

**BAPTISM OF OUR LORD
JANUARY 8, 2012**

“BETTER BY BAPTISM”

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I begin with a poem entitled “A Prayer At A Baptism” by John Shea.

I must remember, Johnny, to tell you,

perhaps on some teen day, when your loneliness is as loud as a rock concert,

how fresh from the bent space, you came among us, in a new womb of blankets.

You belched and laughed and wailed, your face as friendly as a dog’s tail.

We did rites over you, with all the ceremony of a primitive tribe, painting their babies.

Your grandfather, his thumb the trunk of a tree, winter could not break,

traced a cross on your forehead, like a man signing a will.

Your parents held you, under a waterfall of grace, and your sleeping eyes,

suddenly sat up and stared, into the funny faces of our love.

We made you our own, by making you God’s.

Your uncle Len played paparazzo, and has the evidence of all this, in a box somewhere.

Afterwards you slept, and we ate and drank and laughed, and knew,

our love would outlast diamonds.

I must remember, Johnny, to tell you.

I really do not think Jesus cares if call this day The Baptism Of Our Lord or The 1st Sunday after Epiphany.

I do not even think Jesus cares, if we remember His Baptism or not!

But I think that Jesus cares a whole lot about US remembering OUR Baptism!

Over the last few weeks it’s been all about bringing Jesus into our world and into our lives. Pondering with Mary how life-changing the birth of the Savior has been. Wondering with the Shepherds at the humble birth of the Savior of the world and the angelic message of glory to God and peace to the earth. Adoring with the Wise Men as we go the extra mile, bringing gifts of time and treasure, falling on our knees to worship the Christ Child.

But now the view has changed. What we prepared for is in the past. What we live for is this day. And so our focus changes from the Jesus who CAME, to the Jesus who IS. And today, while Jesus is in the river being Baptized, He is asking us to remember that WE are CALLED IN BAPTISM, WE are CLAIMED IN BAPTISM, and today WE COME TOGETHER to AFFIRM OUR BAPTISM. Today is the day that Jesus tells us about OUR Baptism. Jesus says, “I was there to hear your borning cry.”

What is the meaning of HIS baptism? Jesus is God’s Son, the Beloved. When Jesus is baptized, we are filled to overflowing with the joy that God has revealed His Son, announced His love and proclaimed just how pleased He is with Jesus. The meaning of Jesus’ baptism is that God accepts Him as His Son, and the joy we feel over His acceptance is the same joy we feel over our own acceptance. Jesus is the LIGHT! Jesus is the WORD! Jesus is the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE! Jesus is, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God. After witnessing His baptism, we do not have to wonder any longer about who Jesus is. We know His true identity.

The very same is true for us, as we remember our own baptism. We are connected to the body of Christ. St. Paul writes, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?” Paul goes on to say, “If we have been united with Him in a death like His, we will certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.” In Baptism we become children of God, no less loved and accepted by God than Jesus Himself.

What is the meaning of OUR baptism? From our God who is near, to the water that is clear, we are connected to the body of Christ. We are dead to sin and alive to God. We are given a new and everlasting life, and a brand new identity as children of a loving Lord.

There is nothing in Baptism that guarantees a lifetime of bliss. Think about what happens after the Baptism of Jesus. He is tempted by Satan for 40 days in the wilderness. Then His ministry begins. Jesus comes face to face with a man with an unclean spirit, a woman with a fever and a steady stream of people who are sick or possessed by demons. There is no rest for the newly baptized. But there is HOPE!

When we feel like we are drowning in the world's pain, we are raised up, and the breath of God fills us. Like birth, baptism means life. It is done once, but it is good for a lifetime!

The Baptized bring the Good News!

The Baptized stand up for those who cannot stand on their own!

The Baptized are called to change the world!

The Baptized are called to show the way, to speak the truth, to live the life!

The Baptized are called to follow Jesus out of the water and into the world.

My new favorite Baptism story: A father is in Church with his 5-year-old daughter. He sits in the very front row so she can see everything that is happening. During the service a baby is Baptized. The little girl is watching closely and sees that the Pastor is saying something while pouring water over the baby's head. She turns to her father and asks, "Daddy, why is he brainwashing that baby?"

Baptism and brainwashing... maybe not so far apart! If we wash our brains, maybe we will see things more clearly, maybe the water will not be so muddy. Let us open the eyes of our hearts and our lives to God's amazing grace.

Today we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus, and we remember our own Baptism.

In Baptism our gracious heavenly Father frees us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are born children of a fallen humanity; by water and the Holy Spirit we are reborn children of God and made members of the Church, the body of Christ. Living with Christ and in the communion of saints, we grow in faith, love, and obedience to the will of God.

Called by the Holy Spirit, trusting in the grace and love of God, let us make public affirmation of our Baptism.

Please turn to (8:00AM, page 235), (10:30AM, page 237) in the front of Evangelical Lutheran Worship.

And the voice of God says, "My beloved, with you I am well pleased!" And all God's children say:

Amen.

Sola Deo Gloria!