

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, January 18, 2022
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“INTO THE BATHTUB”

READING: Matthew 3:13-17 – Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. 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. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Have you ever considered why Jesus presents himself to be baptized by John in the Jordan? After all, John’s baptism is a baptism of repentance. His call to all who came to hear him was, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of your sins.” What sins does Jesus have to repent of? None. He is the holy Son of God and pure in a way that no other human being had ever been. He has done nothing of which he is guilty or culpable. Still he tells John that “...it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” What could that mean?

I find myself always thinking of this illustration: When we were kids at home on the farm, we did not take baths or showers every day or even every other day. Not until I was in high school and becoming acutely aware of girls did I begin to bathe more often and at least wash my hair every morning before going to school. Until then Saturday was “bath night.” In addition, my dad had a saying, “It costs money to heat water,” so the standard rule was that we were not to drain the tub after each of us bathed, but rather just add enough hot water to warm it up sufficiently to allow for some comfort. Since I was the eldest, I was frequently the last of the five children to get my bath. Many’s the time that I climbed into the tub, looked down at my feet, and could not see them! The water was often very murky when my turn came, but I dutifully added some hot water and went to work scrubbing and “cleansing” myself. It wasn’t until I was older and thought on the subject that I realized how much of my siblings’ dirt and such was in that soup! I climbed in where my brothers and sister had been, and I’m sure I carried away some of their uncleanness when I climbed out!

That’s how I think of Jesus’ baptism. John had been baptizing in that spot on the Jordan for days, maybe weeks. Figuratively (and spiritually) the waters of that place were heavy with the sins and transgressions of all those people. They were washed to cleanse them of their rebellion, and in a sense those sins were there in that water thick as the hair on a dog’s tail. Then comes their brother, Jesus, to that dingy pool. He steps into that water, full of the others’ sins, and takes their transgressions upon himself. The righteousness he has come to fulfill is not his own. No! He has come to see to OUR righteousness before his Father. He accepted the task that God the Father had set before him. The Holy Spirit comes to strengthen him for the task, and the Father speaks words of love and affirmation for Jesus will now begin a journey that inevitably will lead to a cross on a little hill outside the walls of the Holy City. Jesus takes our sin upon himself at the Jordan and carries it to Golgotha where he receives and accepts the punishment that those sins demand.

Jesus is our “Big Brother”, if you will, who comes to bathe in our iniquities that we might be forgiven and receive holiness in his name. Just like me with my siblings, Jesus is willing to get in there where we have been. He is willing to become the sacrifice for sins he himself never committed. Paul says, “He who knew no sin became sin for us.” This event is a picture and symbol of what the incarnation was designed to do: One who was like us in every way, but did not sin would become, “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin

of the world.” He “jumped into the tub” so that we might be washed clean in our own baptisms through him. Wow! That’s love all excelling! Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

- 1) **GRIEFSHARE:** Pastor Woods is leading a class that has brought comfort and healing to many people in the past few years. It’s called GriefShare and it is for anyone, member or non-member, who has lost someone important to them and has been struggling with the grief that event has brought. For you or anyone you know who is still hurting from the death of a loved one, GriefShare can make a big difference. It started this past Sunday, but it is not too late to join that class at 3:00-5:00 PM this coming Sunday.
- 2) **“CAMP COCNUTS”** – this Friday, 8:00 PM, the kids and grandkids can join their parents (or grandparents) in an indoor, over-night camping experience at Grace. They can pitch a pop-up tent, play games, eat snacks, make S’mores and hotdogs, watch a movie, and sleep until a McDonald’s breakfast (courtesy of Pam and Perry Krause) from 7:30-8:30. Encourage young families to treat the kids to a lot of fun.