



Life Guide

applying God's Word to life

Christ Begins: Anointed for His Mission

Matthew 3:13-17

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. ¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

1. In Matthew's Gospel, how much time has elapsed between Matthew 2:23 and Matthew 3:1? (Consult Luke 3:23) When is the last time that we hear about John and Jesus together? (Consult Luke 1:39-45).

It's amazing how little we are told about Jesus' early life. Jesus is presented at the temple and circumcised. The Wise men come to visit when just is possibly as old as two years old. We hear that Jesus make the journey to Jerusalem when he was 12, and he stays in the temple while his parents leave. Then the next time we really hear of him is when he comes to John to be baptized. It's possibly that John and Jesus grew knowing each other, they were cousins after all. John knows who Jesus is when he shows up. But we don't really know anything about the mean time.

2. There's a story in the Old Testament about Elisha healing a commander from Aram named Naaman. What did Naaman say about the waters of the Jordan? See 2 Kings 5:10-12

Now consider this: your God was baptized in the Jordan for you.

10 Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."

11 But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. 12 Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage.

3. Agree or Disagree- Jesus needed to be baptized.
For his own sake, certainly not! Jesus did not have sin to cleanse or forgiveness to gain through baptism. But he does say that it is proper for him and John to do this to fulfill all righteousness. There is something necessary about it to fulfill God's plan, because of what is happening when Jesus is baptized. He is publicly stepping into our place and identifying himself under the wrath of God that we deserved. So in a sense, Jesus does need to be baptized because he is standing as one man for all sinners for all time. In that sense he is the worst sinner the world has known.
4. Look at these passages to get a sense for how "fulfilling all righteousness" connects with God's saving activity in the Old Testament. Psalm 65:5, Isaiah 41:10, 42:6, 45:21, 46:13.

God is certainly righteous, holy, and just. But it seems that God also connects his righteousness in the fact that he is

Savior and that he redeems his people in his righteousness. He upholds them and strengthens them in his righteous right hand. It seems there, that it's not that his hand is "just" but that it is saving. So when Jesus says it is necessary to fulfill all righteousness, he is saying it is necessary to fulfill part of God's plan of salvation, his righteousness expressed on behalf of his people. There is also a connection the righteous life that Jesus is living as our substitute so that he can give this righteousness to us as a gift. This the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel.

5. Compare Isaiah 42:1 (the First Lesson for today) with Matthew 3:17. Isaiah is talking about the office of the Servant who will redeem Israel. What is happening in Matthew 3:17?

These words seem so closely connected, almost a quote, that God is inaugurating his Servant, his beloved Son, into his office as Savior. God had often talked about Israel as his dear Son, though rebellious. Now God is putting into his place his own beloved Son, the Righteous One!

6. What was the purpose of "anointing" in the Old Testament? See 1 Samuel 16:13. How is this connected to the title "Messiah" and "Christ"? Now connect it back to the dove at Jesus' baptism.

A king would be anointed for his office and sometimes the Holy Spirit would visibly come upon him to strengthen him to carry out his office. The title's Messiah and Christ are Hebrew and Greek for the "Anointed One". The Holy Spirit descends on Jesus in power after he is baptized to anoint him with power for his ministry.

7. Jesus' baptism has great significance for our life. He is publicly declared our substitute and Savior. How does that give new meaning to the way you think about your baptism?

Jesus stands in your place through his baptism, and through your baptism, you get to stand in his as the Father's beloved child, pleasing to him. Jesus was also anointed with power in order to carry out everything that you could not, perfectly.

8. John got to see this amazing sign, but later on while in prison, he seems to fall into doubt about who Jesus is. (Pastor Wordell preached on this in Advent.) How can you use this sign in your daily life to assure yourself of who Jesus is and what he promises you?

The devil is crafty and sometimes he uses trials and difficulties in this life to undercut our confidence about who Christ is. Maybe it comes in persecution, or sickness, or frustration. In all of these cases, we have the Father's testimony and the Holy Spirit's indication of who Christ is and what is mission for us is. Maybe it's the image of a dove posted in a special place, or a shell that reminds you of Jesus' baptism and your baptism. God doesn't speak from heaven often, usually he speaks through his word. But when he does thunder from heaven, it must be all the more important to hear!