

Bible Study Guide for the week of January 2, 2023

- 1. Read through the gospel reading**
- 2. Read the notes and comments**
- 3. Read and answer the questions at the end**

Matthew 3:13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, 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 it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. 16 And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

14 John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

The author of Matthew is telling us quite an interesting story here. John who is preparing the way for Jesus, is being asked to baptize Jesus. Jesus is telling John to baptize him. After John said that he is unworthy to untie the straps of Jesus sandals. After John said that Jesus will baptize people with the Holy Spirit and fire. John doesn't want to baptize Jesus. Not because he doesn't have the resources or a reason not to but because Jesus is the Messiah. He is sinless. So why does Jesus need to be baptized? Jesus doesn't. Jesus wants to be baptized to follow God's will. God wills it that the world sees Jesus as his only son. Thus, Jesus is not only being righteous but is affirming the title of Son of God.

16 And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.

Here the author of Matthew talks about “he saw the Spirit of God.” But as curious readers we want to know who is “he”? Is it John? Is it Jesus? Is it the author witnessing the spirit? Different scholars argue different points. However, we conclude that while knowing who saw the Spirit of God might be helpful contextually, Jesus being made known to the world as God's son and having this account of his baptism is a gift in and of itself. Jesus is God's son. We are given the honor and privilege of hearing the story of how Jesus is acting on and following through the will of God. Here, the author of Matthew wants to highlight that God is reaching out to not only Jesus and John and affirming their actions but to us as well. This is all to say while we as humans wrestle with and question the context and background of what's going on, we should be careful to find that balance of reading the baptism of Jesus in a faithful AND historical context.

17 And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

As we pointed out in the last verse, God is affirming what Jesus has done here. Keep in mind God isn't jumping up and down screaming “That's my kid!!” with all the pride a father can muster. God is pleased that Jesus has gone to John for baptism. God is pleased that Jesus is acting and being dutiful to God's will. Because here, the only way that Jesus has been proclaimed as the Son of God was through Scripture. Here God claims and makes known to ALL that Jesus is, indeed, God's son. And because God recognizes Jesus being his son through baptism, we ALL are recognized as children of God. Because we are joined together in baptism and through Christ's life, death, and resurrection on the cross, we are seen by God as his and God is pleased that we too, are acting and being dutiful to God's will.

Discussion Questions

- 1. What is your baptismal story? Tell it to your family or friends (where you were baptized, who was the pastor, were you crying or quiet, what age were you when you were baptized, etc.). If you have children, tell them their baptismal story. Reflect on your story(ies) and how it has impacted you today.**
- 2. How do you acknowledge your baptism? What do you do, if anything, to celebrate the day and its impact on you?**
- 3. As a child of God, where do you hear the proclamation to fulfill God's will the most? Where do you hear it the least?**