

LET ME GET THIS RIGHT
FIRST SUN. AFTER EPIPHANY

MATT 3:13-17
JAN 8, 2017

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

In a couple of weeks, new president of U.S. will be inaugurated.

Large crowd will gather to watch him being sworn in
by chief justice of Supreme Court.

Members of congress will have front row seats.

Although elected at end of last year, & working hard since then,
this is when he officially begins his job.

As unpredictable as the path to this point has been,
it is hard to predict what future holds for him
and what he will do.

But what many who will be watching wonder is
what the future holds for them,

How will the way he does his job effect them, their jobs,
what they are able to do, and what happens to them.

The church today is celebrating the Baptism of Jesus
because it is basically his inauguration into his office
as our messiah, prophet, priest and king.

Although he was already this at his birth,
at his baptism he officially begins his public ministry.

John the Baptist does the swearing in while crowd looks on
And the Father and Holy Spirit take front row seat.

He already knows full well what future holds for him
because God planned it all before creation

But this event is interesting for us especially because
of what it shows about what is in store for us,

What he does makes all the difference in what we do
and what happens to us.

JOHN SAYS WE CAN'T, BY OURSELVES, GET IT RIGHT
JESUS SAYS GETTING BAPTIZED BY JOHN IS RIGHT

THE FATHER SAYS WHAT IS DONE BY JESUS IS RIGHT

JOHN SAYS WE CAN'T, BY OURSELVES, GET IT RIGHT

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

If you are going to give a room a fresh coat of paint,
first thing to do is put masking tape on edges & outlets.
Some think: Oh, I can just be really careful & not drip
but that is foolish. Even when careful, is always clean up.
This is why long before John, Jews had ritual washings
prescribed by God to remind them no matter how careful
they were to do right, they still needed to clean up
before they were presentable to a Holy God.
But still, washing John was doing was something new.
He was not preaching people should wash themselves
but that they needed to be washed by another.
Our problem is like that spot on your back you can't reach.
or like one dirty hand that can't wash just by itself.
This time of year we are reminded to wash hands often
to keep germs that are everywhere from getting into us
and making us miserably sick.
As long as we live in this world, the disease of sin
is constantly getting in all the cracks of our broken lives
making us miserable and sick in heart and mind,
with guilt, fear, despair
and, worse yet, ending in loss of faith and death
unless we are constantly washed clean by forgiveness.
So even John the Baptist, who calls others to repent of sins
and is used by God to wash away those sins,
knows "I myself need to be washed."
We must say the same. No matter how careful we are
how much we say to self, "Let me get this right" this time,
we must confess daily that we need to be washed.
Not only our hands need washing because of what we do
but our mouths need to be washed out
and our minds need to be washed clean
of what gets stuck in its cracks.
But now even John is surprised by something new
that is added to the washing.

JESUS SAYS GETTING BAPTIZED BY JOHN IS RIGHT

¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.

Jordan river, where John was baptizing, was pretty muddy,
not necessarily place to come to get physically clean.
But picture all the spiritually filthy people John washed there.
If several people need to take bath in same water,
the way it was commonly done in the old days,
it made sense for the cleanest to go first, dirtiest last.
So Pharisees refused to be baptized by John;
they weren't about to get in with all those dirty people.
But now Jesus comes to be baptized, and John says
"Let me get this right, you want to be baptized by me?"
You are cleaner than all of us.

But this is exactly why Jesus comes to be baptized,
He is like a sponge soaking up all the dirty water in our lives,
like a filter, taking the dirt into himself.
Later Peter, like John, thought it was not right
that Jesus should die on the cross like a criminal.

But that too was a necessary part fulfilling all righteousness,
Righteousness is simply doing what God says must be done,
and Jesus' taking our place is what must be done
in order to fulfill our righteousness for us.

This is why he was born, lived and died as one of us.
He came to do for us everything we fail to do perfectly.
His perfect obedience included the powerful things he did
and also the things he passively experienced with us,
including his humble birth, baptism and death.

So this is part of his immersing himself in our lives.

As a kid, I took swimming lessons, which I was never good at.
Some instructors stood on side, telling us what to do,
which is hard to hear when you are sinking under water,
but others got into the water with us and held on to us,
so we didn't have to be afraid of drowning.

In Jesus' baptism, he gets in with us,
and in our baptism, he holds on & embraces us
So, as Paul writes in Epistle to Romans,
everything that happens to him happens for us.

He does things for us, but also takes us with him.

This is also true of what happens next.

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¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

You may remember, 8 years ago, Nobel Peace prize
was given to Obama at beginning of his presidency,
recognizing not just what he had done
but what he was expected to do.

Here, at inauguration of Jesus' ministry, Father speaks approval
not just of what Jesus has done but what he will do,
John does not need to wonder. He is getting it right,
both in baptism and in bloodbath on the cross.
He is making peace between God and man
by his being both perfect God and lowly man.

Season of Epiphany is all about revealing who Jesus is.
He is God, united with the trinity, beloved son of the Father
and intimately connected with the Holy Spirit
at same time his baptism shows he is true man with us.

This is why this inauguration isn't just about him but about us.
Now, because of our being united with him in baptism,
what Father speaks to him he is also speaking to us.
God's word makes us children who have his gracious love
and also an inheritance in heaven.

God puts his Spirit on us to give us certain faith in God,
His power working in us to obey, and confident peace.

John later says he knew he got it right about Jesus
when he saw sign of the Holy Spirit coming down on him.
God has also given sign to make us sure Jesus is with us,
it is his sacraments, Baptism & Holy Communion

Through these, God lets me get this righteousness;
because of all Jesus did
uniting himself with me in baptism at start of his ministry
& death at end of his ministry, he fulfilled righteousness.

So I can see what is coming for me as well.
I am made righteous by faith in him
and am also made, through faith in him,
to live righteously with him.

JOHN SAYS WE CAN'T, BY OURSELVES, GET IT RIGHT

we constantly need cleaning up by what another does for us

JESUS SAYS GETTING BAPTIZED BY JOHN IS RIGHT

He has come to immerse himself in filth of our sins

in order to fulfill everything needed to make us righteous.

THE FATHER SAYS WHAT IS DONE BY JESUS IS RIGHT

not only what he does here, but what he goes on to on cross
and, because we are united with him through baptism,

what he continues to do in our lives today

and in the new life he gives us after death.