gurus in the Christian faith can only catch onto the hem of it and the simple pious and devout ones of faith see only a portion of it at a time.

Martin Luther considered baptism such a full thing that a Christian could never within a lifetime exhaust the riches found with contemplating the grace of it all. It is too easy for a person to think in their mind "I am baptized into Christ" and have in mind an event that happened a long time ago, an event that gives some sense of assurance of forgiveness and acceptance. No, Martin Luther might counsel, baptism into Christ did not happen to you long ago, it is happening to you all the time, and you are so enriched each and every time that you remember it, it is life transforming, you are a new creation. Baptized into Christ, is to be taken into God's heart, into a relationship, an interpersonal relationship. It is good to take baptism out of our heads and put it into our hearts. And wear that robe of Christ's righteousness with humble pride that you are beloved children of God. Amen.