

**January 9, 2022**  
**Baptism of the Lord**  
**Luke 3:15-16, 21-22**

Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.



After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

**Background**

Throughout their history, the Jews looked for the coming of a Messiah who would establish the Reign of God. There were those who thought that perhaps John the Baptist was God's anointed who had finally come. In the first line of the gospel text, Luke acknowledges that fact. Luke then quotes John's denial of being the "anointed one." The Baptist, without naming Jesus, then points to one who is to come, and compares his own standing to that of the true Messiah ("I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals"). Washing the feet of another was the task of the very lowest servants. It was also a gesture of respect, that of a student for his master. John uses this image in comparing himself to the one who is truly God's anointed. John is saying that he is not even worthy to be the student of the Messiah.

In the last two verses of the text, Luke first describes the Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus, and then the Father confirming that Jesus is indeed His son. Luke's description of these events is different from the other Gospels, in that Luke presents these events as happening after John had finished baptizing. Luke describes Jesus as being at prayer when he experiences the appearance of the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, and the voice from heaven. These are experiences that happen to him, and not something happens by him or through him. Luke's description also removes any sense of John's involvement in the experience.

The recording of the Father's voice confirming that Jesus was his son was very significant for the people of the day. Their limited understanding of reproduction made it impossible for them to know who the actual father of any child was. Therefore, the father had to publicly state that he was the father of a child. By doing this, he was giving the child legitimacy, status in the community, and the right to an inheritance, and he was taking on the responsibility of being the child's father. This was a critical part of the social structure of the day. Using this social institution, Luke presents God as claiming Jesus as His Son.

**Reflection Questions**

1. Can you recall a time when your parents let you know that they were pleased with you? What do you remember about the circumstances of that event?

2. Can you recall a time when you were filled with expectation?
3. As we begin a new year, what are your expectations?
4. What are your expectations for God's involvement in your life, or in the world?
5. The Jews were waiting for generations for the arrival of the Messiah. What does that say to you?
6. Can you imagine Jesus praying after he has been baptized? What kind of day is it? Are there others around Jesus? What are they doing? Is John present? What is Jesus' mood? What happens within Jesus as he hears the voice of God? What happens to the others who might be present? What happens to you as you imagine this event?
7. Have you ever had an experience where you were aware of God saying to you that you are God's daughter/son? What were those circumstances? How has that experience influenced your life?
8. Can you talk to God now about your own sense of being beloved, your hopes and expectations for God, the ways you would like to point to the presence of God in the world, or some other feeling that might have arisen in you as you read this gospel text?

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