

**Your Baptism Directs Your Entire Life**  
**Sermon on Isaiah 42:1-4**  
**Saint Mark's, Watertown, WI**  
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Scripture gives you your identity, when it says: *You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, because all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ.* Amen.

God's Word for our special consideration on this Festival of the Baptism of Our Lord Jesus Christ is Isaiah chapter forty-two, verses one through four. It has God the Father speaking about God the Son:

*"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. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope."*

This is God's Spirit-inspired Word of Jesus Christ.

### **Introduction: What Is the Most Important Day of Your Life?**

Dear fellow Christians—who share an identity and a mission:

What is the most important day in your life? – That's sort of an interesting question, isn't it?

What is the most important day in your life? ...Well, the day you celebrate the most is your birthday. That must be an important day; without it, of course, you wouldn't be around! Or maybe, really, the day God created you, some nine months or so before your birthday—maybe that was your most important day. Then again, it could be the day you got married that was most important; if you're married, that was certainly the biggest decision you ever made. Or maybe your most important day could be the date of the birth of your child or children; they say that's the biggest adjustment a person ever makes.

### **Theme: Your Baptism Directs Your Entire Life**

What was the most important day in your life? ...How about the day you were baptized? From God's perspective – and isn't that quite important?! – it was on the day of your baptism that he changed your life immediately and forever.

Today we celebrate the Festival of the Baptism of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The day of Jesus' baptism was a very important day for him also. His baptism is going to remind you that \* **YOUR BAPTISM DIRECTS YOUR ENTIRE LIFE.** As Jesus' baptism did for him, (1) **YOUR BAPTISM GIVES YOU YOUR IDENTITY.** And as Jesus' baptism did for him (2) **YOUR BAPTISM GIVES YOU YOUR MISSION,** as well.

### **Part One: Christ's Baptism Gave Christ His Identity**

Jesus' baptism was such an important event for him that God had Isaiah prophesy it more than seven centuries ahead of time. Did you catch that in God's Word to us today? God the Father said of God the Son: *"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him."*

"I" – God the Father – "*will put my Spirit*" – God the Spirit – "*on him*" – God the Son. And when did all of that happen? Well, it's not wrong to realize that the Father and the Spirit

had a special relationship to God the Son during the entirety of Jesus' life. But the day Jesus was baptized was the day that God the Father literally put God the Holy Spirit upon God the Son. This prophecy here was fulfilled at Jesus' baptism.

And notice how Jesus' baptism expressed Jesus' identity! First of all, God the Father said: "This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased," as we heard in the Gospel Reading. Jesus' baptism named him God's own Son. Second, as we read here, God the Father was saying: "*Here is my servant, whom I uphold.*" So, Jesus' baptism named him God's own Servant, as well. And third, as we read here, God the Father was saying: "*Here is my chosen one, in whom I delight.*" So, Jesus' baptism named him God's own Chosen One.

### **Application One: Your Baptism Gave You Your Identity**

And your baptism did exactly the same for you! Really?! Yeah, really!—every step of the way.

At your baptism God placed his Holy Spirit upon you, just as he did for Jesus. Through the water of baptism, God the Holy Spirit was poured into your heart. Before that, a different spirit – a powerful and evil spirit – ran your life for you. But now you belong to God.

Second, at your baptism God said to you, just as he said to Jesus: "You are my child, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Really?! Did God really say that to you? Yeah! In baptism, Jesus got you adopted into God family, when he scrubbed you clean of your sins. Through baptism: you are God's son; you are God's daughter. God loves you. Your Heavenly Father protects you. He provides for you. He is very pleased with you. As secure as a little child with a good Mom and a good Dad can feel—that's how secure you are in the strong arms of your Heavenly Father: because of your baptism.

Third, at your baptism God said to you, as he said to Jesus: "You are my servant, whom I uphold." In other words, God has accepted you so fully that: he didn't just say, "Okay, fine, I've washed your sins away; now get away from me" – no! – God says to you, "I accept you so completely that I have work for you to do as my servant."

And fourth and finally, at your baptism God said to you, as he said to Jesus: "You are my chosen one, in whom I delight." God, your Heavenly Father, has picked you – of all people! – to belong to him and to dwell with him, now and forever. As the Bible says: "God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight; in love he predestined us to be adopted as his children through Jesus Christ."

### **Part Two: Christ's Baptism Gave Christ His Mission**

So, do you think maybe your baptism was the most important moment of your life?! In fact, now I suppose there's nothing left for us to do after our baptism, but to kick back and wait for the dear Lord to take us home with him to heavenly glory....

Of course not! When we get baptized, that's just the very beginning of the life's mission that the Lord has marked out for each of us. After all, consider Jesus' baptism. God the Father says: "...*I will put my Spirit on him,*" and then God gives him his mission: ***He will bring justice to the nations.*** Jesus will bring God's judgment of innocence for those who have trusted him, and God's judgment of guilt upon those who have not trusted him.

But listen to the gentle way that Christ will go about his work of proclaiming God's judgment: ***He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.*** Jesus never sought to create commotion; Jesus never looked to precipitate a riot. ***A bruised reed he will not break.*** Jesus was so gentle he wouldn't hurt a piece of grass! ***And a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.*** Jesus was so gentle he wouldn't so much as blow out a candle. Instead, whatever spark of confidence in Christ Jesus found in a person he sought to fan into a powerful flame.

Finally: *In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope.* Better yet: *For his teaching the ends of the earth will wait expectantly.* Jesus established salvation for every man, woman, and child in every corner of the world—something he shares by way of his Word.

## **Application Two: Your Baptism Gave You Your Mission**

So, it was especially at his baptism that Jesus received his mission: “Establish salvation for every soul”. It was a mission Jesus brought to completion a little over three years later: when he suffered hellish damnation for all of mankind—and rose: to pronounce sin, death, and hell ... dead and defeated.

And it was at your baptism that you received your mission: “Proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ for every soul.” Yep, that’s what a Christian’s life is all about!

See: Life is not about how healthy you feel or how much you know or how much you have or how happy you are. Life can’t be about those things – can it? – because you never have it all, and those things can never really satisfy. Life is not about tasty food, tv, a fairly easy life, romance, restaurants, movies, video games, computer, or – it pains me to say it – even Packer victories. Life can’t be about those things – can it? – because their pleasure always comes to an end.

No: when you were baptized, God gave you a mission for life: “Proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ for every soul.” Now that’s worth your time! But where do you begin?

Well, first of all, you need to be sure of salvation for your soul. That happens through God’s Word. I mean: how many times today, in this worship service, didn’t your soul receive the Spirit’s wholesome reminder that Christ Jesus has ushered you into the family of your Heavenly Father? Frequently, right? And how often do you get to hear that the rest of the week? Hardly at all, right? So, you see, you really do need to get to worship, week by week. Actually, you even need to hear or read God’s Word, day by day.

And then that matter of proclaiming salvation—to the entire world. That sounds rather daunting, doesn’t it?! But it’s not.

It starts at home. If there’s anybody else living in your household, be sure to read the Scriptures with them. And don’t tire of applying what the Bible says to the day-to-day life of your household.

Then this matter of proclaiming salvation in Christ continues with your close circle of relatives, or friends, or coworkers, or fellow students. Probably the easiest thing to do is to invite the unchurched ones to church, or to Bible Class, or especially to a basic Bible Information Class (a new one starts this week). Or else, when the time is right – maybe when Christianity is misrepresented on tv or in conversation, which is pretty much hourly, eh? – when the time is right, explain to your friends what Christianity is. “I’m a sinner. I’m going to die. But Jesus has forgiven my sins. And I will live with him forever. The same is true for you. Come and hear more.” You can proclaim that—really!

And then this matter of proclaiming salvation through Jesus Christ flows through you to the world. See, God gave you your time not just to amuse yourself, but also for you to pray for others to get to know him. God gave you your talents not just to give you a sense of identity, but also for you to use for others to get to know him.

And God gave you your treasure not just for you to spend on yourself, but also for you to support his work. It’s God’s money, after all. You’re simply his manager. And with all your other God-given blessings and responsibilities comes the blessing and responsibility also to support his work.

Surely, if God graciously enables us to pay our electric bills, we in turn will pay for souls to be enlightened through his Word. Surely, if God graciously enables us to pay for groceries, we in turn will pay for souls to be fed with his forgiveness—even across the earth. Surely, if

God graciously enables to pay for our home, we in turn will pay for others to be sheltered by his forgiving love. And if we've had to carry some debts to pay for what we consider our needs, surely a little bit of debt to supply the needs of the Gospel will not scare us either....

### **Conclusion: Besides Baptism, Today Is the Most Important Day of Your Life**

So, what was the most important day of your life? Baptism, right?! On that day you received your identity as an eternal child of your Heavenly Father—whose adoption papers were signed in the blood of Jesus Christ and sealed by God the Holy Spirit. At your baptism you received your noble mission, too: to proclaim to the ends of the earth the good news that Christ Jesus rescued all.

And in a way, that makes today – and tomorrow, too – the most important day of your life. It's one of only a limited number of days on earth for you to serve the Savior who bought you with his own blood. And that's the enduring meaning of your baptismal day! Amen.

Scripture gives you your mission, when it says: *Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.* Amen.