

## Baptism - Jesus and Ours

Date: 25 January 2026

Location: St George's, Battery Point

Series: Matthew

Texts: Proverbs 3.1-8; Acts 2:36-42; Matthew 3

This year we're studying Matthew's Gospel. We've already looked at Matthew's account of Jesus' birth through the Christmas period. Matthew's nativity announces the big themes of his Gospel. That Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. That Jesus is the Messiah who brings in God's kingdom. That Jesus has come to fulfil Israel's Law and Prophets. Today we come to Jesus' baptism in chapter 3. With Edmund being baptised today we're going to look at Jesus' baptism and ours.

Baptism has always been associated with Repentance and Forgiveness. In Matthew 3 we read that John the Baptist preached, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near." Then in verse 6, people responded by confessing their sins and being baptised. In Acts 2 the apostle Peter says, "Repent and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."<sup>1</sup> If Baptism is about repentance and forgiveness, why on earth did Jesus get baptised? Jesus never sinned. He's the one who gives forgiveness. So why would he get baptised?

John the Baptist had the same question as us. John said, in verse 11,

'I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

So when Jesus' came to be baptised, John says, verse 14, 'I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?' So why did Jesus get baptised?

Let's think a little more about the need for repentance. **Repentance** means to turn around. It's like you turn onto one of those big highways and you see a sign saying "Wrong way. Turn back." The sign is there because the cars are going the other direction and you're headed for disaster. John was a pretty fiery preacher. When the religious leaders, the Pharisees and Sadducees, turned up to see what he was doing he gave them a blast from both barrels:

'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? **8** Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. **9** And do not think you can say to yourselves, "We have

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 2.38

Abraham as our father.” I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. **10** The axe has been laid to the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Not really the way to win friends and influence people! Nobody likes to be told that they are wrong, that they have done the wrong thing, that they have a problem and they need to turn around. But this was John’s diagnosis, it was Jesus’ diagnosis of the human condition, in fact it’s been there throughout the Bible. We have a problem with God. We’ve given him the finger, and gone our own way. But this has terribly destructive consequences not only for our relationship with God, but for all our relationships and for ourselves. It’s what English novelist Francis Spufford calls, “The Human Propensity to Stuff things Up”, although he uses more colourful language.

As a religious leader myself, I’m conscious I need to pay particular attention to John’s warning. Even writing this, I’m thinking about how earlier in the day I had done the wrong thing and hurt someone I love. But this is how to prepare for God’s coming. To admit that you’ve done wrong. To fess up. To turn back to God. Because God wants a world where people love him and love those around them. The rest of people got it, even if the religious leaders didn’t. And it’s so often the way. It’s hardest for those in power to admit that they’re wrong and to admit they need God’s help.

So baptism is about repentance: Turning to God and asking for forgiveness. Why did Jesus get baptised? Let’s have a look at Jesus’ answer. Verse 15: ‘Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness.’

What does Jesus mean here? How will his baptism fulfil all righteousness? There’s so much going on in this phrase, but here’s what I think is going on. In Romans, Paul writes that “in the good news [of Jesus] the righteousness of God is revealed.” That is God’s righteousness where he puts unrighteous people like you and me in the right with him. He does that through Jesus dying for us, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God. Jesus does this as Immanuel, God with us, come to save us from our sins. And Jesus does this as one of us, sharing fully in our humanity, to save us in every part, and to represent all of us.

Jesus’ baptism fulfills all righteousness because it is a key moment of fulfillment in God’s righteous plan to redeem humanity. There are three key ways Jesus’ baptism fulfils all righteousness.

The first is **Identification**. In his baptism, Jesus totally identifies with sinful humanity. He does not need to be baptised, but in being baptised he identifies himself with those who need baptism, and all that it signifies, forgiveness of sins, rebirth by the Holy Spirit. He shares our flesh and blood. As the writer of Hebrews puts it, “Both who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters.”<sup>2</sup> In his baptism, Jesus shows he really is Immanuel, God with us.

Second, in identifying totally with us as sinful humanity, Jesus’ baptism looks forward to the moment where he will take our place as our **substitute**. Commentators see in Jesus’ comment about fulfilling all righteousness an echo of Isaiah 53:11,

by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Jesus not only identifies with us as sinful humanity in his baptism, he also begins the road to the cross where he will bear our sin in our place as our substitute. In the words of Isaiah 53,

he was pierced for our transgressions,

he was crushed for our iniquities;

the punishment that brought us peace was on him,

and by his wounds we are healed.

6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray,

each of us has turned to our own way;

and the LORD has laid on him

the iniquity of us all.<sup>3</sup>

Third, in his baptism Jesus **Represents** us. One of the big themes of Matthew’s Gospel is how Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets. He does this by reliving Israel’s story. Matthew is the only Gospel that records the flight of the holy family to Egypt. Matthew says, “And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophets, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”<sup>4</sup> The original quote from the prophet Hosea and was looking back to God’s rescue of Israel from slavery in Egypt, but Matthew actually this is fulfilled in Jesus. He presents Jesus as retreading Israel’s story. So, Jesus’ baptism reenacts Israel’s rebirth through the waters of the Red Sea, and this is immediately followed by Jesus’ being tempted in the wilderness for 40 days, echoing Israel’s 40 years in the wilderness. But where Israel failed, Jesus succeeded. He triumphed over each of Satan’s temptations with the sword of God’s word. He obeyed,

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<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 2.11, 14

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 53.4-5

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 2.15

where they disobeyed. He was faithful to God's calling, where they were unfaithful. He said to God, "Not my will, but yours be done", where they said, "Not your will, but mine be done."

And so we see Jesus, not only replaying Israel's story, but also replaying Adam's story, the story of all humanity, but in doing so opening a new path to being human, one where we love, trust and obey God as faithful children, even as the Son of God himself has done. As Jesus has completely identified himself with us in his baptism, so then baptism becomes the way in which we become completely identified with him, through which we are incorporated into his body the church which shares his risen life by the power of the Spirit.

This is why John says, he will baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Baptism is that external sign with water of the invisible work of the Holy Spirit to bring new birth into the family of God. Fire symbolises the holy presence of God dwelling within us, and yet, by his grace not burning us up. At the same time, the holy fire of the Spirit has come to purify us, to refine us by burning away all the rubbish in our lives and to grow in us the good fruit that God wants to see in our lives, the good works which he has created us to walk in.<sup>5</sup>

By submitting to baptism, Jesus shows us the path we are to walk in as children of God. As Peter says in Acts,

'Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.'

Andrew and Sarah trust that promise as they have brought their child Edmund for baptism today.

Jesus' baptism is one of the extraordinary moments in the Bible when we see all three members of the **Trinity** together. Verse 16,

As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. **17** And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'

Through baptism the story of the Gospel becomes a story with our name on it. All those promises God has made are made to Edmund, to you and to me. As you are baptised, so you have died and been raised with Christ. You have been forgiven. You have been made a new

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<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 2.10

creation. You have been given new birth into a living hope. You have been born into the family of God, the body of Christ, the church, all this done by Christ's work on the cross and made real in your life by the Holy Spirit. And so that window into the Trinity at Jesus' baptism, becomes a window into the true identity of all who are baptised into Christ. We share in Jesus' own relationship with the Father by the Holy Spirit, so that God's words to him, are God's words to us, to Edmund today: "You are my son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased."

What honour, and joy and privilege, for God to call us his beloved children! If you don't know this, come to Jesus today. Come like those came to John, hungry and longing to be filled. Come and ask how you can receive this gift. This promise is for you!

A final word for Andrew and Sarah, and for all of us as Christian parents. We've heard of Jesus' baptism, and the promises of God declared to us in our own baptism. And just as baptism is the external sign of the start of our spiritual lives, so Edmund's life lies before him. Proverbs has words of wisdom for us as parents as we seek to raise our kids.

My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart,

**2** for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity.

These words are addressed to us as teenagers or young adults, to listen to our parents' instruction. But for us as parents, this implies we will be teaching our kids! And the core of what we teach our kids is this, Proverbs 3.5

Trust in the LORD with all your heart

and lean not on your own understanding;

**6** in all your ways submit to him,

and he will make your paths straight.

Andrew and Sarah have brought Edmund to receive those promises of God's love and forgiveness given in baptism. Their task as Edmund grows is to teach him and model to him God's promises, so that they might come to shape his life, that he might walk in the way of wisdom, and that he might know himself as a loved child of God and in time come to own these promises for himself.

Finally, our reading from Acts shows us how all of us are to live as those baptised into Christ, participating in the life of his body the Church. Acts 2.42

**42** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

This is what being a Christian looks like.

- Devoting yourself to the apostle's teaching. Letting the Bible shape your life, reading it privately. Studying it together with others. Hearing it preached at church. Letting it sink into your soul and transform your life.
- Devoting yourself to fellowship. The Greek word means communion, sharing, participation. It means being involved, showing up, being present with God's family. The easiest way you can do that is by making Sunday worship a weekly habit.
- Part of what we do on a Sunday is the breaking of bread, sharing in the Lord's supper. That constant reminder of God's love and grace to us in Christ, feeding us to live as his people in the world.

And finally, devoting yourself to prayer. The heartbeat of spiritual lives as God's people and our theme for this year.

It was not beneath Jesus to identify himself with us sinners in his baptism. As we have received his life and forgiveness through baptism, may his Spirit fire us to live as God's children, holy and dearly loved. Amen.