

The Baptism of Our Lord
January 6/7, 2024
White Paraments
Mark 1:4-11

When I was in high school youth group, we had a great game called sound scavenger hunt. We would take tape recorders all over the town of Littleton, Colorado and had to record certain sounds for points and for more clues that would lead us to the end of the game. It was fun.

Some of the harder ones to get were the sounds of cars screeching their tires, ambulance sirens, and jet airplanes flying overhead. You had to be ready all the time for a possible sound that could be heard and then have the recorder ready to record it at the same time. We missed many of the opportunities because we were usually talking and chattering away. Which, now that I look back on it, was probably our Youth Leader's goal all along. But, at the end of the day, we would all come together, and we could tell which groups took it more seriously and which groups tried to cheat and pretend that their sounds were what the score sheet asked for.

I still remember how one group used the sound of their fan belt wearing out and claimed it was a car's tires squealing on University Avenue. BUSTED. We all knew exactly what the sound really was because we heard it every time that youth member's car started up.

In the end prizes would be awarded to the people who did the best job of listening carefully and didn't get distracted by idle conversation or laughter.

God doesn't want us to be distracted either. So often we are having such a good time living our lives that we forget the real purpose of life is found in revealing Christ. Too often we orient our lives so that our quality time on the beach or our time out with friends is often at the expense of time we could have spent with God.

We manage to plan activities and priorities in our life over the priorities of the mission of the church. Yes, there are times that we know that worship, bible study, fellowship events, and service events are available at church, but we decide that the Orlando social scene is more important than being in the place where we hear our Lord talking to us.

Often we neglect our daily devotional time and choose rather to surf wantonly on the internet, or read another trashy novel, or sit mindlessly in front of the TV for yet another interesting episode of "Friends".

I saw the *Not Enough Time with God Starter Kit* on the internet the other day. Ironically enough it was pictures of Netflix, YouTube, Instagram, and Tick Tock. We spend more than enough time on these things, and then we mutter how we just don't have enough time when people call up and ask for help around church.

Today, brothers and sisters in Christ, John the Baptist is signaling a new beginning for us. He calls out for us to behold the Lamb of God who was sent to die for our sins.

John the Baptist is a pretty unbelievable character, but not in his day. There were all kinds of groups in Jesus' day that found their spiritual journey through the wilderness. So, he would not have been as crazy to them as he may seem to the world today. In fact, his ability to maintain a life in the wilderness with a diet of nothing but wild honey and locusts likely impressed people with his dedication to God and his not letting his day's starter pack of distraction from God get in the way.

With nothing to distract him, John could testify to his cousin's divinity and point out that this was the One powerful enough to change you from a distracted, self-serving person of the world to a Christ-centered, faithful witness to the Gospel.

This person of Christ came up out of the water, not to lead a life of a king, but to lead the life of a servant. He serves every one of us in this sacrament today. This very body and blood of Christ is now given to you who confess that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. That was, indeed, God calling from the heavens that He was pleased with His Son, and that was, indeed, the Holy Spirit that was descending like a dove.

Many of you here today were baptized in the name of our Triune God who showed himself in the scripture today. Some of you came as adults after full instruction because you believed and wanted to be baptized, like so many adults have been, here at Faith. Some of you came through the faith of a little baby, and in the body of a little baby, the pastor poured the water over your soft and precious little head, marking you as one redeemed by Christ the crucified. And some of you are still hearing about God's promise of salvation and deciding whether or not it is for you.

It *is* for you.

Because our God came to us and continues to come to all Christians with more forgiveness for our sins than we can ever comprehend. Our God revealed himself at the cry of John the Baptist and the world has never forgotten that insignificant day in that dirty river.

This event, which has created the largest organization the world has ever seen, came together because of the name of one man.

This is the name of Jesus the Christ, the only name by which man can be saved. The only name by which you can come to true peace and happiness. The only name by which you can find redemption from depression, anxiety, frustration, and constant conflict. This name is your name.

Jesus gave His life on the cross and rose from the dead as the only God who many would imitate but only One would be.

The rock group Queen, known for such hits as “Another one Bites the Dust”, and “We are the Champions”, inadvertently gave homage to our God in their song *One Vision*. The lyrics say, “One man, one door, one mission, one heart, one soul, one final solution, one flash of light, one God, one vision, one flesh, one hope, one true religion.”

Whether they realize it or not, and considering Freddie Mercury was considered to be by many a faithful member of the cult of Zoaster, they likely did not. But, they still paid clear homage to the truth of our dear Savior Jesus.

He is the one, and He will be the one, who will unite the nations and bring us to life eternal.

Now, our mission is to take that cry of John the Baptist, use the language of that great rock and roll song and share that message with all who are disconnected, self-oriented and in need of words of forgiveness. And show them that life rests in our one, true Savior Jesus.

AMEN.

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