

Sermon-Based Study Guide

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Sermon Title: *Jesus' Baptism and Temptation*

Texts: Mark 1:9-13 and Isaiah 42:1-9

Mark has set the stage – something new is beginning to unfold, promised by the prophets, and evidenced by the messenger named John the Baptist. But the reader is left to wonder about this good news – what is it? Who is the one John says is coming? What does “baptize you with the Holy Spirit” mean? Mark deliberately leaves many questions unanswered. One must read on to see how Mark answers them and to see what the good news is all about.

I. Start It – Connecting With One Another

Why do you think people enjoy mystery stories, movies, and/or TV programs? How comfortable are you in dealing with unsolved mysteries – about God, life, the future, etc.?

II. Study the Text – Read the Gospel of Mark 1:9-13

- 1) The scene has been set and Mark continues by introducing Jesus to his readers. Look at verse 9. Mark continues his succinct, reporting style of writing as he introduces Jesus. What does verse 9 tell you about Jesus? Why do you think Mark is intentional about mentioning 1) Nazareth in Galilee, and 2) the Jordan (River)? Locate them on a map to see them in relation to Jerusalem.
- 2) The big question is why Jesus was baptized by John if this baptism was, according to verse 4, “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins?” Why do you think Jesus went to be baptized by John?
- 3) What three specific things happen as Jesus comes up out of the water (the Greek phrase can be translated “ascending up from the water”)? What is significant about these things?
 - 1) He saw heaven being torn open – look at Isaiah 64:1-3.
 - 2) The Spirit descending on him like a dove – doves often symbolized deity
 - 3) A voice from heaven:

You are my Son – look at Psalm 2:1-7, a song associated with crowning a king

Whom I love – look at Genesis 22:2

With you I am well pleased – look at Isaiah 42:1

Note: Mark seems less interested in the reason for Jesus’ baptism than about what happens following Jesus’ baptism. However, by being baptized, Jesus completely identifies with human beings. He is depicted as a real person – not just a spirit-being. Mark is more interested in describing what happens as Jesus ascends from the waters of baptism. Heaven is torn open. Isaiah 64:1 alludes to this as a sign of God’s redemptive activity

breaking into the world. The Spirit descends like a dove (the sign of peace but also of deity) and anoints Jesus for his role in God's act of redemption. The voice from heaven declares Jesus' election as a divine Ruler, who bears the likeness of God (compare to Psalm 2:7). The voice affirms that he is the beloved – like Isaac was to Abraham (Genesis 22:2). And, as God was pleased with the suffering servant of Isaiah 42:1, God states to Jesus, "with you I am well pleased." Mark sees Jesus' baptism as not just Jesus identifying with a sinful world, but as an event that 1) is used by God to affirm his identity, 2) that prepares Jesus for his ministry by filling him with the Holy Spirit, and 3) that seals his obedience to the will of God.

- 4) Again Mark moves quickly to the next event – "at once the Spirit sent (the original language is more like "drove" or "compelled") Jesus out into the desert. What do you notice regarding the persons of the Trinity in Mark 1:9-13? In what ways does this passage help you understand the mystery of the Trinity?
- 5) John the Baptist was in the wilderness, but it seems like he was in a place that was rather accessible (crowds went out to him). Mark says Jesus was sent into the desert with the wild animals. How would you describe the setting Jesus is now in? Though Mark does not elaborate at all, what kinds of temptations do you imagine Jesus faced in the desert?
- 6) Scripture describes Satan as a rebellious, fallen angel who fosters evil, deceives and seeks to destroy human beings, and schemes against the will and purposes of God. Jesus has just experienced a clear statement of his identity and role, and been anointed for ministry. How do you imagine Satan tempting him during this time in the wilderness? How does being filled with the Holy Spirit enable a follower of Jesus to withstand temptation or trials?

III. Apply It -Reflect and Respond

Reflect: How has God affirmed that you are God's beloved child? How has God taken delight in you? How have you experienced the Holy Spirit in you?

Respond: As you recall your baptism (if you were an infant you can do so with imagination) prayerfully ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit – Christ in you. As you experience trials and temptations, ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to say "Yes" to God and "No" to the Tempter.

IV. Pray It - Responding in Prayer

Prayer Requests: How can your group pray for you?

Prayer for our Community and World: Please pray for Good Shepherd to be faithful to do what Mark has done – proclaim the good news about Jesus Christ – to our friends, colleagues, and neighbors. Ask God to use us to help others become Jesus' disciples who connect with God in worship, grow in faith, and serve others in love. Ask God to use us to confront evil and to do what we can to bring justice, healing, hope, and new life in Christ to people around us.