

In Baptism, you are marked with the name of the Holy Trinity. You were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This is no mere piece of trivia. When you are baptized into the name of the Holy Trinity, things happen. By putting His name on you, God has skin in the game, so to speak. He works to save you. **IN BAPTISM, THE TRINITY WORKS TO SAVE YOU.**

The baptism of Jesus serves as the basis for our text today. It is quite short, let me re-read it to you. **“Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.””**

In baptism, we see all three persons of the Trinity at work. First things first, let’s talk about God, our Heavenly Father. I. In baptism, the Father calls you His Child. In Baptism, the Father says to you, “You are my beloved son.” “You are my beloved daughter.”

To be a Christian isn’t just about saying the correct list of doctrines and teachings. That is part of it to be certain. However, to be a Christian means to be placed into a new family. Jesus tells us, **“My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”** We are part of a family here in the Church. We are brothers and sisters of the Heavenly Father through these baptismal waters.

A young man lived in a small town, and this young man’s father was arrested and sentenced to prison for robbing a bank. The son of course was ashamed of his father. Not knowing what to do, he started attending services at the Lutheran church at which he was baptized. His family stopped attending shortly after he was confirmed, but he thought the church might have answers.

He kept a low profile and arrived after the bell rang and left before the final hymn. It went on that way for months until one Sunday he ran into the old emeritus pastor who was on his way in just as the young man was on his way out.

The emeritus pastor called out and said, “Hey, I recognize you!” The young man thought the man was going to confront him about what his father did at the local bank last spring. The young man pulled up the hood of his coat and kept walking faster.

The pastor grabbed him by the arm. He couldn’t escape. The pastor smiled and said, “I do recognize you. I baptized you! I know who you are, you’re God’s beloved son!”

Perhaps you can relate to the young man in this story. We all carry issues of shame and guilt. If only God knew. If only this congregation knew. we would high tail it out of this sanctuary with our coat covering our head in shame.

But when the Father looks down upon you, He looks past all your worst moments, your sins, and your shame. He looks past all of that and says, “I do recognize you. You are my beloved child! With you I am well pleased!”

You might wonder, how can this be? II. In baptism, the Son takes your place. Baptism marks the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. From there He is thrown into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. From there He calls his disciples, wanders the countryside, conducts miracles, and teaches the people.

This ministry of Jesus culminates in Holy Week. He celebrates His last meal with his disciples in what we now call the Lord’s Supper. He is arrested, tried, tortured, crucified, died, and buried.

In Baptism, the Son takes your place. His righteousness becomes your righteousness. His good deeds become yours. His patience becomes your patience. His love yours. His kindness yours. All the things He did throughout His time here on Earth become credited to your account.

In Baptism, the Son takes your place. Your sin and shame becomes His. Your shortcomings, your failures, the things you’re embarrassed by, the things you don’t want anybody to know. The whole wretched lot, it is known by Jesus so that He could take all that to Calvary and forgive you.

IN BAPTISM, THE TRINITY WORKS TO SAVE YOU. As we examine the scene before us in our Gospel text, we see the Son being the one baptized. And this matters! In being baptized, He was taking your place.

In Jesus’ baptism, it’s almost as though He becomes your stunt double. All the things that are too risky or too hard for the main star to do, that’s what the stunt double does. Jesus Christ takes your place in baptism, and if it’s you as you go down into the waters, it’s Jesus who rises out of them ever ready to serve.

Only Luke mentions this last part, that Jesus was praying as He was baptized. Of course, the Bible doesn’t inform us of the subject matter of His prayers, but perhaps He was praying for you. Even if it was a brief moment, all things are possible with God. Even if it was a brief moment, perhaps He was praying for you knowing of that temptation you would fall into, or perhaps He was praying for you as you made that big mistake.

What we do know is that Jesus Christ is praying for us now and we have this confidence, as Scripture writes, “**Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.**” We are they who Jesus prays for, let us take confidence that He took our place in Baptism and continues to walk alongside us.

Finally, III. In baptism, the Holy Spirit descends upon you. We see in Jesus' baptism that **“the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove.”**

In Luther's Baptism Rite, he included the line, “Depart, you unclean spirit, and make room for the Holy Spirit in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” This didn't make the final cut in our current hymnal perhaps because they thought parents wouldn't appreciate their kids essentially being called little devils. Nonetheless, if someone really wanted to use that rite, it is included in other publications by the hymnal committee such as the Altar Book or the Agenda.

Luther had a way of getting straight to the point, didn't he? Baptism is not some kind of indifferent thing like choosing to use disposable or cloth diapers. At its heart, Christian baptism is an exorcism. “The Word of God teaches that we are all conceived and born sinful and are under the power of the devil until Christ claims us as His own.” Even infants need to be taken from the domain of darkness to the domain of light.

The Holy Spirit descends on Jesus in bodily form, like a dove. Only Luke mentions that the Holy Spirit descends in *bodily* form, it would have been nice to see what that looked like. From that point forward, Jesus' ministry is a ministry of the Holy Spirit. For example, we read shortly after this event, **“And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness.”** The Phrase “the Holy Spirit” appears more in Luke's Gospel than Matthew, Mark, and John combined. Luke is at pains to demonstrate how everything Jesus did was empowered by the Holy Spirit who dwells in Him.

So too with us, at Baptism the Holy Spirit dwells in us, and that means there's a new sheriff in town. The Holy Spirit runs things in the hearts of the Christians. The Holy Spirit produces in us those fruit of the Spirit through which we have genuine love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

And the Holy Spirit given to us at baptism is a hungry fellow. He instills in us a hunger and thirst for God's Word and Sacraments. Just as Jesus' baptism started his adventure, so too with ours. Baptism starts your walk with Jesus, and it is the lifetime of continuing to hear His Word, to receive His forgiveness, to pray to Him in good times and bad, and to receive Jesus' body and blood in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

IN BAPTISM, THE TRINITY WORKS TO SAVE YOU. The Father calls you His beloved Child because Jesus His Son has taken your place. The Holy Spirit walks alongside you and empowers you to live this life worthy of Christ. May we walk in our Baptisms daily and give thanks for all the Lord's benefits!