

Jesus' Baptism Mt.3:13-17 9-26-99

Welcome to our very first morning worship service.

When you visit a church for the first time, you might evaluate that church based on how many people welcome you and are friendly to you.

You expect that the people who go there will do something to make you feel welcome.

If you are at your home church, and you have been going there a long time, you try to make others feel welcome. Well, guess what – every single one of you have been attending CREEKSIDE ever since our very first Sunday morning service. So you are all old timers. So it's the responsibility of you old timers to make the first timers feel welcome. So you have a big job, because everyone around you is a first timer.

You may especially want to shake the hands of David and Debbi Growman.

6 months ago we began having informational meetings – at that point CREEKSIDE was nothing more than an idea and a prayer. Those meetings ranged from 6 to zero in attendance. Next we started a evening Bible study. There are about 10 of you who were there when that began in May.

Over the summer, instead of the normal 40% decline, we have more than doubled in size. Over the month of September, we have received more phone calls and inquiries than any month yet.

So this is a time of great momentum and excitement here at CREEKSIDE.

2:30

Before we begin our worship time, we want to formally, publicly dedicate CREEKSIDE EFC to God.

This is His work, not ours. We could make it ours, and ruin it by turning it into a strictly human endeavor, but we don't want to ever do that.

The purpose of dedicating something to God is to remind ourselves that it belongs to Him, and that we are totally dependent upon Him in every way.

As we look ahead at the decades that are to come, we realize that sometimes churches loose their focus, get off track, fall into traditionalism and formalism, become infested with unrepentant sin, and any number of other pitfalls. So let's bow in prayer now, and at the very outset dedicate this church and our hearts to God.

4:05

Pray

"Our gracious and kind Father in heaven, there is no one like you in heaven above or on earth below-you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way.

You have kept your promise to build your church, and that the grave will not prevail against it. We ask that You will fulfill that promise here in our midst at Agape.

The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. And we know you are not limited or contained in any sense by any building. Yet we ask that Your presence be in our midst in a special way as we gather each week to worship You.

We ask that You give attention to our prayer and our plea for mercy, O LORD our God. Hear the cry and the prayer that we are praying in your presence this day.

May your eyes be open toward this body night and day, this place that You called a spiritual house where You would dwell.

When people come here to worship, accept our worship. When the people bow in prayer here, listen to their prayers.

When people come here seeking comfort, reach down with your tender grace, and gather them into your arms in comfort.

When people come here to find forgiveness of sins, grant them a repentant heart, and wash them clean.

When people come seeking to know You, reveal yourself in a clear, vivid, explicit way.

When people are in need, grant us the generosity to care for one another as we should.

When people begin to see your love through your people, and are exposed to Your holiness, and hear of your great name and mighty hand and outstretched arm – people will come seeking to know you. Have mercy on them and reveal yourself to them – so that the masses in the Denver area might believe and fear you as we do.

In the future, when we fall into the ruts of human traditions, and we become blind to what you want us to do – do whatever it takes to shake us back into following your will.

Show each one of us what our role is that we might honor You by fulfilling the central purpose of our lives.

When we cry out to you to provide for us – to provide us with gifted people who love you, to provide us with wisdom and guidance, to provide us with finances – listen to our cry for help, that the world might see and hold You in great honor.

We humbly dedicate this church to You Father, from this day forward, until You come.

7:48

Introduce Becky Arters

Singing time (John Arnold and Greg Whipkey)

This morning we are going to begin study of the miracles of Jesus. Since this morning marks the beginning of our Sunday morning services, I want to begin with an event that marked the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

At this moment – Sept. 26, 1999, we stand at the threshold of the life span of this church. So I think it is appropriate that we take a look at the day when Jesus stood at the threshold of His public ministry.

:51

Lk.3:23 points out that Jesus was “**about 30 years of age when he began his ministry.**” That's exactly how old I am - *about* 30.

There are 2 things I have noticed about being about 30 years old:
- it seemed like it took a long time to get this old

Think of the patience of Jesus - for 30 years living w/ mom - doing chores, fixing leaky roof, etc. Mundane, rural existence
(Jesus never in a hurry)

- now that I am this age, it doesn't seem like I'm all that old

When I contemplated this ministry, it was kind of overwhelming to think that I would have such a responsibility (all my life I have never been anything but just a young guy)

Imagine J the B - with his ministry to all those multitudes, and he was my age.

Imagine Jesus

3:12

MT 3:13 Then Jesus came from Galilee

The word means “appeared” and carries the idea of a public appearance. “**From Galilee**” reminds us that until now, Jesus had been living at home, and now he left home.

Jesus was a young man - much younger than most of the religious leaders he would confront. What would it be like to be my age and embark on such a task? - Add to that the knowledge that in 3 years you would be dead.

I don't know how my time will end here, but Jesus knew that he was beginning a task that would end on the cross.

to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

LK 3:21 When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too.

Jesus came at the height of John's ministry - right in front of all the multitudes.

4:50

Why did Jesus come to be baptized? Some say he became the Christ at that moment (but Immanuel – God with us) Others - the Inauguration of His ministry.

But we can't just make things up in the Bible – we need to look at what the Bible says.

What was the significance of John's baptism?

It was a baptism of repentance (2,5-6,8, 11).

MT 3:1 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance

11 "I baptize you with water for repentance.

This was considered scandalous by the religious leaders. The only baptism they knew was proselyte baptism (Gentiles who converted to Judaism we considered unclean and needed a spiritual bath)

John comes along and says, "You all need a bath." It was a symbol of cleaning from sin, and it was an act of repentance. So you can imagine the shock when Jesus came to be baptized.

8:30

The Gospel of Hebrews "**Behold the mother of the Lord and his brotheren said to him, John the baptist baptisith for the remission of sins, let us go and be pabtized by him. But he said unto them, 'what sin have I comitted that I should go and be pabtized by him except perchance this very thing that I have said in ignorance.'**"

So what on earth is Jesus doing? Why would Jesus participate in something that was a picture of the cleansing of sin?

Did He have any impurity in His heart? If so, He could never be the Lamb of God, could He?
Heb.4:15 – He was tempted in every way just as we are – yet was without sin.

Jesus was the only human being who ever lived, who never committed one sin.

If not repentance, didn't need to be cleansed, what in the world is he doing? Puzzling.
If you are puzzled by that, don't feel bad – John was too.

14 But John tried to deter him

Think of it. John is standing there in the river, talking to the people about sin, baptizing them. Then, suddenly, here comes his cousin, Jesus. The sinless, spotless Lamb. The One that John jumped for joy in his mother's womb when Mary walked in carrying Jesus in *her* womb. This man who had lived 30 years without ever doing *anything* wrong.

Some of those folks may have known Jesus. Perhaps they had heard him pray many times over the years, but no one had ever heard him pray a prayer of repentance or say he was sorry for a sin, or ask for forgiveness for himself.

10:30

So this scene begins with a confrontation. John didn't know for sure that Jesus was the Messiah yet, but he did know that Jesus was sinless, that Jesus was more holy than he, and he knew that his baptism was a baptism of repentance for sinners.

The imperfect shows that John kept deterring him, which means Jesus kept persisting as well. It turned in to a bit of an argument.

14 saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

All the pronouns are emphatic.

"I'm dirty, you're clean if anyone should be washed by anyone..."

It was a symbol of washing away filth. John can't imagine that Jesus would do this - he figured a perfect man would not do this, since it was a sign of repentance (it would seem to imply that Jesus had sin).

If Jesus goes into the water just like everyone else - all those sinful people, who were doing this to acknowledge their sinfulness, won't it look like Jesus is just like them?

That's how John figured. I figured the same way. Both John and I figured wrong.

13:37

Mt.3:15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now;

This is an idiom. The meaning is something like, "What you are saying is true, but let it slide this time."

Jesus acknowledged that it was a sinner's baptism, and that Jesus was not a sinner, yet he wanted to do it anyway.

now Jesus seems to acknowledge John's reasoning, yet he still wants to be baptized for another reason, and the only hint we get toward that reason is this word, "**now**." It was important that Jesus be baptized at *this* moment, because something about *this* moment is very significant.

Then Jesus says something to John that puts an immediate end to this little disagreement.

it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

14:45

What does this mean? Some: It is necessary for me to be baptized, because that is a good thing for people to do, and in order for me to fulfill all righteousness, I must do every righteous thing."

Problems: Jesus didn't do every possible righteous thing. Some things are unnecessary if you are sinless. It is a righteous thing to apologize if you hurt someone, and to make restitution if you steal. But if you don't hurt someone or make steal, those things are not needed.

And if you don't sin, then repentance isn't needed, and if you don't need to be cleansed, then baptism isn't needed.

Besides, Jesus didn't say, "**it is proper for me to do this to fulfill all righteousness.**" He said "**us**"

It's not that Jesus was doing one more righteous deed so that he could chalk up one more off the list on his way to doing all of them.

Jesus says that it is necessary for he and John to do this so that everything that is supposed to take place in Jesus' Messianic work will be fulfilled.

What was it that was so important to Jesus' work as Messiah? V.16 gives us a clue:

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized

16:45

In v.15 he was discussing with John about it, and now in v.16 it is already over. We missed it! Jesus got baptized in the white space between vv. 15 & 16.

In my Bible this section is titled, "The baptism of Jesus" But the baptism of Jesus isn't even described! If you were going to write a ch. about the baptism of Jesus, don't you think you would at least mention the baptism? But that isn't the point.

The issue is not the baptism - it is what happens right after the baptism.

16 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 lighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

John's concern turned out not to be a problem. Jesus didn't end up looking like just another repentant sinner. Thousands were being baptized. This didn't happen when any of them were baptized. They all got dunked under the water, and the only thing that happened was a few ripples went out and they got wet. Jesus does it and heaven opens, God the Spirit appears, and the Father speaks audibly from heaven!

Don't ever disobey because you are afraid of how it will look!

19:30

Let's go down to the Jordan and get a good spot so we can watch this. Are you ready?

There you are, standing along the bank with the crowd. You just stepped out of the water. A little chill runs through you as you feel a little breeze. You are soaking wet, but you aren't going anywhere - you wouldn't miss this for the world. All of Israel it seems is coming. People are repenting of their sins and turning to God. You can't believe that you were just baptized by J the B himself!

21:00

Now a man comes that John knows. They are out there talking, and it's hard to hear over the sound of the river, but it looks like John is refusing to baptize him!

The man seems totally untimidated by this great prophet - in fact it looks like the prophet is a bit intimidated by this man. Who *is* he? He can't be anyone very important - he came down the road from Galilee.

Oh, look! Now John *is* baptizing him.

Jesus goes into the water, he goes under, John brings Him up...

17 At that moment heaven was opened

clouds roll back, blue goes to the side, the blackness of outer space cracked open...

Suddenly you find yourself gazing directly into heaven itself! The first thing you notice is the brilliant bright light (instantly blinded Paul – sun doesn't do that)

Heaven is always described the same way – brilliant, flashing spectacular Jewels and precious stones – the light of the glory of God refracting through them with infinite beauty and colors beyond description...

God's awesome throne surrounded by 4 huge living creatures 24 rulers on thrones, and countless millions of angels...

You're standing there, and you can't believe your eyes. You wonder if it's just a vision, but you look around, and everyone sees it!

That's not all. Next something even more astounding happened – something that had never happened before and has never happened since.

17 and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.

The Holy Spirit was actually incarnated. He took on some kind of body (Lk.3:22). We don't know what kind of body – perhaps like a bird's body, but it descended right out of heaven like a dove would descend. Almighty God, the Holy Spirit, actually descended from heaven and landed on Jesus.

This was a pre-arranged sign.

Jn.1:33 I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' 34 I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."

A Dove would remind those common folk of sacrifice. The poor were to sacrifice a spotless dove. The Spirit of God is making it crystal clear that Jesus is no sinner. He has NO blemish, NO spot, NO sin, NO guilt.

26:00

Picture it. You are standing there in awe and fear looking strait up into heaven. You see things that the Bible writers are at a loss to describe. Suddenly the Holy Spirit takes a bodily form and flies right down out of heaven, right into the earth's atmosphere, and lands on that Man!

Unbelievable! and just when you think you are about to pass out from amazement, that's *still* not all!

17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Your senses are shattered by the most awesome voice your have ever heard. God Almighty speaks audibly from heaven! What was that voice like? Was it like being next to a loud speaker when you can feel the vibrations in your chest? (Could hear from heaven)

my Son "In case you were wondering who this man is."

Some have said, "Why wasn't Jesus more clear about who He was? Why all the mystery – why didn't God just speak from heaven?" He did!

Some people have tried to make that mean Jesus is something less than God the Father. That is not what that term means.

It means Jesus is essentially the same as God. Just like my children are made up of nothing but a piece of me and a piece of Tracy, so they are 100% human, so Jesus was 100% God.

What is Jesus made out of - Deity. Jesus consists of the same stuff as the Father. Son of God means he is by nature GOD. That is not true of any other human being.

28:47

whom I love; with him I am well-pleased

He hasn't done anything wrong. He is my son - I am on his side. You oppose him, you oppose Me.

They say when you get a church you should get someone influential on your side. Jesus had the Holy Spirit and the Father on his side.

29:33

Abraham was great, but this didn't happen to him.

Moses, David, Elijah

and Jesus turned to John and said, "Now what were you saying about the people thinking I am a common sinner if I get baptized?"

Why was Jesus baptized? John thought it would be a mistake, but Jesus said, "Permit it at this moment, so that all righteousness will be filled up"

Far from making Jesus look like everyone else in the crowd, Jesus' baptism showed Him to be transcendently different from everyone in that crowd and everyone else.

- this is also seen in John's response. Some say Jesus was just a prophet - but here the greatest prophet that ever lived says, "You are in a category way beyond me." This, the greatest of men who towered above the Pharisees who thought they towered above everyone else is bowed in humble repentance before this, the Son of God.

32:32

But the question still remains - why this act associated with cleansing? God could have spoken from heaven without it.

The fact is, Jesus *did* participate in a rite that was a picture of cleansing. But he was spotless. *Why?*

Isa.53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

32:39

Every one of us is morally corrupted on the inside.

The reason Jesus came to this earth was to live a perfect life and then bear the guilt of our sin in our place – and then take the punishment we deserve so that we could be granted forgiveness – if we entrust our lives to Him.

12 he was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many,

1 Pe.2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness;

Jesus came to identify with sinners. This baptism because a picture of his own death. Every time Jesus refers to his own personal baptism, it takes on this meaning.

MK 10:38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

LK 12:49 "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!"

34:00

CONCLUDE:

- This absolutely eliminates any doubt about who Jesus is. If we ignore the resurrection, all the miracles, the transfiguration, and everything else, this is enough. Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God. The only one ever who is so important that the Father and the Spirit show up personally at his baptism - the Spirit bodily and the Father audibly.

- I think this is significant for us to think about at this moment. This happened at the inauguration of Jesus' ministry, and here, this morning we are inaugurating our ministry.

When Jesus stood at the threshold of the beginning of His ministry, heaven opened, the Holy Spirit appeared, and God the Father spoke audibly.

“What does that have to do with us? Are you expecting heaven to open after the service and for God to say, “CREEKSIDE is My church – go there!”?”

35:56

No, that's not going to happen. It would be ridiculous for God to focus attention on us. That's the opposite of what needs to happen.

What happened at the baptism of Jesus was unique – it had never happened before and has never happened since. It only happened once, because there is only One on Whom we are to focus our attention.

When heaven opened, God spoke and the Spirit appeared all attention was riveted on Jesus Christ. That's how it should be. We don't want the attention focused on CREEKSIDE or any other church. Jesus Christ remains the focal point of everything. Our message to the world is not “Look at us!” It is “Look at Christ!”

The important thing isn't CREEKSIDE, the important thing is Jesus Christ, that's why Heb.12:2 says **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith,**

God stated categorically that He was well-pleased with Jesus (didn't say “at this moment”).

He can't say that about anyone else, because the rest of us are sometimes pleasing to God, and other times not. He can't say that about CREEKSIDE, because we are fallible. We might do what is pleasing to Him today, and do something displeasing tomorrow.

37:29

This happened another time. Jesus & P,J&J went up on a mountain, and Jesus peeled back the veil of His humanity and revealed a glimpse of His glory.

Lk 9:34-35 **While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love, whom I have chosen, and in Whom I am well pleased; listen to him.**

We are not looking for God to open up heaven and announce that He is pleased with CREEKSIDE. The measure of God’s pleasure is determined by one simple thing – whether or not we *listen* to the One in whom God is ultimately pleased - Jesus Christ.

How do we do that? Jesus didn’t write anything that we know of. The way He got His message out was by spending 3 years training 12 men. He gave those men the ability to work miracles so people would know they were commissioned by Him. And those men went around teaching Jesus message (the Gospel). Then they wrote it down (the NT). Jesus also referred to the OT as God’s Word. So how do you listen to Jesus? Study the Bible.

39:09

Is God pleased with CREEKSIDE? It depends. It depends on our level of loyalty to Jesus Christ. It depends on with what level of intensity we listen to Him.

At CREEKSIDE, we are devoted to listening to Jesus Christ.

If you were looking for a church that has a whole lot of entertainment, and then a little 10-minute sermonette – this isn’t the place. Sermonettes produce Christianettes.

CREEKSIDE will never be a perfect church this side of heaven, we will always have some faults – but one thing you can count on, one thing I will promise you right now. At CREEKSIDE EFC, above all else, we are committed to listen to Jesus Christ with every ounce of ability God has given us.

Our purpose statement is as follows: “CREEKSIDE exists to help each person discover and fulfill his or her calling in life.” That is our purpose, because the most important thing in life is to listen to Jesus Christ, and to respond. And that is done not thru some mystical experience, but through the Bible

40:24

The last thing our society needs is another “expert” going on and on about his own opinions and ideas. You don't need to hear what I think, you need to hear what God has said.

When you come here, I may not have jokes that are as funny as some other speakers, I may not have stories that are exciting as some guys. That’s because I spend *most* of my time studying to find out what the Bible means by what it says, and how that applies in our lives.

If you come to CREEKSIDE, you may or may not enjoy it, you may or may not be amused or entertained, you may or may not be impressed.

But there is one promise I can make: If you come each week with an open heart, I promise you will grow closer to God, you will develop spiritually, your character will become more like God’s, and your life will fill up with meaning.

I realize that is an enormous promise, but I can make it with full confidence and without reservation, because I know that is the power that is in God's Word.

41:49

That's why we are starting with a study of Jesus' life.

If you grew up in church, it is easy to become inoculated to Jesus (Monkey SS joke). My goal in this series is to go from Jesus being a mere name - an answer to a question - to being a person. What was he *really* like?

Can you *imagine*? (A perfect human being - All the best traits of your favorite people)

Very often Bible study is academic and cerebral - like a black and white documentary.

This study will be different. I'm not going to lecture on complicated details of theology while you all take copious notes on the outline.

My goal in this study is instead of a black and white documentary to show you a vivid, full color movie on a giant screen.

Our ears will hear the tone of Jesus' voice as he confronts the Pharisees or as he deals tenderly with the children,

our eyes will see the mighty miracles first hand,

our mouths will taste the wine Jesus made and

we will smell the bread and fish as we sit down there on the grass with the 5000.

We will feel the wonder, surprise, amazement, love, shock, outrage, curiosity, confusion, joy, elation, and fear of those who saw and heard Jesus.

45:00

Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

Closing Prayer (This study, this church, potluck, offering)