

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 16 February 2025

Sermon Title : Jesus: The Stories - The Baptism

Speaker : Rev Kenneth Huang

Text : Matthew 3:13-17

INTRODUCTION

This is the first in a series of sermons entitled 'Jesus: The Stories', which aims to introduce to us Jesus and His life. This first sermon is about Jesus' baptism in Matt 3:13-17, to help us get to know better who Jesus is, and what He will do in our lives as we place our faith in Him and follow Him as Lord and Saviour.

1. Jesus' baptism revealed Who Jesus is!

A. Matthew 3:17 reveals without any doubt, that **Jesus is God's Son**, and it is no other person that **God declares this truth** about. As God's Son, Jesus is the only person who really can represent God the Father, for Jesus is the exact representation of God the Father: both righteous and sinless. This truth is emphasised in Hebrews 1:1-3. This means that **to know God the Father**, the Bible states plainly that **we must first come to trust in Jesus**, who is God's Son. (John 14:6-7)

B. As God's Son, in the rest of Matthew 3:17, the Bible also testifies that **Jesus is both loved by God, and that God is well pleased with Him.**

We see 3 definite signs of God's love for and approval of Jesus immediately upon His getting out of the River Jordan after His baptism by John (vv.16 and 17a):

(i) Heaven opened – in the Old Testament, these two words were used to indicate God revealing Himself and showing His favour. (Ezekiel 1:1) That is, in Matthew 3, when heaven opened here, God was acting out His will, and showing His affirmation of Jesus.

(ii) The Spirit of God, as a dove, alighting on Jesus – Now, God the Holy Spirit did not come upon Jesus because He was lacking in anyway. The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus to affirm that Jesus was and is truly God's Son because the Holy Spirit only comes upon the one who is righteous and obedient to God, and Jesus was and is! The dove would henceforth symbolise the Holy Spirit.

(iii) God's voice from heaven – God's Word carries life and authority (as we remember Genesis 1) and so, when He revealed who Jesus was, we know

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that God is declaring the truth about Jesus as His Son and affirmed Him as such!

These three signs were both *visual* – could be seen (Heavens opened, the Spirit of God descending and alighting on Jesus) and *audible* – could be heard (God speaking about Jesus). But surely, Jesus already knew that He was and is God's Son, and that He had God's love and pleasure.

So, who were these 3 definite signs by God regarding Jesus, that could be witnessed by both sight and sound, really meant for?

Although it is not explicitly stated in Matthew 3, these signs were surely meant for those present and witnessing Jesus undergoing baptism, namely, John the Baptist himself, the many others who were also being baptised by John, those present just to see what was happening, and finally, even or especially, those who were exposed by John as not being truly repentant, such as the Pharisees and Sadducees. For all these people, representing humanity, needed to hear and see from God Himself who Jesus really is – God's Son.

One other important question that needs answering: "Why did Jesus get baptised by John the Baptist in the Jordan River in the first place?"

Jesus' answer is, "*to fulfil all righteousness*". (Matthew 3:15) The "righteousness" that was fulfilled in Jesus being baptised by John, was not because Jesus needed to repent of any sin for He was sinless (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus being baptised by John was to serve the purpose of Jesus completely identifying Himself with sinful humanity. And He did so in order that He could be identified with, and also identify with, us. Morgan put it this way, "*In baptism He (Jesus) confessed, as His own, sins which He had not committed...before God. He was numbered with the transgressors and bore the sins of many.*"

That is, Jesus stood in the place of sinful man (2 Corinthians 5:21). And it was not demeaning for Jesus to have been baptised by John. Jesus did so in order to do what was right and necessary in the eyes of God. Thank God for Jesus' obedience and humility!

In Matthew 3:16-17, we also see the interactive work of the Holy Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit) as God the Father sent God the Holy Spirit to rest upon God the Son, Jesus.

2. Jesus' Revelation as God's Son is confirmed by:

- A. His qualification to render the kind of Baptism that only He could administer – the "Baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matthew 3:11):
 - (i) Baptism with the Holy Spirit signifies the life-giving power of God to effect life into what is already dead. (Ezekiel 37:14)

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- (ii) Baptism with fire signifies a purification of the person from sin in order to effect what is holy and right in God's eyes, and also, a judgement of those who have sinned. (Matthew 3:12)

- B. His task as the Messiah who would die for the sinful, as the only One who was fully approved by God. (Isaiah 53:5-6)

Jesus' revelation as God's Son confirms that He is the only One who can and does baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire, resulting in the abundant and pure life that John 10:10 talks about being experienced by the spiritually dead – the life that all of us truly want and can only have in Jesus, a life that gives us meaning from God, a destiny by God, an eternity with God. A work that only the true Messiah can do, and the life that only the true Messiah can give. For Jesus is the Messiah sent by God who comes to take away our sins.

Following from Points 1 & 2:

3. Take Jesus, God's Son, very seriously and obey Him fully

We do so by:

- A. Gladly allowing Jesus to daily convict us, and to purify us, of our sin so that we will be holy and right in God's eyes through the baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire, that only He can administer. The conviction of sin and our being made holy is not just a one-time event in our lives when we first become a Christian. But it happens throughout our lives as Jesus' disciples because Jesus wants us to continue to experience life, and grow in holiness. (1 Thessalonians 4:7)
- B. Gladly obeying Jesus' command that His disciples are to undergo Water Baptism in the Name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:18-20) Water baptism (whether by sprinkling, pouring or immersion) signifies *repentance* – turning away from, and dying to, the old self – and being raised by Jesus from the dead – to new life in Him. (Romans 6:3-4)

Undergoing Water Baptism is also:

- a public declaration of one being a disciple of Jesus – that one has fully given his or her life to Jesus as Saviour and Lord, and is totally committed to daily following Jesus, to imitating Jesus.
- a means of receiving God's much needed grace in a disciple's life as he or she confesses Jesus as Saviour and Lord, and knows that when one is baptised, he or she will be able to better live the life of a disciple of Jesus.

But ultimately, undergoing Water Baptism is a matter of OBEDIENCE to God!

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CONCLUSION

Jesus' baptism revealed who Jesus is – God's Son, whom He loves and is well pleased with. As God's son, Jesus is qualified to render "Baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire" and is the Messiah who would die for the sinful. We must take Jesus very seriously and obey Him fully, gladly allowing Jesus to daily convict us of, and purify us from, our sin so that we will be holy and right in God's eyes, and gladly obey Jesus' command that His disciples are to undergo Water Baptism.

Let us all obey Jesus' command for baptism and *also* commit to becoming official members of the church as the Bible, in so many passages, commands Christians to come together quite formally to help each other grow in the faith and in good works, to help each other serve together in unity, to help each other be encouraged to remain faithful to Jesus when undergoing tough times, to be committed to love each other so that others will know that we are disciples of Jesus.

For Jesus is the Son of the Living God, and we are to imitate Him – *reflect, represent and reveal Him* – as His Witnesses! Amen!

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the Missions Bible Study?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

- 2a. Why do you think Water Baptism is a matter of obedience to God?
- 2b. If you have not been baptised, what is stopping you from doing it? If you have been baptised, is there anyone you would like to encourage to be baptised?

As a group, spend a moment to pray for the Holy Spirit to guide those who have not been baptised (naming those that you know), to see the importance of obeying Jesus' command to do so.

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

3. Jesus' baptism revealed Who Jesus is and confirms His qualification to administer the "Baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire" resulting in the abundant and pure life that John 10:10 talks about, that gives us meaning from God, a destiny by God, an eternity with God.
 - a. Do you desire this abundant life with meaning from God, a destiny by God and an eternity with God?
 - b. Are you experiencing this abundant life now? If not, what is missing?

4. We need to take Jesus, God's Son, very seriously and obey Him fully by allowing Him to daily convict us, and to purify us of our sin so that we might be holy and right in God's eyes through the baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire.
 - a. Reflect on whether you are taking Jesus very seriously and obeying Him fully.
 - b. If you are not doing so, or unsure, how can your Life Group members help, pray for you, or encourage you, to take Jesus very seriously and obey Him fully?

5. Jesus' baptism was to serve the purpose of Jesus completely identifying Himself with sinful humanity.
 - a. What does that tell you about Jesus' love for humanity?
 - b. Since water baptism is a public declaration of one being a disciple of Jesus – that one has fully given his or her life to Jesus as Saviour and Lord, and is totally committed to daily following Jesus, to imitating Jesus, consider:
 - (i) how you can imitate His love for others and commit to doing it by sharing it with a prayer partner.
 - (ii) as a Life Group, how you can imitate Him in serving others and commit to doing it by your next meeting.

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

6. If you have obeyed Jesus' command for water baptism, give thanks for Jesus' obedience and humility that made it possible for you to be made right in God's eyes.

Share how your baptism signifies repentance – turning away from, and dying to, the old self – and being raised by Jesus from the dead – to new life in Him.

7. If anyone in your group has not been baptised, pray for the Holy Spirit to remove any obstacles in your member's path, embolden your member to obey Jesus to publicly declare faith in Jesus and receive God's grace to live as a faithful disciple of Christ.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Crown Him (Majesty) - Chris Tomlin
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqy-gob13kA&ab_channel=ChrisTomlinVEVO
2. There Is One Gospel – CityAlight
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GZuSivURPk&ab_channel=musicmeetsheaven
3. Jesus Shall Take The Highest Honor - Chris Bowater
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hv33W6W_ssw&ab_channel=citrail

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