

Mark 1:4-11 ⁴ John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. ⁵ Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. ⁸ "I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." ⁹ It came to pass in those days *that* Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. ¹¹ Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

In the beginning God said let there be light and there was light and it was good.

And light is good, very good, what a wonderful gift it is. Do we need it? Maybe not, but what a wonderful gift to have.

In our gospel reading God gives spiritual life through Baptism, remember what Luther wrote about Baptism?

3. How can water do such great things?

The water doesn't actually do anything by itself. The power is in God's Word, which is in and with the water, and in faith which trusts this Word of God in the water.

Without the Word of God it is just plain water, and there is no baptism. But with the Word of God it really is a baptism; that is, a gracious water of life and washing of rebirth through the Holy Spirit.

Just as Saint Paul says in the third chapter of Titus:

"According to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying . . ." (Titus 3:5-8).

The Lord by the power of His Word gave us light and it was good. The Lord through His word sent John the Baptist and gave the forgiveness of sins through baptism, and it was good.

Which is greater the gift of light or of baptism? The people of Johns' day recognized what a wonderful gift baptism was.

⁵ Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

All of Judea and Jerusalem came out and were baptized. That is an extraordinary thing when you think about it. John was preaching their sin. If there is one thing that people don't like to hear (especially the people of Judea and Jerusalem) it's that they are sinners. Not only was John telling them they were sinners but he was also telling them to be baptized. This was a ritual meant for gentiles who wanted to become Jews, for the people to accept this baptism was an admission that they were no better than the gentiles. It wasn't just a vague repentance it was a complete admission of their wretchedness.

And yet all of Judea and Jerusalem went out to be baptized by John. **And it was good.** What a wonderful gift from the Lord that we don't have to be upset when we are confronted by our sin. Forgiveness is freely given.

But more than the forgiveness of sins is given in baptism, for John reminds us that his baptism gives only the forgiveness of sins, but the baptism of Jesus will give forgiveness **AND the Holy Spirit**

Jesus' baptizes with the Holy Spirit

"According to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior" Titus 3:5

"The washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." Those two are intricately joined. Baptism and the giving of the Holy Spirit, not only is the Holy Spirit given through baptism but He is poured out abundantly.

Some are confused; did John not have the Holy Spirit? Did the Old Testament people not have the Holy Spirit? Absolutely they did, we are specifically told that the Spirit was given to Moses and Saul and David and Elijah and Elisha etc. He certainly was given also to them, but to us He is given through baptism.

John gave forgiveness through baptism, but Jesus is greater than John. He will give more, forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. And it is good!

This Spirit lives in us giving us spiritual life and light, guiding us in the truth of God's word. The same God who spoke and there was light, also now speaks to our hearts and there is light and life.

And that is the purpose of the Holy Spirit, not to teach us to babble in tongues, or do wondrous miracles. His purpose is to teach us to live as God's Children, in God's love, that we might be good as He is good.

And So Jesus himself came and was baptized

And the question is always asked, why? Jesus had no sin why was he baptized.

In various places the Bible mentions a couple of things

1. This was His anointing. The moment He was shown to be the chosen one of God. Much like a king being crowned. You don't need the ceremony but it's important to let the world know here is your king.
2. He took our place under the law, since it is right that we do it, therefore it is right and obedient for Him to do it.
3. To unite Himself to us. As Paul reminded us in our epistle reading. In baptism we are united with him. Being united with Him we also will raise.
4. The best answer I think is the one Jesus himself gives, "to fulfill all righteousness." In other words, "**It is good**. Baptism is a good and precious gift which gives many blessings and I want it."

Jesus is one who knows what is good. He doesn't get overly excited about money or even having a pillow. But when it comes to baptism, He says that is the gift I want for Christmas

And so that the Father spoke from heaven, saying, "**This is my beloved Son, In whom I am well pleased.**"

And It was Good

It is good that the Father created light.

It is good that we confess our sins.

It is good that He forgives our sins through Jesus, in Baptism.

It is good that He fills us with the Holy Spirit that we might live with him.

It is good that He himself was baptized.

It is good that God sent His Son to live and die for us.

Amen

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus