

“How Can You Say ‘This is Not Enough’?”

Matthew 3:13-17

Jesus’ baptism is different than our baptism. Like our baptism, at His, a great exchange takes place. He takes upon Himself all the sin of the world (past, present, and future) and He goes forth from there – carrying it to the cross. The baptism we receive is also an exchange, but very different. All of your sin was washed away and the righteousness of Christ was placed upon you. That is a very good exchange. There is a reason this is called the Gospel. This is “Good News.”

When Jesus comes to John for baptism, John is puzzled. John says, “I need to be baptized by you, and you come to me?” John’s assessment of the situation was not wrong. John needed to be baptized. John was a sinner. John needed forgiveness. John needed the Gospel.

The baptism of Jesus did not happen the way John thought it should. This should not surprise us. When has God ever presented Himself the way people think He should? The Israelites coming out of Egypt hear the voice of God thundering from Mt. Sinai and they ask Moses to please tell God to stop speaking directly to them. He was scaring them.

So He speaks to Moses and Moses speaks to the people. But they still are not happy, because every time Moses is in the presence of God, the lingering glow of the glory of God remains on Moses' face. So they ask him to wear a veil. God never presents Himself the way people want Him to.

God presents Himself the way God wants to present Himself. God permits Himself to be found when and where He permits Himself to be found. The letter to the Hebrews says, "In many and various ways God spoke to the people of old by the prophets, but now in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son."

Many people today say that they could believe in God, or pay more attention to God, if He would just speak directly to us – like He use to back in Old Testament times. But speaking directly to the people was not common at all. Most of His speaking to the people happened through the prophets (in many and various ways). He even spoke through the mouth of a "donkey." (We will use that animal term for now.)

The common plea heard throughout our world is "I just want God to speak to me." Why can't He just thunder down His voice from heaven, like at Jesus' baptism?

He doesn't do that because God presents Himself the way God wants to present Himself. And God permits Himself to be found when and where He permits Himself to be found. And He has told you where you can find Him.

If you seek the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, look no farther than your own baptism. But people say, "I need more than that. I don't even remember being baptized as an infant." Baptism is a new birth. Do you have to remember being born to really be born? This is how God has chosen to present Himself to you. How can you say "This is not enough?"

Do you want God to speak directly to you? God's Word says, "In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son." St. Paul says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, correcting, training in righteousness." This is how God has chosen to present Himself to you. And this is often spoken through the mouth of a pastor. How can you say "This is not enough."? How can you say, "I need more."? This is how God has chosen to present Himself to you. It is in Scripture, in His Word, and in the Word joined with water, and in the Word made flesh who dwelt among us and still comes to us in His flesh through the miraculous union and communion of the body and blood under the form of bread and wine.

How can you say, "This is not enough."? This is how God has chosen to present Himself to you. It is true that God's voice did not thunder down from heaven on the day that you were baptized. Then again, when you read the other Gospel accounts, many of the people who were present missed it and imagined that it was "just thunder." When the Word of God is read; when God speaks to you through His prophets, through His evangelists, through His Son, do not miss it.

Do not imagine that these are “just words” written down by some people a long time ago. God has spoken to you. How can you say, “This is not enough.”? This is how God has chosen to present Himself to you.

The Son of God entered the world as the child of Mary, took the sin of the world – at His baptism, took your sin upon His shoulders, carried that burden to the cross and grave. His broken body and shed blood – given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins is how He has chosen to save to you. Not only is it enough, it is more than we could ever imagine we deserve.

Why would anyone want God to deal to them like He did in the Old Testament days? You get to hear the voice of God, in your own language, in a way that is not terrifying or bewildering.

You get to be washed clean of all of your sin in the name of God – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You get to receive the benefits of Christ’s once and final sacrifice. You get to participate in a miracle every time you approach the Lord’s Table. “This is My body . . . This is My blood.” Do not miss it. Do not imagine that it is “just bread and wine.”

Pay attention to all the ways in which God has said He will come to you. Because those are the ways in which He comes to you. God presents Himself the way God wants to present Himself. God permits Himself to be found when and where He permits Himself to be found. How can you say, “This is not enough.”? Amen.