

# Reflections in the Water

## Mark 1:4-11 (Baptism of our Lord)

A clear and calm day on the shores of that crystal clear water Wisconsin lake is quite the sight! How beautiful it is to look out over the water and behind it you see the trees and hills! When you look at that crystal, clear water itself you see the sunlight shining off the water. Oftentimes reflected off that water you can see those trees and hills. Putting it all together and taking it all in you see the beauty of God's creation. How captivating it is! You could just sit there for a while in your chair and perhaps open a book. How calming a scene! In that moment every problem, every care, every stress, everything that was on your mind before is quieted as you enjoy the stillness of those waters, the surrounding beauty, and the reflections seen in the water.

As much as we may want to enjoy a nice quiet scene like that (and maybe we think we could use a day or two in a place like that), today let's look out at the waters of baptism. Those waters were splashed on our heads. Through those waters God worked wondrous things for us and in us. The baptismal font stands in the front of our church as a visible reminder of our baptism every time we see it. Yet how much recently have you set yourself in front of those waters? When was the last time you looked out over those calm, crystal clear waters to enjoy the reflections in those waters? Today as we do just that, our problems, our stresses, every care of life in this sinful world that burdens our thoughts right now are silenced in the stillness of God's grace reflected both in the water of Jesus' baptism and our own.

Let's first look toward the baptismal waters of the Jordan River. John the Baptist was there dressed in his not so fashionable clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt and enjoying his delicious diet of locusts and wild honey. But John was not out by the Jordan River in the wilderness where nobody really wanted to be to start a new fashion trend or healthy form of diet. His purpose was to prepare the way for Jesus. He was to get the people ready for the Savior calling them to repentance and then baptizing them for the forgiveness of sins. It was during that time Jesus comes from his hometown of Nazareth for the purpose of being baptized by John.

The question we must first answer is why. Everyone has a need to repent of sins and a need to be washed of those sins and given forgiveness. Baptism for everyone is needed, but not for Jesus. For Jesus there was nothing for him to repent of. There was nothing that needed to be washed away. There was nothing Jesus had done to have a need for forgiveness. Unlike you and I, he was perfect in every way with no sin. So why did he come to be baptized by John? The answer lies in the work of saving he had come to do. In presenting himself to be baptized, Jesus was showing his solidarity with sinners. Though himself sinless, he was identifying himself with sinners by giving himself to the work of bearing their sins. You could say that in his baptism, Jesus was anointed publicly to take up that work with the aid and approval of the other two persons of the Triune God.

After John baptized Jesus and he was coming up out of the water, Jesus saw what looked like the sky being torn open. The Holy Spirit took on the visible form of a dove and descended on Jesus. With the Spirit at his side, Jesus was empowered to carry out the work of saving sinners. Then added to the sight of the dove, came the sound of the voice from heaven, God the Father, clearly identifying Jesus as his Son. "You are my Son, whom I love. I am well pleased with you." This love was not just a sentimental expression, but it was the Father's complete approval and confidence in the work Jesus had taken up to do. The Father was publicly acknowledging there was no mistake in assigning this task of saving sinners to Jesus. Jesus' perfect life made him the perfect Savior sinful man, you and I, needed.

Of course, as true God, Jesus knew he had his Father's love and approval. He didn't need to present himself as he did. He didn't need to identify himself with sinners and be baptized with them. He certainly didn't need the Holy Spirit to descend on him. So for whose benefit was Jesus' baptism? It wasn't for Jesus' benefit. It wasn't for God the Father's benefit. If it wasn't for either of their benefits then it certainly wasn't for the benefit of the Holy Spirit. As we peer into those baptismal waters of Jesus, isn't it for our benefit? Reflecting in the water of Jesus' baptism we see God's grace before our very eyes revealing the perfect Savior sent for us. Seeing Jesus now publicly begin that work with the Spirit's presence and the Father's approval, we are given certainty as we see the reflections in the waters of our baptisms.

Whether you were baptized as a tiny infant, an older child, as an adult, at this baptismal font, another baptismal font, in a hospital room, or perhaps even at home, the reflection in the water is no different. The Triune God is bestowing the same blessings upon you through that water poured on your head and the words were spoken, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Reflecting in the water of your baptism today what is it that you see?

In the waters of your baptism, Jesus presented you to himself and our heavenly Father as one for whom he did all of his saving work on the cross. Through those waters you are washed clean of your sins as if they were never there. Consider what the Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians, **"Husbands, love your wives, in the same way as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, by cleansing her with the washing of water in connection with the Word. He did this so that he could present her to himself as a glorious church, having no stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but so that you would be holy and blameless."** (6:25-27)

In the waters of your baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon you to dwell in your heart. As the water was poured on you, so the Spirit was poured out working new faith in the tiniest of children and strengthening faith in whom the seed of faith he had already planted. It is faith to trust the promised blessings of baptism are yours - forgiveness of sins, life in heaven, and salvation. Consider the word of Titus 3, **"He (God) saved us through the washing of rebirth and the renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs in keeping with the hope of eternal life."** (3:5b-7)

In the waters of your baptism, the Father declared his approval of you as his dearly loved children all because of Jesus and what he has done for you. The sins that caused him to be displeased with you have been washed away. In its place the Father sees someone through faith clothed with Jesus' perfection, his own Son whom he loves and was pleased with. What the Father spoke to his Son, he says to you. "You are my son. You are my daughter whom I love. I am well pleased with you." Galatians 3 says, **"In fact, you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Indeed, as many of you as were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ."** (3:26-27)

After viewing the reflections in the water at the lake, there's a reason that you don't really want to leave the sight of that calm crystal clear Wisconsin lake. You want to keep seeing the beauty of God's creating hand. You want to keep enjoying the calm and quietness. So even after that time, you remember what you have seen and maybe you return another time to see it again.

Today we have seen the reflections in the waters of baptism - both Jesus' baptism and ours. What joy fills our hearts! What peace it gives us! What calming comfort we have received through those waters! Jesus at his baptism presented himself as the perfect Savior. He gives himself to the work of bearing sins and is publicly anointed into that work with the approval of the Father and the help of the Spirit. Because of Jesus' baptism, our baptisms into

Christ have value and give joy, peace, and calming comfort not just on the day of your baptism, but every day of our life whenever we return to those waters.

We see those reflections when we think about our baptism and the blessings God gives us through it. We see those reflections when we gather in God's house and see the baptismal font standing in the front of the church. We see those reflections when we hear the words that were spoken at your baptism time after time at the beginning of worship. We see those reflections at the sight of another baptism. It's a sight that we want to keep returning to.

Take time and look at those waters. Marvel at the beauty and stillness of God's grace which they show you. Enjoy the forgiveness, life, and salvation that is so miraculously and wondrously being reflected in those waters. As you look out over them, rejoice at the life you have on the horizon through those waters because what the Father said to Jesus, he says to you because of Jesus. "You are my son. You are my daughter. I am well pleased with you."  
Amen



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