

"You are my beloved Son; in You I am well-pleased."

1. WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED?

a. ***If you ask me why I have been baptized, I might say it is a sign of the forgiveness of my sins.***

- i. Yet if Jesus was "perfect," without sin, how do we explain his walking down in to the muddy Jordan River to receive baptism at the hands of his cousin John?
- ii. A fire and brimstone preacher was glaring down at his nervous flock from the pulpit, and he shouted, "How many of you want to go to heaven when you die?" Everyone raised their hand, except one young girl. The preacher fixed his eyes upon that girl as he shouted out the same question a second time, and he got the same results. Finally, he said, "Young lady, do you want to see them pearly gates when you die, or do you want to burn in eternity?" She replied in a sweet, calm voice, "Oh, yes, preacher, I want to go to heaven; I thought you were gettin' up a load to go right now."
 - (1) Some church-goers will tell you, you need to be baptized to go to heaven. It is a superstition from the Middle Ages.
 - (2) Baptism does not guarantee Heaven.
- iii. Besides, Jesus had come from Heaven; He was God, but in human form.

b. ***Why were you and I baptized? Why did Hilary and Jason Corbin want to have water sprinkled over their son John Dennis the second Sunday in November;?***

- i. Do you remember the date you were baptized?
 - (1) You might go home and get out your baptismal certificate...
 - (2) It serves as a legal document certifying your your age.
- ii. I recall a number Of EVENTFUL BAPTISMS over my career...
 - (1) My first one: Lynda Marie Wagner, August of 1971. I was a newly ordained pastor, and I think people in the congregation were disappointed that I was not nervous and afraid I might drop her.
 - (2) Perhaps the most memorable baptism was that of an elderly gentleman named Fernando Dominguez, in Alamogordo, New Mexico. He did not see the need for it. In 10 years he never missed a Sunday in church, his old father was a member, his wife, his daughters, and each of his granddaughters were baptized members. But Fernando would say after church each Sunday, "God knows my heart—He doesn't need me to be baptized. Perhaps when my pastor learns to speak Spanish I will be baptized and join the church. One day Fernando said, if I invited a certain Hispanic Presbyterian pastor whom we all loved, a lovely woman in whose ordination I assisted, then he would be baptized—in Spanish. And so we did it in his living room, with the family and our Session gathered around. And we had a wonderful party. He died a month later.
 - (3) Each baptism has been a thrill for me.
- iii. Does baptism change you? Does it do anything to you?
- iv. The baptism of Jesus and our own baptism are certainly tied together.

- c. ***In baptism Jesus is introduced to the world in spectacular fashion, initiated to life's work by his Father: "This is my own dear son!"***
 - i. Dr. David McKenna, a former Methodist seminary president in Wilmore, KY, suggests that in his baptism three things happened to Jesus. These same three things also happen to you, to me, to our children, during baptism.
 - ii.
- 2. FIRST, IT IS AN ACT OF BELONGING.
 - a. ***God says, "I claim you as my own child--You are my Son, my daughter."***
 - i. The naming: "John Dennis Corbin, or David Arnold Schneider."
 - (1) That unique Christian name now gives definition, meaning, direction, purpose to a new life.
 - (2) What is the origin of your name? What does it mean? Did anyone else share part of your name in your family history?
 - ii. When you were baptized, perhaps your parents called it a CHRISTENING;
 - (1) What does that word mean?
 - iii. It means to be given a name or to take a name, Christ's name.
 - iv. You become a "marked" person--God's watermark is indelibly stamped on each one of us--it cannot be washed off!
 - b. ***Jesus belongs to us and we to Him in baptism.***
 - i. Once I asked one of my elders, "Why do you think Jesus was baptized?" He said, "When Jesus became human like us, He had to be baptized just like us."
 - ii. Thus, he was baptized into our total humanity.
 - iii. In his baptism Jesus becomes one with us, and we with Him. ...This is an exciting proposition!
 - iv. Paul (Romans 6) announces that anyone who has been baptized into Christ has been baptized into his death and shall rise with Him in a resurrection like His.
- 3. BAPTISM IS SECONDLY AN ACT OF LOVING.
 - a. ***"This is my BELOVED Son!"***
 - i. A particularly intimate word, just as Jesus used the familiar word "Abba," or "Daddy".
 - ii. God is saying to his only Son Jesus in front of the whole world: "I love you; you are very precious to me!"
 - iii. It is truly tragic, where there is belonging without love.
 - (1) I recall watching a movie about a nursing home in December. It seems many of us do not enjoy going to visit our grandmother or another relative in a nursing home, particularly at Christmas. It is a very lonely time for them. In this one movie, the whole family goes to visit grandmother, but everyone is wrapped up in their own worlds, with their own holiday plans. Each member of the family seems to be carrying on only a perfunctory conversation. No one touches grandmother in the nursing home. But the little girl touches her. The ten year-old, reaches out and she says, "I love you, Granny!" Only this youngster sees her granny's reaction, as a few tears fall from the elderly woman's face. (page 2)

- (2) Our deacons have been given a wonderful ministry- to visit the very special older members and to say to them, "We love you."
- (3) We need to teach our children to say, "I love you," as well as "thank you," especially to our elderly, to those in retirement or nursing homes.
- (4) Marriage without love is literally hell on earth for both partners but most of all for the children.
- iv. In baptism God takes each one of us into his loving arms forever and holds us: "I claim you; you are mine; I love you--you are my beloved son/daughter! I will not create anyone else like you ever again!"
 - (1) In reading David McCullough's biography of John Adams, most of the biographical material comes from the daily love letters Abigail and John wrote back and forth to each other. I am deeply impressed by the way those two expressed their love and addressed one another as, "my closest friend."

4. THIRD, SAYS DR. MCKENNA, IT IS AN ACT OF PRAISING.

- a. *"I am well-pleased with you!"* **(with an exclamation mark!)**
 - i. The Living Bible puts it this way: "You are my delight! I am bursting with pride over you."
 - (1) Look into a mother or a father's eyes during a baptism... and what do you see?
 - ii. "I am so proud of you!" God says this three times during the lifetime of His Son:
 - (1) Baptism
 - (2) Transfiguration
 - (3) At the cross
 - iii. How often have you told your child or each other? "I love you, I am so proud of you."
 - (1) My father and mother said it to me often when they were younger and were able to visit in the congregations I was serving. I wish they could visit our church family here...
 - iv. In your baptism God says to you by name, "I am very proud of you; I am pleased with your life."
 - v. The baptism of a new-born baby in some Christian traditions is a time for celebration with gifts and a big dinner.
 - (1) In some old traditions, a christening cake is baked. Or a layer of the wedding cake is saved and used in the naming of the couples' first child, thus a christening cake. That dates back to the 19th century.
 - (2) The baptismal gown sometimes is handed down from generation to generation
 - vi. In the intimate life of our church family many members are slow to praise or to weep with one another and to celebrate their belonging to each other.
 - (1) And do we say to each other, "I miss you in church; You belong here?"
 - (2) Can you and I learn to give and to receive a simple "Thank you--I am proud of you?"
 - (3) ...or even, "I love you...your life is very dear to me." (page 3)

- (4) These go hand in hand with giving and asking forgiveness from each other in the church.
- vii. If we are able to say these things to each other in this church, then “we, too, will release in others the confidence... God releases in His own Son” at baptism.

5. BUT NOW A FOURTH THING HAPPENS: BAPTISM GIVES YOU AN IDENTITY.

- a. ***In the Jordan River, God not only ANOINTED His very own Son for his APPOINTED work, He gave Jesus (McKenna) a sense of identity--through the act of belonging; through the act of loving; through the act of praising.***
 - i. As Jesus did nothing at his baptism, so you and I do absolutely nothing--it is all God's action..
 - ii. John the Baptist felt unworthy at Jesus' baptism to even touch his cousin's sandals!
 - iii. Our response to God's gifts comes after being baptized.
 - (1) confirmation
 - (2) ordination
 - (3) marriage
 - (4) even in death
 - (5) These are all a part of the implication of confessing Jesus openly as personal Lord and Savior
 - (6) and the realization that we have renounced a life of sin and evil.
 - (7)
- b. ***Thus, your life is removed out of the common and re-set in the larger framework of the holy, from the secular to the sacred.***
 - (a) For we have been set apart, anointed for a special work: we are SANCTIFIED, declared holy to the Lord.
 - i. Paul says it this way: *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me”* (Gal 2.20).
[PAUSE]
 - ii. God says, “I claim you, I love you, I am proud of you; you belong to me.”
 - (1) Mc Kenna: “How simple, how basic! To belong, to be loved, to be praised! Nothing more is needed.” In baptism God says it all.

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Now may all of the people who belong to God and each other respond by saying....“Amen!”