

Scripture: Mark 1:1-13

Text: Mark 1: 9-13

Meet the Messiah!

Beloved in Christ, we met John last Sunday. Today we meet the Messiah.

John's preaching was strong and bold. He was not afraid to call sin a sin and He called people to repent of their sins. That's because he wanted them to be ready for the coming of the Messiah! Jesus the Messiah is the Promise of a new beginning for their lives!

This is one of the great gifts of God to His people: conviction of sin. We won't come to Christ unless we understand sin. If we don't understand sin, we don't understand our need for Christ. If we don't understand sin, we don't understand God's grace.

Thousands, perhaps even hundreds of thousands, came to John confessing their sins, requesting baptism. Convicted of their sin, they came to see their need for the coming Messiah. John points them to the One who is so much greater than he. Of the Messiah, John says, 'I am not even worthy to bend down and untie His sandals.' Today we meet the Messiah in Mark 1:9-13,

1. Baptized for us [v.9]
2. Approved for us [vv.10-11]
3. Tempted for us [vv. 12-13]

Baptized for Us

We read in **verse 9**, "*And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.*" "Those days" refer to the days when the people were coming to John, confessing their sins, and receiving baptism. These words also make us think something really special is about to happen. It sounds like we are expecting something really great. It's this: Jesus comes to John the Baptist.

This is not really the important event we may have expected! It's nothing more than Jesus coming from Nazareth in Galilee, a village so small and so unimportant. A man from a village in a rural area, not from the bustling metropolis of Jerusalem. Nazareth is never named in the Old Testament. The man who comes is just an ordinary man, a Jew, coming to get baptized – just like everyone else. In other words, like one of us. There is no trumpet sound, no public notice, no fanfare. He's one among the thousands who has come to John to receive baptism.

Do you ever ask yourself, 'why in the world was Jesus ever baptized?' Jesus had no sin. Jesus had no guilt. Jesus did not fear the wrath of God to come. So why?

The reason is that Jesus identified Himself with His people. He took upon Himself their sin. He took upon Himself their guilt. He took on Himself the wrath of God that was to come upon them. Not just the sins of one person, but all His people – everyone one of them! In his baptism, He begins to fulfill what the prophet Isaiah spoke, "***All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way, and the LORD laid on Him the iniquity of us all***" [Isaiah 53:6].

This hardly looks like greatness. This One looks more like a servant than a king! At first, John did not understand. He was almost offended. According to Matthew, John tried to stop Jesus, saying ***"I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me"*** [3:13]. This hardly looks like the coming One about whom John says, 'I am not worthy to bend down and untie His sandals.'

He looks more like the menial servant who does all the dirty work for us – taking all the dirt on Himself and taking all the blame for it! Meet Him; yes, meet Him. Meet the Messiah, the Servant of servants, baptized for us. The one baptized for us is also

Approved for Us

What comes next is a total contrast to His baptism. He comes as a Jew from Nazareth, an ordinary man coming to get baptized. But now as this ordinary man comes out of the water, the heavens tear open with the witness of the true greatness of this lowly man. The Messiah we meet here is God's own Son!

What happens? First, the heavens tear open. They split open like a garment at its seams. God has answered Isaiah's prayer, ***"Oh, that you would rend the heavens! That You would come down"*** [Isaiah 64:1]! This is a witness that in this man God has come to do a mighty work.

But what kind of work?

We learn this in the second thing that happened: the Holy Spirit comes down through the opening in the form of a dove and rests on Jesus. He comes down on the Messiah to empower Him, to equip Him, in His human nature, for His work of salvation. But He comes like a dove. Think of the dove Noah sent out after the flood. When it was sent the third time it found dry land to make a new home. Or think of the Spirit of God who was hovering over the waters in the beginning act of creation. This is God's witness that the Messiah has come gently like a dove to make a new beginning in this world for sinners who have lost their way. He has come to bring about a new creation, to make a new start.

The words of the prophet Isaiah come to mind in 42:1-3, ***"Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth."***

There is so much hope here for us. If you have made your life a mess, if you have hurt yourself or brought a lot of hurt on others or even to your family, have not been living as a Christian or been living as a lukewarm Christian, meet the Messiah. No need to make an appointment. He is always ready for you to come to Him. Begin new with Him!

He is filled with the Spirit of gentleness to lift you out of the deep. He can make you new so that the rest of your life is different. New! Don't you want to meet Him? Truly, He will judge those who reject Him. But those who surrender their hearts and lives to Him will find a place of mercy and new beginnings.

Third, a voice came from heaven, the voice of God the Father. He calls this ordinary man His Son and shows approval of this man for His work on earth for His people. Notice, we have here the three Persons of the Trinity: the Son, the Spirit, and the Father – working together for our salvation! The Father is not saying to Him, ‘now you have become My Son as of today!’ He says, “You are My Son.” He always has been His Son – from all eternity. God says, ‘this Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, is My Son. I have sent Him down to bring salvation and I approve of Him.’

This is a most amazing mystery, a marvelous truth: Jesus of Nazareth is also the Son of God! He is both from Nazareth and from heaven. He is baptized by John, like one of us, and at the same time He baptizes you with the Holy Spirit! This Messiah we meet in the pages of Mark’s gospel. He gets really tired and falls asleep in the boat and at the same time controls the wind and the waves. He weeps at the death of Lazarus and at the same time raises Lazarus from the dead!

Meet the Messiah. This is the One approved by God. This is the One God wants us to meet and find our salvation in Him. Today there are many religions that claim to be the way to God, but the Messiah is the only One approved by God Himself. Heaven is open through faith in Him! He is the only way, the truth and life for all. May we come to meet Him – the Son of God who became a Servant for your sakes. May we discover Him for Who He is in this gospel. Meet the Messiah approved for us, but also

Tempted for Us

The Messiah is not treated as we might expect. There is no royal reception or celebration as at an inauguration of a public official. Verse 12 says, “**Immediately**” - not the next day – “**Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness.**” This reminds us of what the Lord said to Moses about the scapegoat in Leviticus 16. It was loaded down with the sins of Israel and sent into the wilderness. “**The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land, and he shall release the goat into the wilderness**” [vv.21-22].

But there is a difference. The Spirit who empowers the Messiah sent Him into the wilderness to confront Satan, the tempter and our adversary! This is the very one whose works the Messiah came to destroy. 1 John 3:8 says, “**For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.**” But He must first meet Satan and be tempted by him and He was for forty days [v.13].

Why so?

Do you remember who else was tempted by Satan in the garden and fell? Adam was and we all fell in him, the whole world. We need another Man, more powerful, who is tempted by Satan for us and overcome him for the world. Meet the Messiah: Jesus of Nazareth who is also the Son of God!

Like the first man, Adam, His obedience to the Father was also tested. Satan tempted the Messiah to disobey. For us, He was tempted. Look at the conditions. It was a total contrast to the garden where Adam and Eve lived. Jesus was in the wilderness “*with the wild beasts.*” Meet the Messiah – all alone, tempted for us in the horrors and dangers of an untamed wilderness.

Was He tempted like we are? He, in His human nature—really and truly was tempted. Really so; truly so! In Hebrews, we read, ***“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin”*** [Hebrews 4:15]. He knows. He fully understands. He went through it – in His human nature. But the angels were also there for Him, in the wilderness, ministering to Him.

Meet Him, the Messiah: tempted for us. He passed. He sustained the divine exam! Through faith in Him, He lives in us and we too can overcome the devil’s temptations –whatever the temptation may be. He helps us. The Bible says, ***“being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted”*** [Hebrews 2:18]. He promises a way of escape, ***“God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able; but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it”*** [1 Corinthians 10:13].

When Martin Luther was asked how he overcame the devil’s temptations, he replied, ‘Well when he comes knocking on the door of my heart, and asks, ‘Who lives here?’, the dear Lord Jesus goes to the door and says ‘Martin Luther used to live here, but he has moved out. Now I live here.’ When Christ fills our lives, Satan has no entrance. When we come to know the Messiah personally, then He takes over our lives. He makes us new creatures and He gives us a new beginning.

You meet Him here in the pages of Mark’s gospel. His ministry of preaching, teaching, healing and casting out demons – all of this leads to His final triumph of death followed by His glorious resurrection on the third day. In Him, new life begins.

Sometimes we ask someone, ‘if you could meet anyone you wanted in your life, who would you like to meet?’ It may be a movie star, a president or prime minister or the queen of England. But there is no greater person to meet than the Messiah. Today you have met Him again – baptized for you, approved for you and tempted for you. This Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God from heaven! All glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen!