

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort. Amen

Luke 3:15-17, 21-23a

Everyone has a desire to feel connected in one way or another. The plethora of technologies in our world today give us a glimpse into the human mind. God has created us to be people who connect to other people. We connect to email, the internet, phones, snail-mail, Facebook, or 3G networks. We connect to friends and family and workplaces—and sometimes we even connect to loved ones on a cell phone *while* we're connected to the internet. It's almost as if we have a "connection overloaded" society. Yet in the midst of all this, people still feel disconnected and alone. Suicide rates rise and TV shows like *LOST* garner a cult-like following, all while we are trying to get connected. Today we see Jesus get connected, so to speak. In a unique way the Holy Trinity, all three persons of the Godhead, appear in amazing fashion to assure us of this connection. Luke's gospel leads us to see, "**Baptism Connects us to Christ!**"

1. In baptism, God anointed him as Christ, 2. In baptism, God appointed us as heirs.

1. In baptism, God anointed him as Christ

It has been nearly 18 years since we last heard of Jesus' activity. No, I don't mean Jesus didn't do anything for 18 years; it's just that the Gospel writers don't tell us about it. The last account we have from Jesus' life was his time spent at the Temple as a twelve year old boy. So Luke fast-forwards 18 years later. John has come, baptizing in the desert and preaching a message of forgiveness of sins. John is leading sinners to see their sins (men like the soldiers and tax collectors) and to see God's forgiveness. At the height of John the Baptizer's earthly ministry, Jesus enters the scene again. But why? And why did Jesus come to John?

John knew there would be this special moment in his future. God the Father had told him: "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit" (John 1:33). So as John went about fulfilling his commission to baptize and prepare the way for the Savior, Jesus suddenly appeared in line to be baptized. "When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too." Jesus was washed with water and God's Word, just as John had done for so many others. But this baptism was unique. Jesus came up out of the water and he prayed. "As he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." The heavens are torn open and God's Spirit descends on Jesus in the form of a dove. God the Father thunders his approval specifically to Jesus. But we still have answered the why question...

Unlike the crowds that came to be baptized by John, Jesus was not a sinner. He had perfectly obeyed Mary and Joseph his entire life. He had never spoken, thought, or done anything sinful or wicked. He was holy. Therefore, Jesus had no need for Baptism. He had no need for John's washing for the forgiveness of sins, because he didn't have any sins. But then why did he come to the Jordan? The words of Luke tell us the reason: "Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry." Jesus' baptism was the first public activity of his ministry. This was God's inauguration of Jesus as the world's Christ. The name "Christ" means "the Anointed One". Just as David and other kings and priests were anointed into their offices, so also Jesus was anointed publicly as the Christ. **In baptism, God anointed him as Christ.**

Who gave the inaugural address at this one of a kind ceremony? God the Father himself thundered from heaven and spoke to Jesus, specifically to Jesus: "You are my Son whom I love. With you I am well pleased." These words, directed at Jesus, were meant to assure Jesus that God the Father and the Spirit who rested upon him are with him in his work. The work of

seeking and saving sinners would not be easy, but the Triune God—all three persons stand ready to rescue the world from sin. You and I have the confidence of knowing Jesus is the Chosen Son of God. **In baptism God anointed him as Christ** and we rejoice to say with John: “Look the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). This is his ministry. This is the purpose for which he was anointed.

February 14th is quickly approaching. With it come all the Valentine’s Day butterflies for those nervous young men, who are working up the courage to talk to that special girl. The first impression can make all the difference in the delicate world of dating. A good first impression can make the difference in the long run, whether it’s relationships or even when it comes to the workplace. Here at Jesus’ baptism, we have our first impression of what Jesus’ ministry will be all about. His work will be about separating the wheat from the chaff.

John said, “His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” Jesus preaches a message of separation. You are either with him or against him. There is no in between when it comes to eternity and the way to heaven. Jesus identifies himself as the only Way, Truth, and Life. All other paths in life only lead to unquenchable fire. The cross of Christ stands as the dividing line for all people. Some find it absolute foolishness to believe that the death of a carpenter from Nazareth will make us God’s children. But we know that the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom.

2. In baptism, God appointed us as heirs.

When it comes to first impressions with a product or a food, a good first impression might mean a continued connection to that item. We want to continue using the toothpaste or continue buying that frozen pizza, all because we had a good first impression. The same is true of baptism. We were given an amazing experience (a great first impression), all by the power of the Spirit working through water and the Word. Because of this great first impression, we want to run back and see what makes our Baptism so awesome! The reality is this: **Baptism Connects us to Christ.**

Luke tells us, “When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too.” We learn something else from this, other than the fact that Jesus begins his public ministry. Jesus entered the waters of holy Baptism, just like any other person. Jesus identified himself with sinners. He put himself in our place and made the waters of baptism holy. He made this a blessing for you and me. Because he underwent Baptism, the same baptism you and I have today, therefore, we are connected to him. It’s as if we stood next to him in the waters of the Jordan. **Baptism is our connection to Christ.** Saint Paul told us: “He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). Simply put, **in baptism God appointed us as heirs** of eternal life.

But there are times in life when we don’t feel like heirs. We don’t feel like people who are inheriting the kingdom of heaven. We feel more like people who are inheriting a kingdom of problems on earth. Families are in turmoil, with moms and dads fighting left and right. Students constantly disrespect their teachers and murmur under their breath. Workplaces are filled with people looking out for themselves and not concerned about those they call friends—but we don’t suffer from those inheritances...or do we? Each one of us must ask the soul searching questions: Do I see more value in what I have in my garage than what my relationship with Christ looks like? Do I desire to grow in Christ with my kids or am I angry that they take away from my free time? Have I taken the time to thank Him for all he’s done for me?

Then, in the face of our utter failure as God’s heirs, we fall on our knees. We fall to our knees in that Jordan river, where we were just standing with Christ. Now our faces are downcast and the weight of sin sinks in. We hear a voice. No less powerful than the first time it was spoken: “You are my dear son, my dear daughter, whom I love. With you I am well pleased.” And we rise to our feet and we remember. “I have been baptized. I am God’s dear child. I am connected to Christ in baptism.” And we see the reality of being heirs of eternal life. God doesn’t search the globe looking for people who are good enough for him to love. God doesn’t go around trying to find people worthy of his grace. No, God makes the unlovable sinner, lovable. God appoints you and me heirs of life simply because he wants to. There is nothing special or worthy in us. Yet, **God connects us to Christ in Baptism.**

So now our baptisms have meaning for our daily lives. Martin Luther put it this way in his Small Catechism: “Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.” We have a “purpose-driven” life. Every day is a new day to live as a baptized child. When we wash our faces or take a shower, we can remember how God used a little water and the Word to make us new people. We wake up refreshed in his forgiveness and eager to do what is good, all because he is good to us. **In baptism he appointed us as heirs.**

Connections can be made in our world by clicking a mouse or picking up a cell phone. But no amount of technology can replace the intimate connection we have with Christ. He came and was baptized in the Jordan, beginning his public ministry and making our baptisms holy. Thank God that **Baptism connects us to Christ.** AMEN.

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