

“Why Jesus Went into the Water” – Mark 1 – January 22, 2023

A husband was making coffee one morning when his wife came up and gave him a big hug and said, *“I bet you don’t know what today is, do you?”* He looked at her and said, *“Of course I do!”*

The truth is, he didn't have a clue. But because his wife was so sentimental about special occasions, he figured, *“It must be her birthday.”* So, he had a dozen white roses delivered to her.

About noon, he began to worry, *“If it’s our anniversary, flowers won’t be enough.”* During his lunch he went to a jewelry store pick out a beautiful necklace and had it delivered to her.

Driving home from work, again he began to worry. So, just in case, he picked up an expensive box of chocolates for her. He walked in the door and as he gave her the chocolates, she got all teary eyed, threw her arms around him and said, *“Honey, this is the best Ground Hog Day I’ve ever had!”*

“I bet you don’t know what today is, do you?” Of course you do! It’s a special day. It’s kick-off day. I use the term “kick-off” not because I enjoy football, but because Mark tells us about the “kick-off” event of Jesus’ ministry.

As Christians, we know Jesus is our best friend ever. Look at his track record. He’s always there to share and celebrate good days with us:

- the day we got promoted at work,
- the day we were released from the hospital,
- the day we received an unexpected check in the mail,
- the day our children were born.

And he’s always been there to help us keep things together on our difficult days:

- the day we faced surgery,
- the day we didn’t know how we’d ever pay the repair bill,
- the day we heard someone near and dear passed away,
- our first time away from home.

The more we look into our Bibles the more good things we discover about our best friend. The more we listen to him in worship, the more convinced we'll be that he's the most important friend we have and the reason we're here right now.

In today’s lesson, our friend is up to his knees in water. **Why Did Jesus Go into the Water?** There are two reasons:

- 1) **He’s there to be identified as our Savior.**
- 2) **He’s there to be endorsed by his Father.**

The details from Jesus’ early years are kind of sketchy. One thing we know for certain is that he knew who he was and why he was here. Remember what he said as a 12-year-old when his parents found him in the Temple? He needed to be doing his Father’s business.

Mark fast forwards 18 years to the time of our text, where we’re told: **The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him.** The “him” isn’t who we think it is. John the Baptist is the “him.” Luke’s account of the same event explains the people’s excitement: **All the people were waiting and wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ.**

The people were expecting someone special. They knew from their OT prophets that God had promised to send someone who would rescue them in a very dramatic way. Listen to the promise God made in 700 BC through Isaiah: **Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.**

Since they knew God was faithful to his promises, it was only a matter of time before God’s servant would arrive. A man by the name of John wasn’t the special one, he was the one who would identify the special one. And he did: **“One more powerful than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals! I**

baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

John's telling them: *I'm not the one you're looking for. But, he's coming, and soon.* And sure enough: **In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.**

John had a nickname. He's called "the Baptist." Even before Jesus commanded all believers to go into all the world and baptize at his ascension, God told John to baptize along the Jordan River. When it came to the people to be baptized, there was only one qualification. You had to be a sinner. So everyone met the qualifications since everyone was a sinner.

That is until Jesus stepped in the water. Both John and Jesus knew Jesus wasn't a sinner. If Jesus didn't need Baptism to be forgiven, why did he go into the water? Jesus went into the water to be identified as our Savior. That very reason he came.

What God demands is that our will line up perfectly with his. What God sees is that our will does not line up with his. We have a huge problem that we can't solve. Because we're not perfect, we can't give God what he demands.

If we can't meet his demands, what chance do we have of having a connection to God? That's what makes our weekly journey here so meaningful. We celebrate God's solution to our sin-problem. Jesus' baptism kicked-off his mission to be our solution, a substitute for sinners. What began here at the Jordan River would end in a river of blood on Calvary's cross. Jesus went into the water to be identified as our Savior.

Endorsements are very popular today. An endorsement is a show of support, a seal of approval. We hear all kinds of endorsements from actors, athletes and celebrities for a variety of things.

Let's head back to the Jordan River for the greatest endorsement of all time: **Just as Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And**

a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love. I am well pleased with you." Jesus went in the water to be endorsed by his Father.

If there's ever a question about who Jesus is, today's trip to the Jordan gives the answer. God endorsed Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of our world. Our time down by the river today reminds us that there is only one name that saves sinners – that name is Jesus.

Just as the Father endorsed his Son at his baptism, so your heavenly Father endorses you as his child through your Baptism. In your Baptism he personalizes the victory and forgiveness he won for you on the cross. It is yours by faith.

What a wonderful thing a baptism is. It's the kick-off of a child's connection to Jesus. Baptism is only the start for parents. What follows are Bible songs ... Bible stories ... sitting next to mom and dad in the pew ... attending Sunday School, Vacation Bible School and a Lutheran Elementary School are just some of the blessings our best friend Jesus wants to give to children.

As a pastor, I can't tell you how uplifting a person's baptism – their first connection to Jesus at the beginning of their days, is so comforting at the end of our days. That's how God intended it to be. God wants us to find security in our baptism every day in between our first and last day.

Your Baptism was your spiritual kick-off. Let this font be a frequent reminder, a powerful reminder of your forgiveness and faith in Jesus.

Jesus went in the water to be identified as our Savior, and to be endorsed by his Father. You went in the water to become part of God's family! See, you did know what today was!