

THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD AD 2026
TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
KURTZVILLE, ONTARIO
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Isaiah 42:1-9

Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break,
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
He will not grow faint or be discouraged
till he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his law.
Thus says God, the Lord,
who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people on it
and spirit to those who walk in it:
“I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness;
I will take you by the hand and keep you;
I will give you as a covenant for the people,
a light for the nations,
to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.
I am the Lord; that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to carved idols.
Behold, the former things have come to pass,
and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth
I tell you of them.”

Romans 6:1-11

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of

sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 3:13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

“I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” John had a good point, one that anyone who’s been called to be the Lord’s servant could make, one that I know that I certainly could make. Who am I as a man of unclean lips to say such cleansing words to the children of God? Who am I as a sinner to do such a holy thing for the children of God? Who am I as someone who has fallen so short of the glory of God to give such glorious things to the children of God?

Yes, John had a good point, one that many a prophet, apostle and pastor has thought, and even, at times made, when called on by the Lord to do what the Lord has given him to do to fulfill all righteousness. Perhaps, you have felt it too, when the Lord has called upon you in your life to do some good and holy work for someone or speak a holy word to them when they needed to hear it. Who am I, as a poor miserable sinner, to be doing or saying such a thing to such a person?

There may have been no man born of woman, greater than John, but when the Lord of heaven and earth made flesh presents Himself at the Jordan to be baptized by him, John understandably, feels so poor and lowly, so unfit and unholy to do such a thing - even if the reason why he was born was to do this very thing. Yes, beloved, when God calls on us to do great things for Him, it is easy like John, to look at ourselves and all our brokenness and sin, and believe and even protest, that we shouldn’t be the one to do it - that we are too unworthy.

But as the Lord answers John’s protest in the Jordan this morning, he puts to rest all our doubts and silences all our protests. No, he doesn’t deny that John is unworthy, He doesn’t tell him that he is actually pretty good compared to everyone else or that he’s got a lot going for himself in spite of his unworthiness, He doesn’t tell him that there’s no greater man born of woman than him, or even tell him this is the reason that he was born of his parents in their old age. No, He simply tells him that they have to do it to fulfill all righteousness. He simply tells him that they have to do what God has given them to do because God has given it to them to do.

As unworthy as John might have been, the Lord was at work through him to do the great things that He wanted to get done. The Son of God had to be baptized to fulfill all righteousness. He had to be baptized so that He could take on the sins of the whole world and be the Lamb of God who bears them all away. He had to be baptized so that he could pick up all our sins out of the Jordan river and carry them to the cross to suffer and die for them all to wash them away with His blood. The Son of God had to be baptized so that we could be saved. Yes, the Son of God had to be baptized, and no, there was no one worthy of doing it, but John is the one who God chose and sent so that all righteousness could be fulfilled in the baptism of His Son.

Yes, John was unworthy but without John simply doing what God had given him to do, there would have been no Saviour, because if Christ was not been baptized then He could not have taken up our sins and we could not have been baptized into His death and so be delivered from it. If Christ had not been baptized then there would be no way for His death on the cross to be connected to us to wash way our sins and save use from death. If Christ had not been baptized than we could not have been baptized into Him to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and be declared the Father’s beloved children in whom He is well pleased. If Christ had not been baptized than our baptism would not connect us to Him or give us anything - our baptism would mean nothing.

Yes, beloved, Christ had to be baptized, so that, as the Word made flesh, He could connect the Word of God to baptism's water to make it, as the Catechism says, "a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit." Without Christ being baptized, the Word of God, would not have been connected to the water and so it would have remained just plain water - useful only for washing away dirt from the body but unable to do anything about the sin that stains both body and soul. Without Christ being baptized the water would not have been filled with His holiness and righteousness, but would have remained nothing but a cesspool in which we all bathed.

So yes, Christ had to be baptized, and somebody had to do it, as unworthy as he might be, but the great good news for today is that John, unworthy as he was, listened to the Lord and fulfilled his purpose by doing what God had given him to do - an unworthy servant who had only done his duty. Yes, John in the Jordan turned his eyes from his unworthiness to look instead to the one who had sent him and put his trembling hands on the Son of God and opened his trembling lips to baptize the Holy One of Israel with the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, so that Baptism could be all that it is for you now. Yes, John, in fear and trembling, did what the Lord called him to do to fulfill all righteousness for you so that you could be saved through your baptism into Christ's death for the forgiveness of all your sins.

Yes, beloved, because John, as unworthy as He was, baptized the Lord, and because men like me, as unworthy as we are, baptized you, You have been baptized into Christ's death. Christ has taken up all your sins and carried them to the cross and paid for them all with His bitter sufferings and death and washed them away with His blood. Christ has paid the wages of your sin by dying your death so that you can be set free from its power to live forever in His holiness, righteousness, innocence and blessedness. Christ has poured out the gift of His Holy Spirit upon you and has given you a new birth as beloved children of the Father in whom He is well pleased. Christ is in you and you are in Christ, unworthy in yourselves, but most worthy in Him to receive the fullness of God's kingdom in the resurrection to eternal life.

Yes, beloved, that God gives and does the greatest of things through unworthy people is made clear at the Jordan this day, as it is made clear at the altar, as the Lord shares His life with unworthy people with the gifts of His body and blood, given to you through the lips and hands of an unworthy servant. The Lord makes this clear in the Jordan and at the altar this day, so that you might be encouraged in whatever callings God has given you, to trust and believe that He is at work in whatever He has given you to do to accomplish His will - as you love and serve those around you in His love and are prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. And so, beloved, come live out the truth of your baptismal life in Christ by being united with Him in His body and blood, so that He might silence all your protests about your unworthiness to serve His purposes with His - "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Amen.