

1 Baptism of our Lord – Isaiah 42; Matthew 3

A good conversation is something priceless. A man and a woman fall in love, get married, embrace each other, and bear children. They talk with their kids, teaching them to love one another, trust in Christ, and pray to their heavenly Father. It all started with a pleasant chat. Once upon a time, the man and woman met. They talked. They enjoyed the talk. So they kept talking. This is at the heart of a loving relationship. It benefits the children and children's children when mom and dad talk to each other. Talk in the car during trips. Talk at the dinner table. Don't just talk about your schedule, though I suppose you need to discuss those things too. Talk about God and his Word. Critique the various errors of the culture around you, and contrast them with what God's Word says. Talk about history, nature, or current events, seeing how God's truth gives light to how we understand these things. Good conversations, which reflect on God's wisdom, bear beautiful fruit. The children learn from their parents how to talk to one another, and it continues through the generations.

Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River reveals the divine conversation that has existed in God from eternity. Jesus speaks of it in Psalm 2, "The LORD said to Me, 'Thou art My Son. This day have I begotten Thee.'" And Psalm 110 says, "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'" This constant dialogue within God is the eternal life, which has existed in God from eternity. The Father has always loved his Son. The Son has always loved the Father. The Holy Spirit has always proceeded as perfect love. What do you do with the one you love? You speak to him. You embrace him. This is exactly what is revealed at our Lord's baptism. The Holy Spirit embraces the Son, anointing him and resting on him in the form of a dove. The Father speaks to the Son. The Evangelists Mark and Luke record God speaking directly to Jesus saying, "You are my beloved Son." Here, in the Jordan River, at the Baptism of Jesus, God finally reveals this eternal conversation he has been having within himself.

The Old Testament already gave us some insight of God's conversation within himself. Before creating Adam and his wife, God said, "Let us make man in our own image after our own likeness." When the people of the earth were building a tower in the city of Babel, God said, "Let us go and confuse their language." In his creation of man, God is letting man in on his conversation, inviting him into his eternal life. At the tower of Babel, God does the opposite. He confuses their language, punishing them for their prideful and self-centered statements about making a name for themselves. He brings these careless words into judgment. And yet, hidden in this punishment of Babel was God's plan to bless his people.

You see, when God confused the language of the people at Babel, he caused them to scatter throughout the earth. Now, this may seem like a curse, but it was actually part of God's plan. He told Noah and his family to be fruitful and multiply and to fill the earth. God scattered the people of the earth all so that he would gather his people from all the nations of the earth. This is revealed in another conversation God had within himself. Isaiah records it in our Old Testament lesson. The Father says to the Son, whom he calls his Servant:

I the LORD have called You for My righteous purpose. I will take hold of Your hand and protect You. I will give You as My Covenant to the people, as My Light to the nations – to give sight to the blind, bring prisoners out of the dungeon and those who live in darkness out of prison. (Is 42:6-7)

This is God's conversation. The Father addresses the Son with love and confidence. He calls him to fulfill his righteousness, to bring light to those scattered around the world and sitting in the darkness of sin and death. This is what God is talking about in himself. He's talking about

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our salvation. Some of our hymns express this dialogue of God within himself. For example, we sing,

God said to His beloved Son,
“Tis time to have compassion.
So go, bright Jewel of my crown,
And bring to man salvation.
From sin and sorrow set him free.
Slay bitter death for him that he
May live with Thee forever!”

And in another hymn, we sing,

“Go forth, My Son,” the Father saith,
“And free men from the fear of death,
From sin and condemnation.
The wrath and stripes are hard to bear,
But by Thy passion men shall share
The fruit of Thy salvation.”

And then the Son responds,

“Yea, Father, yea! Most willingly
I’ll bear what Thou commandest.
My will conforms to Thy decree.
I’ll do what Thou demandest.”

This conversation within God is revealed for us, because God wants to bring us in on his conversation. Just as parents talk in the car during a trip and the children sit and listen, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit continue their conversation right in front of us. His words are revealed for us by his Spirit in the Scriptures. And he comes to us with tender words. He doesn’t put you to shame or embarrass you for not being in the know. He doesn’t yell or raise his voice at you for not understanding. He doesn’t break a broken reed or put out a dimly burning wick. Instead, he lovingly invites you to sit and listen. He places his Word and Spirit in your ears, mouth, and heart, patiently giving you the confidence to speak his words as your own. He who causes the earth to melt when he utters his voice does not burn you up. Instead, he bore the fiery wrath of God, all so that he might speak tenderly to you, assuring you of God’s favor.

This is the conversation of God revealed in our Lord’s baptism and fulfilled by his atoning death. He therefore lets us in on this divine conversation. He addresses you and says, “You are my beloved son.” His Son, who took your place under the law and died for your sins, has brought life and immortality to light by his gospel. And the Father who called and chose his Son from eternity has also chosen and called you to have a share in this same eternal life.

As the children, who sit and listen to their parents talk, bit by bit gain the confidence to join in on the discussion, the children of God do the same. So listen to what God is talking about. Take part in the divine dialogue as you talk with your spouse, children, friends, and loved ones. God’s words are always edifying. His conversation never comes to an end. It enters into our homes and hearts, continuing throughout the generations and into eternity. Amen.