

## The Baptism of our Lord

### Text: Matthew 3:13-17

<sup>13</sup>Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. <sup>14</sup>But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”<sup>15</sup>Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.<sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

### *The Ultimate Fulfillment*

The beginning of Matthew’s Gospel is all about things that Jesus’ fulfilled. He was born of a virgin to fulfill the word given to the prophet Isaiah, “*Behold a virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call Him Immanuel.*” He was born in Bethlehem to fulfill the prophesy that Micah made. He came from Egypt to fulfill the word, “*Out of Egypt I have called My Son.*” He was raised in Nazareth to fulfill the prophetic words that said that He will be called a Nazarene. Matthew shows that Jesus fulfilled all the prophetic words about the Savior. In his Gospel Luke shows that Mary and Joseph did all that was required in the Law, so that Jesus would fulfill it all.

The ultimate fulfillment that Jesus made however, was that He fulfilled all righteousness. He could have done everything that the prophets foretold. He could have kept every Old Testament Law, and it would have all been useless if He did not fulfill all righteousness for us. Today I’d like to look at how His fulfilling all righteousness is the ultimate fulfillment.

I. All of the other people who came to John knew that they didn’t fulfill all righteousness.

They had come to be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. People were coming from all over Israel. There were even tax collectors and soldiers who came to him. They came and confessed their sins. They knew that they were not righteous. They looked at their lives and realized that even their righteous deeds were like filthy rags. There is no one who is righteous, not a single one. They all came to John, seeking the forgiveness of their sins.

Jesus would show that we are all unrighteous. Toward the beginning of the sermon on the Mount, He says, “*Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.*” (Mt 5:20) Then He goes on to point out our unrighteousness. With regard to the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment He says, “*Anyone who is angry with his brother is subject to judgement... Anyone who says, ‘You fool’ will be in danger of hell fire.*” (Mt 5:21-22) With regard to the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment He says, “*Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart*” ... and “*Anyone who divorces his wife except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulterer.*” He tells us to turn the other cheek and to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. In summary He says, “*Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*”

When we consider what God demands, we must confess, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” None of us are righteous. We have all gone our own way. We would all like to say that we are good and

kind people, but how often have we doubted God's goodness? When haven't we given a second thought to someone in need? So much in our society revolves around me and what I want. A good example is how often the words "I" and "my" are used." We have "ipods" so that I can listen to the music that I want. Radio and tv stations have websites that use the word "My." Even churches do. We are so tempted today to have everything revolve around me and what I want. It doesn't matter what someone else needs, how we hurt someone else to get what we want or what God's Word says about what I want to do. Our righteousness is lacking. Like the people of that day we also need the forgiveness of our sins.

## II. But Jesus came to fulfill all righteousness for us.

The first way that He fulfilled all righteousness was by a perfect life. For the first 30 years of His life on this earth, Jesus lived in an obscure little town called Nazareth. He grew up like any normal child. He did no miracles nor did He preach. He probably learned Joseph's trade as a carpenter. But there was one difference between Jesus and anyone else. He never sinned, even once. Yet, He was tempted in every way, just as we are. He even had harder temptations than we will ever have, but He never sinned. I have often thought that it must have been hard to be Jesus' brothers and sisters or neighbors. Their parents must have said things like, "Jesus never talks back." "Jesus takes out the trash when He is asked." "Jesus never complains about His supper." "Jesus always shares." He was perfect. He loved His heavenly Father above all things and His neighbor as Himself. That was really the first way that He fulfilled all righteousness. He lived a perfect righteous life that none of us will ever do..

The second way that he fulfilled all righteousness was by bearing our sins. Had Jesus come into this world and lived a perfect life and then returned to His Father in Heaven, it would not have helped us one bit. It would only have shown how sinful and unrighteous we are. But on this day Jesus began to take our sin upon Himself. He got in that line of sinful people, who were waiting to be baptized by John. He stepped into the Jordan River, just like they did. It was then that John tried to stop Him. He knew that Jesus was sinless. He didn't need to be baptized for the forgiveness of His sins. But Jesus said, "*Let it be so now.*" John consented. The Father gave His approval, and Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit for the work that He was about to do. On this day He began His journey to the cross. The devil kept trying to get Him to go another direction. Right after Jesus' baptism the devil promised Him the whole world without the cross. While Jesus was on the cross, He was tempted to prove that He was the Son of God by coming down. He was tempted to think of Himself and let those sinners rot. But He fulfilled all righteousness. He paid the penalty for all of our sins. When He died, He was able to say, "*It is finished.*" Everything had been fulfilled. Our forgiveness had been won.

## III. Through faith in Him we receive His righteousness.

If Jesus had not fulfilled everything in our place, we would have no hope, but He fulfilled everything so that Paul wrote, "*God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*"

Our hope is not in what we have done. It is in what Christ has done for us. He bore our sins, and He clothes us with His righteousness. Paul writes of this in Romans 3, "*Now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteous from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference for all have*

*sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ.” (Rom 3:21-23) Our righteousness is a gift of God. In our baptism we were clothed with Christ (Gal 3:27) and His righteousness. Our sins were washed away, and we were reborn to a new life in Christ as Paul writes in today’s epistle lesson. (Romans 6:1-11) Just as Jesus received the Holy Spirit when He was baptized, we were born of the Spirit when we were baptized, and God made us His beloved children. God now calls you His child. He is pleased with you because Christ has fulfilled all righteousness for you.*

Jesus fulfilled many things, and He did many things when he was on this earth, but none of them was as great as when He fulfilled all righteousness for us. That was the ultimate fulfillment. He took away our sins, and gives us His righteousness. May God grant each of us that faith in Him that we may be clothed with the righteousness of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen.

***Pastor Don Hougard  
Benediction Lutheran Church  
Milwaukee, WI  
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