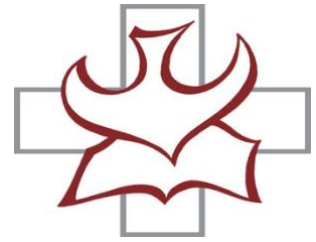


Baptismal Identity

Isaiah 42:1-7 Romans 6:1-14 Matt 3:13-17

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The season of Epiphany is like a spotlight that shines on Jesus and reveals to us who He is and what He has done for us.

Last week the **Magi from the East** were led to Jesus; it taught us that Jesus is the Savior of all men, and that we are to study His Word, to faithfully worship Him, and to generously give gifts to Him.

Today the Epiphany spotlight takes us to Jesus' baptism. Jesus is about 30 years old now. His Baptism *dramatically* reveals Him as the Savior of the world! **It is the only time in all of Holy Scripture that all three Persons of the Holy Trinity are publicly revealed at the same time!** That makes Jesus' baptism exceedingly significant!

The **Holy Spirit** descends on Jesus like a dove, and **God the Father** speaks to **His Son!** *Second only* to the Resurrection, Jesus' baptism is the **brightest heavenly spotlight** shining down on Him and revealing Him as the Savior of the world!

The Baptism of Jesus **revealed** that He is the promised Messiah Who came into the world to "**fulfill all righteousness**".

The word "**righteousness**" is the courtroom term that means that you are **declared "not guilty" and set free** from your sins to live a new life. Jesus does that for you in His work of salvation, which begins with His Baptism. Jesus is beginning His work that will culminate with **your righteous "not guilty!" verdict** before God!

The reason you are declared "righteous" and set free is because Jesus took your sins upon Himself in His baptism, and then He carried them to the cross in Jerusalem, where He suffers and dies in your place. His resurrection from the dead on the third day is the PUBLIC DECLARATION that you and all people are set free from sin, guilt and death!

In His Baptism, Jesus **begins** His work as the Savior of the World.
In His death, Jesus **finishes** His work as the Savior of the World ¹.

In His baptism, Jesus begins His journey to Jerusalem with your sins that culminates with His death on the cross. **Jesus “fulfills all righteousness” for you by His life, death and resurrection.** In other words, you are declared “**not guilty**” because Jesus picked up your sins in His Baptism and died with them on the cross in Jerusalem.

Jesus’ baptism is a big deal: today we would use words like “It’s His ordination” or “It’s His commissioning.” **In His Baptism, the Son of God is anointed by the Holy Spirit and identified by God the Father as the Savior of the world!** His work will accomplish “righteousness” for you! Because of His work, you are declared “not guilty!” and set free from your sins!

Because Jesus’ Baptism is a big deal, so too is your Baptism! Baptism is something that God commands for you; it is not an option, it’s not your work, it’s not a sign of loyalty, nor is it simply a “church rite”. Baptism is called “Holy” Baptism because it belongs to God. **HOLY BAPTISM IS SOMETHING GOD DOES TO YOU – He is active, you are passive!**

**What happened to Jesus
happened to you!**

In Jesus’ Baptism, the Holy Spirit came to Him, and the Father declared Him His Son. In your Baptism, the Holy Spirit comes to you, and the Father declares that you belong to Him and that you are part of His family!

**This is your
Baptismal identity!**

- † **In Holy Baptism, your sin and guilt are “washed away!”**
- † **In Baptism, you are given the gifts of salvation!**
- † **In Holy Baptism, all the blessings and benefits of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection are given to you!**
- † **In Holy Baptism, you are declared “righteous!” -- “not guilty!” of your sins!**
- † **In Holy Baptism, the Holy Spirit comes to you, and God the Father declares you His very own son or daughter!**
- † **In Holy Baptism, God writes His name on you as you are baptized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit!”**

¹ Remember that when Jesus died, He said, “**It is finished**”. John 19:30: *When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished,” and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.* The work that makes you righteous is finished: it is complete, nothing more is needed! You are declared “not guilty!” (= righteous) in His resurrection because of His death on the cross! The Resurrection validates and confirms that Jesus’ death was for the sins of the world!

Throughout the New Testament, there are many and various blessings associated with Holy Baptism. Here is a sample of the gifts that God gave you when you were baptized:

Given the gift of faith
Sins were washed away
Justified by Grace
Heir to Eternal Life
Rescued from death
Delivered from the devil
Given eternal salvation
Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit
Cleanses your conscience
Access to God
Considered Holy & Pure
Belong to God
United to Christ
Filled with Holy Spirit

This is all God's work in your life – it's 100% God's grace, mercy, and goodness! Baptism is the way that God has chosen to forgive your sins and to bring you into His family. **In Holy Baptism, all the blessings and benefits of Christ's life, death, and resurrection are given to you!**

Baptism is called a **Means of Grace**. It is a means, a way, that God has chosen to give you His grace, mercy and forgiveness. In Holy Baptism, you are passive, and God is active to save you: *it is HIS WORK in your life!*

HOLY BAPTISM IS A BIG DEAL ---- and it changes your life!

You now belong to God; You are connected to Christ; you are in a relationship with the Holy Trinity! Your whole life is different!

Each day you live as a baptized person.

What that means is that you remember the significance of your baptism each day. Baptism isn't just a distant memory or something that your parents arranged for you when you were a baby. **HOLY BAPTISM is an everyday reality in your life!**

It is the miracle of new birth that changes everything about you!

If you struggle with self-esteem and self-worth issues, then look to your baptism to find your value, your worth, and your identity. You belong to God, and every single blessing of salvation has been given to you. You are valuable to God – that is where you find your value, your worth, and your identity. The blessings of baptism overcome depression, discouragement, and despair. Daily confession and forgiveness remind you how much God loves you, and it's where you relive your baptism and receive its power! Your baptism marks you as God's very own. You belong to God the Father, you are redeemed by God the Son, and you're filled by God the Holy Spirit! Here is how the Apostle Paul teaches the baptized to live their lives:

In the same way, count yourselves **dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus**. Romans 6:11

In Holy Baptism, your old sinful nature was crucified with Christ and buried; it is drowned in Holy Baptism.

IT HAS NO POWER OVER YOU!

Just as Christ rose from the dead and has new life, so too, in Holy Baptism, you have risen from the dead and have **new life**. Your **new life** is a life in Christ! Your **new life** is life in the Kingdom of God! **Your old sinful nature is crucified and buried: it has no power over you!**

You are to think about yourself like this. You are to **count yourself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus**. That means that you intentionally live a holy and godly life. It means that you strive for good works according to the 10 Commandments. It means that the Fruit of the Holy Spirit are seen in your life. Things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control; you live a life of humility, gentleness, patience, and love.

Find your identity and Holy Baptism!

Holy Baptism changes you forever! Your Baptism is a big deal!

Jesus' Baptism marked Him as the Messiah and Savior of the World! Jesus' Baptism was the beginning of His work of salvation for us. His journey to Jerusalem began on the banks of the Jordan River.

Your Baptism marks you as belonging to Christ! Your Baptism was the beginning of your Christian faith and life; its power and significance is a present reality in your every day of your life! Your journey to heaven began in the waters of Holy Baptism!

You belong to God the Father, you are redeemed by God the Son, and you're filled by God the Holy Spirit!

This is your Baptismal Identity!
Go and live your life that way! Amen!