

Luke 3:21-22

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

And as he was praying, heaven was opened

Lk 3:22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

In sermons and readings over the past few weeks we have witnessed the birth of Jesus and His appearance as a twelve year old in the temple. When He was born it was said of Him that He would save His people from their sins. As a twelve year old He said that He must be about His Father’s business. Today we hear of Him formally beginning His public ministry. Perhaps we’ve witnessed an inauguration of a president or the installation of someone into public office. In this reading we see Jesus at the Jordan River being installed- if you will- into His office. We are witnesses as Jesus becomes the Christ. This Word of God shows that Jesus became one of us, that He was anointed by the Holy Spirit and that He was certified by His Heavenly Father.

John the Baptist was baptizing at the Jordan and the Bible tells us that people went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins they were baptized. And Jesus too came to be baptized by John. John was amazed. He said to Jesus, “I need to be baptized by You and not You by me.” The Lord led John to know Jesus was the Lamb of God who had come to take away the sins of the world. Why should He be baptized? He needed no saving. Yet Jesus was baptized in order that He might join the mass of sinners that stood condemned before God. St. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “God made Him Who had no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. Without exception, all people were drowning in the guilt of their sins. All must confess with the prophet Ezra, “Our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens.” By His baptism Jesus jumped into the pool of our sin to be with us so that He might rescue us.

After His baptism Jesus prayed. We don’t have the words to this prayer but one could surmise He was asking for help in order to complete the awesome mission that lay before Him. Here we see something that you and I cannot understand... Jesus is true God., He has all power and He knows all things. Yet, He prays for God’s help. This is possible because at His birth Jesus took upon Himself a human nature. Because of that human nature He could be weak and dependant upon His Heavenly Father and so pray for help and strength.

As He was praying heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove. You will often see the Holy Spirit pictured as a dove in church windows and in church art. Later John bore witness, “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on Him. I would not have known Him, except 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.’ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”

Earlier in our service we heard how David was anointed to be king over Israel. Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with a special oil to signify that they had been chosen for their special calling. Jesus was anointed as He entered his office of the Christ.

The word Christ is not a name but rather an office. It means the anointed. Throughout the Old Testament God told His people that He would send His Anointed, His Messiah, His Christ. Jesus is greater than all the prophets, priests and kings that came before Him because He was not anointed with oil, rather, He was anointed with the Holy Spirit. St. Peter wrote, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power." In the 2nd Psalm we heard God speak of His Anointed One. Jesus said later in His ministry, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." At the Savior's trial, when the High Priest said, "Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God?" Jesus answered, "Yes, it is as you say."

I mentioned earlier that Jesus' office of Christ included the work of prophet, priest and king. He is the Great Prophet anointed to bring the Good News of salvation to the world. He is the Great High Priest come to offer Himself as a sacrifice to make payment for the sins of the world. Finally, He is the King Who establishes His kingdom in the hearts of His believers and rules all things in their behalf.

Here at Jordan Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power to begin His public office as the Christ.

It was also at this place that the Father certified him to be the world's Savior. A voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased." By the way, take note that at this time we have all three persons of God revealed at one time. The Son is there with John, the Spirit descends from heaven and the Father speaks from heaven. There are three distinct persons, yet the Bible also says, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one." This is the mystery of God that we cannot understand... God is one; yet, the Father sent the Son to win our salvation, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son to call us to faith so that we might enjoy the salvation that Christ earned.

The Father says, "You are My Son." This is not an ordinary Son as a believer is a child of God but this is the Son. As it is written, "When the fullness of time had fully come God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under law to redeem those under law that we might receive the full rights of Sons.

The Father certifies Jesus. Yes, He is the One official Christ and Savior, and He tells Him, "You are My Son whom I love; with You I am well pleased." The Father encouraged the Son as He set about His work of saving sinners.

These words also tell us Jesus is the one, the only Savior. He came to be our substitute. If the Father is pleased with Jesus, He is also pleased with us because of Jesus. At the close of His public ministry, shortly before His crucifixion, the Father said similar words, "This is My Son, with Him I am well pleased. Jesus work satisfied the Father and therefore God could mark our debt paid in full and raise Jesus from the dead.

One reads that many people claim to be spiritual but that they don't hold to any religion. I'm not sure I understand what that means. Perhaps they have developed their own system of belief in their mind. Perhaps they have taken a little from Christianity, a little from the Hindu and a little from the religion of Islam. Today God has come and cleared up any confusion that one might have about Who is the true God, Who Jesus is to how to escape the judgment that is to come and what to believe. At the Jordan River God made the public announcement, "Here, world, is Your Savior. Trust Him. There is no

other Savior. There are no other Gods. Christians are to be gentle and loving However, we will insist that Jesus is the Christ, the only God sent Savior. The Bible states, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. Does God want us to force our faith on others? No, hearts are to be won by the gentle preaching of the Gospel. That is why we are passionate about testifying about Jesus. He is my Savior. If I love my neighbor, I will say Jesus is the only Savior and He is your Savior too. Amen.