

**"Jesus Entered Baptism as Our Savior"**  
(Matthew 3:13-17 – Baptism of Our Lord – January 11, 2026)

Matthew 3:13-17 – <sup>13</sup>Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup>And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" <sup>15</sup>But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him. <sup>16</sup>When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. <sup>17</sup>And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Dear fellow Redeemed, baptized into Jesus Christ.

For thirty years, Jesus had lived in quite seclusion in the town of Nazareth. There He had grown through His childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. Relatively little is said about His early years.

Now at the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus comes to the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist. But why? Wasn't John's baptism "*a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*" (Mark 1:4)? Certainly Jesus, the holy Son of God, did not need to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins! Nonetheless, the Savior Himself steps forward. He descends into the water as one Man among many to be baptized. We hear John puzzled, and even reluctant to baptize his Lord. He exclaims: "*I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?*" (vs. 14).

Let us learn with John why our Lord submitted to this baptism for sinners. **"Jesus Entered Baptism as Our Savior": 1) To fulfill all righteousness for us, 2) To bring His blessings of salvation to us, 3) To give us confidence as the children of God.**

**1) To fulfill all righteousness for us**

When John the Baptist objected, "*I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?*" Jesus responded: "*Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness*" (vs. 15). Yes, as a sinner John is the one who needed to be cleansed by Jesus. But Jesus was saying, "This is part of the righteousness I am to fulfill as your Savior and the Savior of all people."

Indeed, Jesus needed no baptism of repentance for His own sins; for He had none. As the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit in our flesh, Jesus was born without a sinful nature. On the other hand, as fallen children of Adam, we all were conceived and born with the inherited condition of sin (Psalm 51:5). That is why, even when we

do our best works, our sinful nature is there harboring selfish motives. Even when we speak the most loving words, our sinful nature is there holding on to uncharitable attitudes. Even when we try to entertain the purest thoughts, our sinful nature is there corrupting them with unclean imaginations and desires. But in Jesus, there was none of that. As the holy Son of God and Son of Man, He came forth with a life free of any sin, perfect in every desire, thought, word, and deed.

Yet as the Savior of sinners, Jesus entered baptism weighed down with more sin than anyone else. For He was the Lamb of God who came to bear the whole world's sin on Himself to the cross. As Isaiah 53:6 said: *"The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."* In 2 Corinthians 5:21, we hear what God the Father did to His Son to save us: *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

Already throughout His sinless life, Jesus had been fulfilling righteousness for us as our Savior. Now He placed Himself under John's baptism for sinners, identifying Himself with us as the one bearing all our sins away to the cross. There one day, He would pay for all our sins by His innocent sacrifice. Jesus' baptism at the start of His public ministry is closely tied with His death on the cross at the end – so that by His righteous life lived for us, and by His innocent blood shed for us, He cleansed the very waters of baptism He entered for us. Now by His cleansing in the waters of baptism, He purifies and makes righteous all who are baptized with Him and in His name.

As Jesus entered the waters of baptism it says: *"Behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'"* (vs. 16-17). Here we see the Triune God – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God the Father sends the Spirit to anoint His Son in His office as the Savior of sinners. The Father declares that He is well pleased with His Son's work in fulfilling all righteousness for us, winning our salvation by His holy life and sacrificial death.

## **2) To bring His blessings of salvation to us**

Now, having entered baptism as our Savior, Jesus joins us to Himself in baptism to bring His blessings of salvation to us.

At Pentecost, when Peter preached to the crowd that assembled, he held out to all the blessings promised in baptism: *"Let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call"* (Acts 2:38-39).

First, we are assured that in our baptism we receive His blessing of forgiveness. Since Jesus entered baptism as the one bearing all our sins away to the cross, in our baptism He washes all our sins away (Acts 22:16). Scripture speaks of the way He applies His salvation to us in such intimate terms that He is described as the Husband and we in His Church as His Bride. Ephesians 5:25-27 says: *“Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.”* That is what baptism is – water connected to Christ’s Word of forgiveness. So He presents us to Himself as His Bride: *“not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”*

And where there is forgiveness, there is life and salvation. In Mark 16:16 Jesus says: *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved.”* 1 Peter 3:21 compares it to the Flood, in which Noah and his family were saved through water: *“There is also an antitype which now saves us – baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”* Baptism is not merely an outward cleansing. It saves us and gives us a good conscience toward God, because in this Sacrament He washes all our sin and guilt away.

In baptism, we also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. We read in Titus 3:5-7: *“He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”* In baptism, God pours out His Spirit on us, giving us a washing of regeneration, a spiritual rebirth. The Holy Spirit creates saving faith in us, making us God’s children. As Galatians 3:26-27 says: *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”* As God’s children in Christ, we are *“heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”*

### **3) To give us confidence as the children of God**

What wonderful blessings we receive in our baptism into Christ! In His baptism, Jesus wants to give us confidence as the children of God.

Do your sins and failures bother you? Are you haunted by dark regrets and blemishes to your name? Remember how Jesus stood in the water at His baptism, in view of His perfect life and sacrifice for you. Remember how He has come in the waters of your baptism, to cleanse you by the washing of water through His Word. Leave all your sins and failures there, all cleansed away by Jesus’ blood and righteousness.

Live confidently in your baptism into Christ, for God gives you a new status as His children. At Jesus’ baptism, heaven was opened over Him, the Holy Spirit descended on Him, and the Father said: *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (vs.

17). Likewise, in your baptism heaven is opened over you. God pours out His Spirit on you. As the Father looks at you through His Son who fulfilled all righteousness for you, He says: “You are My dear child, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

This gives us true confidence in life. Are you afraid of what may come in life or in death? Remember, if God is for you who can be against you? His Fatherly love will never change. His promises will never fail, no matter what. You live as a blessed child of your heavenly Father, united with His Son in baptism. And nothing *“shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:39).

Think of Jesus’ life. Did the hardships, temptations, or changes He faced mean His Father’s love had gone away? How about when Jesus was a child, and He had to flee with His parents from the murderous King Herod? How about when Jesus was a man, and He wandered the earth with no place to call home, despised and rejected by men? How about when Jesus was tempted and afflicted by the devil himself? Did any of this mean His Father’s love had gone away? No! Through it all, the Father looked on His Son with tender love to protect Him, provide for Him, strengthen Him, and fulfill all His gracious plans in Him.

So it is with us. Do any hardships, temptations, or changes we face in life mean our heavenly Father’s love has gone away? No! You are joined to His Son through baptism and faith. God the Father looks on you and sees a child whom He dearly loves, clothed in His Son’s righteousness. Through it all, He looks on you with tender love to protect you, provide for you, strengthen you, and fulfill all His gracious plans in your life.

As His beloved children in Christ, our Father invites us to come to Him confidently in prayer. In Jesus’ baptism, as He was praying, heaven was opened over Him. So it is with us. As we pray, heaven is opened over us. We join our hearts in prayer with Jesus to His Father and ours. Our heavenly Father hears our prayers for Jesus’ sake. This gives us confidence to lay all our needs in His hands, knowing He will answer by giving us what is truly best for us.

Rejoice in your baptism! Jesus has entered baptism as your Savior. He has fulfilled all righteousness for you by His innocent life and death. Now He cleanses you of all sin and clothes you in His righteousness, to present you to His Father as holy children. Jesus brings all His blessings of salvation and eternal life to you in baptism. Let His baptism strengthen you against all temptation, doubt, and fear. Let it give you confidence as you live in your heavenly Father’s loving care, today and forevermore!

Glory be to God in whose name we are baptized – the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.