

SERMON FOR JANUARY 8, 2023

TEXT: MATTHEW 3: 13-17

THEME: FULFILLING ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him.

14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" **15** But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it

is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. **16** And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; **17** and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

In the name of Jesus:

When something you value is destroyed, you are heartsick and inconsolable. When I first got my hearing aids, within one week they were destroyed. How did that happen, you may ask? I left my hearing aids on my nightstand, and our beloved dog, Riley, ate them. Totally destroyed them. Now if you have hearing aids, you know that they are expensive. Real expensive. I took the hearing aids back to where they were purchased, and Derek, the audiologist, told me that it happens all the time. Dogs think that they are dog treats, they look like dog treats and smell like their owner, so the dog thinks that this is something good to destroy. Fortunately they were covered by insurance, until they were destroyed a second time by Riley, this time they fell out of my ears after wrestling with the grandchildren. She found

them, and once again chewed them to pieces. This second time I had to pay out of pocket. And once again I was heartsick. I learned two lessons, one is to never leave hearing aids out where the dog can get them and two, take them out and put them in a safe and secure place when wrestling with the grandkids.

You are heartsick when something valuable is destroyed. A new car in an accident, valuables that are stolen, or family keepsakes that are disintegrated over time or due to the elements. If it happens once it happens once too often, and you are bound and determined not to have it happen again.

When our Lord created heaven and earth and formed our first parents, Adam and Eve out of the dust of the ground, breathing into them the breath of life so that they would become living beings, He was heartsick over their decision to disobey His law and walk away from an eternal relationship with Him. Our Lord is a jealous God, perfect and holy, He gives His honor to no one else and He promises to punish sin. The one who sins will most certainly die, says the Lord. This means that the living Lord is eternally separated from those whom He created and loves. And He is heartsick about it.

So much so that God in love sent His one and only Son, Jesus, into human flesh. God became a man in Jesus, that is why we celebrate Christmas and that is part of the good news of Christmas, that to you is born in the city of

David a Savior, He is Christ the Lord. He was given the name Jesus, because He would save sinners such as you and me.

And so the God Man, Jesus, comes to the Jordan River today in our text, to the place where John the Baptizer is baptizing people. John's baptism is one unto repentance, meaning that those who were baptized by John were turning from their sin to follow God. But Jesus comes to John to be baptized and John responds by saying, "Hold on a minute, Jesus, you got this backwards. You came to be baptized by *me*? Lord, what needs to happen is that I need to be baptized by You." But what happens next? John baptizes Jesus, after the Lord Jesus instructs him to baptize Him for in doing so Jesus is to be baptized "to fulfill all righteousness."

The good Lutheran question is this; "What does this mean?" What does it mean that Jesus had to be baptized to fulfill all righteousness? Well, Jesus came down from heaven to make each of us righteous, that is, right with God. The Apostle Paul writes that because of our sinfulness, no one is righteous, not one, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. So that means that no one has a right relationship with God because of their sins, the sins that they inherited from birth from their parents and the sins that they commit every day, even the things we forget to do or omit to do that God commands is considered sinful. As Jesus explains in the Sermon on the Mount, not only are

you to be faithful to one's spouse, you must also not look lustfully after another, as that is sinful as well. Yes, you shouldn't commit murder, but it is sinful to also hold a grudge as well. Do not steal, the Lord says in the Law, but that also means that you are called to help your neighbor in each and every need. There are things that you do that are sinful, and there are things you fail to do which are sinful as well. Just as we confess we are sinful in thought, word and deed.

That is why Jesus was born, to make us right with God. And that is why Jesus was baptized, to make you right with God, or, to fulfill all righteousness.

God doesn't desire the death of the sinner. He wills that all be saved and come to know the truth of His love for all. As sinners who are incapable of saving themselves, Jesus, God's only Son, steps in to save us, declaring that He would do whatever it takes to save mankind from sin, Satan, and death. Even if it meant that God would have to become like us and identify with us in order to accomplish salvation for us.

That is why in the Gospel lesson for today John the Baptizer baptizes Jesus. Even though Jesus is the Perfect Son of God in human flesh, and has no need to be baptized for forgiveness, He steps in our place and is baptized in our place. Jesus chose to be baptized, and was baptized, to, in the words of Scripture, fulfill all righteousness. In Jesus' baptism He fulfilled all

righteousness, in that He was anointed and approved by God to be the Savior of the world. In His Baptism, God announces to you and to the world that the Messiah has come, Jesus has arrived to save His people from their sins. And how does Jesus save? By taking on our nature, our human flesh, and by being baptized for in His Baptism all of our sins have been placed on Jesus, they have been drowned and buried, so that our old sinful nature has drowned and died. Jesus saves you, by living His life for you in your place to be your Perfect Substitute in Life. Jesus saves you, by going to the cross, to be nailed to the tree and damned by the Father, Jesus saves you, by doing whatever He needs to do so that the lost might be found and the damned might live eternally.

You have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In your Baptism a great exchange has taken place, Jesus takes on your sin so that you can be clothed in His forgiveness and righteousness. Jesus takes your place in His baptism, drowning your sins to die so that you can rise to live your life for Jesus. In His baptism Jesus put himself in your place to fulfill all righteousness, taking upon himself the consequences of your sins, graciously purchasing for you a right relationship with our heavenly Father (Mt 3:15).

These blessings were given to you when you were baptized. Just as the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, so the Holy Spirit has been given to you in your baptism. All of your sins are washed away, the sins you have committed in

thought word and deed, and the sins of omission, those things that you have failed to do to show love to others. In your Baptism, the Holy Spirit gives to you new life and makes you a new person in Jesus.

This is what Luther means when he writes about Baptism in the Catechism where he says that the old person is daily drowned and die through contrition and repentance, so that by the power of the Spirit we rise to newness of life in Christ, living before God always in a right relationship with Him on account of Jesus. The Father looks at you and me, not as if we were sinners, for we are forgiven! He looks at us in love, seeing Jesus, His Son, His forgiveness, His love, His life, and His purity, forever! This is the wonderful exchange, a blessed exchange, our sins laid on Christ so that we now live the holy life of Christ. It is why we begin our service, it is why we begin each day reminding ourselves that we have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son +, and Holy Spirit, forgiven to live a new life for Jesus.

Jesus has fulfilled all righteousness. For you! He was born, baptized, lived, died and rose again to make you His own. And you are His own, made His own in the waters of Baptism. Jesus, forgiving you, so that you can now live for Him!

In the name of the Father, Son+, and Holy Spirit.

Amen

