

SERMON NOTES: Following Jesus: One With Us

Luke 3:1-23

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I. Luke “roots” the story of Jesus not in a myth, but in real human history:

1. John the Baptist is mentioned outside the Bible by the first century Jewish historian, Josephus [Antiquities 18.118, 119, abbreviated]

Now many people came in crowds to hear [John the Baptist], for they were greatly moved by his words.

Herod, feared that the great influence John had over the masses might put them into his power and enable him to raise a rebellion -- (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise) -- So he thought it best to put him to death.

In this way, he might prevent any mischief John might cause, Accordingly, out of Herod's suspicious temper, John was sent as a prisoner to Fortress Machaerus [*in what is now Jordan*] and was put to death.

2. Luke (3:1-3) deliberately mentions 6 historical pegs that enable us to date John the Baptist's ministry to A.D. 27-29.

1. It's the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius,
2. & Pontius Pilate is governor of Judea,
3. & Herod Antipas is ruler of Galilee,
4. & his brother Philip ruler of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis,
5. & Lysanias ruler of Abilene,
6. & Annas and Caiaphas are high priests

II. “Baptism”

1. The word “baptism” comes from a Greek word that originally meant “washing” or “cleansing by immersion.” In Judaism, baptism symbolized the human need for cleansing and forgiveness from sin before being able to enter God's presence.

2. Baptism also came to mean an event or ordeal (with or without water) that initiates people into a new era or status.

- Jesus described his death as a baptism (Luke 12:50)
- The crossing of the Red Sea was understood by St. Paul as a baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1-2).

III. The Baptism of Jesus

- Jesus was not a sinner, so technically he had no need to be baptized. However, as a leader he chose to share the experience of his people, experience by submitting to John's Baptism alongside his people.
- Jesus was a prophet like Moses (see Deuteronomy 18:15-19). In being baptized, Jesus was identifying his leadership and purpose with that of Moses. Even though Moses was not a slave (just as Jesus was not a sinner), yet Moses chose to experience “baptism” (the crossing the Red Sea) alongside his people.
- Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus' willingness to be baptized was also a declaration, affirmed by God's voice (3:22 - “You are my Son, the Beloved”), that Jesus was indeed the Messiah that John was proclaiming.

IV. The “ABCD's” of Our Baptism . . . which points to

- **A – An Affirmation** of our belief that God has actually entered history in Jesus the Messiah, to lead us out of slavery to sin and death. This Jesus alone, we affirm, can give us the power “to be clean” and to live with and for God, now and through eternity.
- **B – A Belonging**: not just to our earthly families but to God's family. It was not just men and women, but families with children who experienced “baptism into Moses” at the Red Sea. In Christian baptism God assures us that young and old all have a home in God's new family, as part of God's people, together.
- **C – A Commitment**. Baptism is a declaration both of God's commitment to us (expressed in sending us Jesus) and of our own commitment to God (expressed in heeding God's call to repentance). True, our infant children are too young to express this commitment to God. But in baptism, God commits to assist parents and their children; and also challenges parents and the church to commit to leading their children to Christ – before whom, in due season, they can make their own commitment (repentance) real.
- **D – The Dove**.

*“the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in bodily form like a dove.
And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved;
with you I am well pleased.’ (3:21-22)*

Baptism provides a moment for God to speak through the physical touch of water. In this moment, God longs to assure us (as he did with Jesus) that by Jesus' saving power, we, like Jesus, are true children of God (John 1:12), in whom God lives God's Spirit.