

Jesus – Our Example 11-9-03

Matthew 3:13-17

(Video clip of the baptism of Jesus from Matthew)

Open your Bibles and read along with me the passage for today, Matthew 3:13-17 (NIV) ¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. ¹⁶As 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. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Let's examine this passage one verse at a time and see what the Spirit will speak to our hearts today. ¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. Most pastors and missionaries can tell you when they heard the call of God to work in some fulltime ministry. The Word declares that we are all fulltime ministers, but some of us are called to do so in secular fields. In working with High School students it is a joy to see them discover what God is calling them to. I've shared with many of you how I heard the Holy Spirit call my heart to a pastoral ministry after attending a Promise Keeper event. It was as clear as if the conversation had taken place audibly. Jesus must have had some call from the Father to begin His earthly ministry. If he followed the traditions of his culture, as the oldest brother, he would have been caring for the family after his stepfather's death.

Luke tells us that Jesus was around 30 when He began His ministry (Luke 3:23). In the Old Testament, the Levites that cared for the most holy things had to be thirty years of age. (Numbers 4:3-4) In keeping with God's design, the Holy Spirit had Jesus in a period of preparation until the call to the lower Jordan where John was baptizing.

I have sometimes wondered what it would have been like to do business with Jesus the carpenter. I'm not alone, Max Lucado writes about the sawdust left behind in Jesus' seat in the Synagogue. How wonderful to know that He can relate to our working life. He knows what it is like to have to fill orders, keep up with demands, pay creditors, and I really like the fact that He can relate to complaining customers. He was surely tired at the end of a long hard day, and yet, He put up with His brothers and sisters and needs around the house with loving grace. If you think dealing with the spiritually immature can be taxing, consider that, to Jesus, everyone was incredibly immature spiritually. No doubt He sat and listened to the rabbi in the Synagogue as they completely distorted the Word that He was, but He did so with patient compassion. Yes, He can relate to whatever you are going through, even the hectic demands of everyday life. He's been where you are. (Hebrews 4:15)

Yet, one day, perhaps during His regular early morning time of prayer, (you don't think He started that habit only when His ministry began do you?) the Spirit directed Him to be baptized by John. Sometimes the direction of the Holy Spirit doesn't seem to make sense. That is because our perspective is so limited. Why would Jesus need

Commented [notes1]: ²³Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. Luke 3:23 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: ³Count all the men from thirty to fifty years of age who come to serve in the work in the Tent of Meeting. ⁴This is the work of the Kohathites in the Tent of Meeting: the care of the most holy things. Numbers 4:3-4 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: ¹⁵For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15 (KJV)

the baptism of repentance? He didn't need a change in His perspective, and He certainly had nothing to be sorry about, no areas that needed to be surrendered to God.

John asks the same question in the next verse. ¹⁴*But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"* Matthew 3:14 (NIV) John knew that his mission was to be the forerunner of the Messiah. He had come to prepare the way for Him. I don't know how he knew about Jesus. Maybe the rumors of this incredibly godly carpenter had made their way to his cousin, John. Perhaps John's spiritually tuned ear heard the Holy Spirit point to Jesus as the One. We know that John pointed his own followers to Jesus as the Lamb of God. But the question remains, how can the servant, one who feels he is not even worthy to be the servant, baptize the Master? Why would a sinless person be baptized?

Matthew 3:15 (NIV) ¹⁵*Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.* What does that mean? Let's try the Message translation, Eugene Peterson's interpretation. ¹⁵*But Jesus insisted. "Do it. God's work, putting things right all these centuries, is coming together right now in this baptism."* Jesus has heard the call. He knows His mission, and this is the exciting beginning. I never saw the anticipation in this until I read it this last week. Imagine the patience of Jesus! Every year He went to the Temple and saw the corruption. Every Sabbath He witnessed the teaching of the Old Covenant knowing He was about to make a New Covenant with the people of God. He probably was seethed every time He saw the moneymaking going on in the Temple.

In my humble opinion, Jesus had done no miracles before His ministry began. He knew He could, for all of the temptations in the wilderness will be requests to do the supernatural. But He was submitted to the direction of the Holy Spirit, and His time had not yet come. Year after year of the tasks of common man and suddenly the call comes. "Go be baptized by John," the Spirit directs. Jesus made the journey in obedience, and yet, John said it isn't proper. Now read the Message version again. *"Do it. God's work, putting things right all these centuries, is coming together right now in this baptism."* Matthew 3:15 (Message) "Let's get the show on the road. This is God's direction, just obey and see what He does next." He was identifying with fallen man's condition in every way including baptism. The call was a call for His ministry to begin.

I wonder if there aren't some of you that are waiting for a call. You've been doing the everyday tasks of life, growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord, serving Him by serving your fellow man in your field of employment. You've been doing your work as unto the Lord. You've been patiently observing a need that you wondered if God wants you to fill. Maybe He is about to call you. Whatever He says, do it! Don't hesitate or second-guess. When you are sure it is God, just go! Are you available to hear Him call you in another direction? If He is Lord of your life it doesn't matter whether you have other plans or not. He is Lord. His call to glorify Him in some secular field is just as important, but perhaps He wants to stretch your faith. Are you willing? That's what He asked me. He may be knocking on your heart sometime soon to ask you too. You can't be too young or old to answer a call to some new ministry.

In everything, Jesus related to us so that He could be the example of how a godly man was to live. Godly men repent and make a public declaration of a heart change. In so completely relating to mankind, Jesus was baptized. He had no need to be baptized, but as our perfect example, He obeyed the leading of the Holy Spirit. Fulfilling all righteousness was completing the task the Father had given Him. Relating to man, even in baptism, was a part of that assignment. (Hebrews 2:17)

¹⁶As 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. Matthew 3:16 (NIV) As soon as Jesus and John obeyed, the miraculous happened. Heaven is opened and the Spirit of God descended like a dove and lit upon Jesus. Talk about not being able to describe the supernatural with our everyday language! Here was an extraordinary supernatural event, and the only words that can be used are similes. What does it mean that heaven opened? Something happened in the heavens that was visible to Jesus. All we have are these words to go on.

The Holy Spirit has been referred to as fluttering over, brooding over, and even passing over in the Old Covenant. (Genesis 1:2) This was not an unfamiliar expression. Surely Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit from conception, so what is this? Is it just for John? The Spirit had told John that the person upon whom the Spirit lighted like a dove was the Messiah. (John 1:31-34) The Spirit empowers us to minister. He not only directs us but also empowers us to do as He has directed. Jesus is not anointed by man for ministry but by God. Under the Old Covenant the priests and kings were anointed with oil for their ministry. That was a picture of the Holy Spirit. Here we do not have a picture but the visible manifestation of the anointing from God.

There is a key lesson for us here. Jesus was called, stepped out and obeyed. In obeying He was our perfect example. It didn't make sense to John, but obedience makes sense to the Lord. Just do it John! He obeys and, BOOM, he sees what He has been waiting for, the sign of the Messiah. When God calls you to step out by faith and obey, whether it is the ministry you're in now, or a new ministry, sometimes you can't see what it is all about. But when you obey, the anointing to do the work comes upon you. You might think, Lord, you've got the wrong person. I don't have the gifting to do that. You step out in faith and the anointing to do the job and the power of the Holy Spirit is there. Don't trust in your natural gifts or talents. Even Jesus needed the anointing from the Father to walk in His calling. How much more do we need it?

I have a confession. The last few weeks I have been leaning on man for my direction with the messages, reading commentaries before listening to the Holy Spirit. Please forgive me. I don't want to waste your time. I want to come before you as I come out of the presence of God with a word from His lips. (1 Peter 4:11) The wisdom of man can't change our hearts, only the power of the Holy Spirit, only the anointing of God in the message can.

When the Spirit is present, God speaks to our hearts. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: ¹⁷For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Hebrews 2:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: ²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Genesis 1:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: ³¹I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel." ³²Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God." John 1:31-34 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 1 Peter 4:11

When you obey the direction of the Spirit, you'll find God speaks even more. This is the first quote from the Father in the New Testament. It has a lot to say to us. I believe it is a pattern for everything that God says. You'll notice that there are 3 times that God spoke in the Gospels and two out of three say the about the same thing. (Mark 9:7) (John 12:28)

Jesus is the Son. "This is My Son." It is important for us to know that Jesus is the Son of God. He is the firstborn. He has all the rights and privileges of the firstborn. He is the heir of God. He is not the son of a human man. A couple of weeks ago we looked at the virgin birth. God wants you to know that He is the Father of Jesus for the same reason that He wants you to know that Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus. He wants you to know that Jesus is not the son of Joseph. He came down from heaven to do His heavenly Father's will. He came from eternity with the Father to be a light in the darkness. He came to do what man born of human parents could never do. "This is **MY** Son." This is not Joseph's son. This is not the son of illegitimacy. God Himself declared it. We'd better believe it.

Sometimes we wish God would just speak out loud so we could clearly know what it is that He wants us to know. HE DID! And here is what He wants you to know. "THIS IS MY SON!" You see, once you get that, life is not the same. God has visited man. What He said and did gives our lives purpose and hope. If you ignore that... It wouldn't matter if God did speak out loud to you personally, you've already decided what you want to do with your life, and it has nothing to do with God. But if you accept this voice that Peter testified to hearing when he was with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (2 Peter 1:17-18) then you just need to do what God said there, "Hear Him!" (Luke 9:35) Hear His teaching. Hear His Spirit and obey. He is Lord!

"Whom I love;" God said. Jesus has forever been satisfied with the Son. Do you know why? Because the Son is holy as the Father is holy. The Son has all the attributes of the Father, for they are One. Those perfect attributes appeal to God's heart because they are an expression of all that is good.

Now, I want to share something that should thrill your heart. Jesus said, "*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.*" (John 15:9a) Once again, why does the Father love the Son so much? Because the Son's character, his attributes are the same perfect ones the Father has. He is holy, just, righteous, good, compassionate, love, and every other perfect virtue. Then why does the Son love you? Because He is making you like Himself. He sees the finished work. He sees you in Him right now, positionally, and knows that one day you will be like Him in all His attainable attributes. You'll never be eternal, or all powerful – thank God – but you will be holy and good. When you see Him, that work will be complete. Oh happy day!

I imagine that Jesus was very encouraged, as He began this incredible task before Him, to hear that He was the beloved Son of God. I hope you are encouraged, in a similar way, to know that you are a beloved child of God. It is not because of what you have accomplished. It is because of who you are in Him. If you have a low expectation level of what your life can mean in eternity, this is a wake up call. You are a beloved son or daughter of God. Will you hear His voice to you right now, right

Commented [notes8]: ⁷And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. Mark 9:7 (KJV)

Commented [notes9]: ²⁸Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. John 12:28 (KJV)

Commented [notes10]: ¹⁷For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."
¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. 2 Peter 1:17-18 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: ³⁵And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. Luke 9:35 (KJV)

here, right from His lips? *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love."* John 15:9(NIV) Did you hear Him? (Hebrews 3:15) Be encouraged son or daughter of God. You are loved because God has begun a work in you that He will complete.

Commented [notes12]: ¹⁵While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. Hebrews 3:15 (KJV)

This is a side note to fathers. If you don't declare your love to your children, you aren't following the heavenly Father's example. They need to hear that they are loved. I love you Andrew! I love you Katrina! I love you Elizabeth! I love you Daniel! I'm proud of each of you.

The Father went on to say, *"With Him I am well pleased."* We've seen why this is true. It is His character that pleased God. Jesus had just begun His ministry, and God was pleased. A character that is pleasing to God will not disappoint God in actions. It is our Christ like character that Jesus is most lovingly and diligently forming in us, so that when we see Him He can say to us, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter into my joy." (Matthew 25:21)

Commented [notes13]: ²¹lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Matthew 25:21 (KJV)

You realize God had to be WELL pleased don't you? If God were just pleased with Jesus, He would not have been sufficient sacrifice. He had to be the unblemished Lamb. He had to be the perfect, spotless Lamb. Jesus was our example in all things: in childhood, in the work-a-day world, in hearing the Spirit, in obeying the call, in baptism, in ministry, and in death. Peter calls Him the Lamb without blemish or defect. (1 Peter 1:19) His character is our goal. His character in us produces a transformed life.

Commented [notes14]: ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 1 Peter 1:19 (NIV)

When God spoke, it was two excerpts from Scripture. The first, "This is my Son", is from Psalm 2:7. That Psalm goes on to describe the Son of God becoming the King of kings that conquers the world. The second is from Isaiah 42:1 "...my chosen One in Whom I delight..." This was the start of the Servant Songs that culminate in Isaiah 53. In that short expression to Jesus, was both His destiny of becoming Lord of all and the path to that place through the cross. We hear what God said on one level, but I believe Jesus heard it on a much deeper level. The pattern is the same for us. We will rule and reign with Him, but we must die with Him first, and die daily in this life, to be an overcomer.

Thus began the ministry of Jesus the Messiah, our perfect example, with the very voice of God declaring the eternal truth that Jesus is His Son. He satisfies the heart of God. In Christ you are pleasing to God! In Him, you are a son or daughter of God in whom God delights. "This is my Son, Whom I love; with Him I am well pleased."