

Kingdom Come

Week 2: The Baptism of Jesus

Main Passage: Matthew 3:13-17

Leader Focus:

Whenever we talk about baptism, those of us who have already taken that step of faith and obedience may be tempted to check out. But baptism is more than just a one-time act – baptism is a way of life for those who follow Jesus, because baptism is the public declaration that we belong to Him. As we go about our day-to-day lives, God gives us opportunities to talk about Jesus and demonstrate our faith in, and commitment to, Him in the ways we interact with the people around us.

Ephesians 2:13-22 explains what happens to us when we say “yes” to Jesus. Take a minute to read those verses and think about them for a bit. Our salvation through faith in Jesus tears down the wall that sin has built to divide us from God. Our salvation gives us complete and permanent peace with God. Our salvation means we are now citizens of Heaven, no longer strangers, no longer alienated from our Creator who loves us. This is the message of salvation we are called to bring into the world. This is the message our baptism communicates publicly.

As I thought about this week’s message and lesson, I realized that I don’t do a very good job of publically declaring my private decision to follow Jesus. The questions I ask in the “Things to Think About” section pulled me up short because it occurs to me that the only way my neighbors lives are different right now because I follow Jesus, is that they have a harder time finding a parking spot if they come home between 6:15 and 8 on Wednesday nights. So I clearly have some things to work on coming out of this week.

How about you? Is someone else’s life different today because you know Jesus? How are you able to show Jesus to the world in the way you go about your life and in the ways you interact with and treat other people? Sharing Jesus with people doesn’t always have to look like sitting them down and sharing the Romans Road. Sometimes, it’s as simple as stopping what you’re doing to help someone get something off the top shelf at the grocery store. Sometimes, it’s saying “no” to Sunday soccer practices to help teach your kids that God takes first place in our lives (which could give them an opportunity to talk about Jesus with their own friends). Sometimes, it’s giving that friend advice straight out of the Bible, instead of your own opinions. And sometimes, God will give us specific opportunities to explicitly share the Gospel with someone. But unless we’re actively looking for these opportunities, we may miss them...

Group Focus:

- Do you prefer baths or showers?
- Rank the following from best to worst: Lake, Pool, Ocean, River

Open the Word:

- ◆ *Have a volunteer read Matthew 3:13-17.*
 - What is baptism and why do we do it?
 - Look back at 3:5-6. Why were the people coming to be baptized?
 - So if baptism demonstrates our repentance from sin, why did Jesus come to be baptized?

- What does the phrase “to fulfill all righteousness” mean?

◆ *Have a volunteer read Leviticus 8:1-6, 14:8-9.*

- [LN: Early references to baptism do not technically exist in the Bible, but these are two examples of the symbolism we hold to in our baptism. In Old Testament times, people were specifically instructed to bathe in certain circumstances, or before performing certain rituals. In ancient Israeli extra-biblical writings, there are records of Gentiles being baptized as part of their conversion to Judaism. The fact that people were coming to John to be baptized indicates that baptism, or some close approximation to it, was a normal part of their religious observance.]
- How was cleansing, or baptism used in Old Testament times?
- What parallels do you see between the purposes and types of cleansing we read about in Leviticus, and the symbolism of baptism in New Testament times and today?

◆ *Have a volunteer read Hebrews 10:19-25.*

- In addition to our baptism, how else are we called to demonstrate to God and others that we belong to Christ?
- If baptism is a public declaration of a private decision, what do these verses tell us about our responsibility to each other as those who make that public declaration?

What do we do with this?:

- What are some other public declarations we make in our daily lives to demonstrate our commitment to and faith in Christ?
- What dangers do we need to be aware of when we make any kind of public declaration of our faith? [LN: Think about attitudes and thoughts...]
- Why is it so easy for pride to enter our hearts, even when we set out to do the right things for the right reasons?
- How do we combat the forces of pride in our lives so that our public declarations are done from a place of humility and submission to God instead?

Things to think about:

[LN: These questions are for personal reflection. Have your group members write them down to think about and talk to God about later, rather than to answer now.]

- Have you been baptized since you made the decision to follow Jesus? If not, what is holding you back?
- How do you demonstrate to others that you belong to Jesus?
- How are other people’s lives better because you follow Jesus? (Neighbors, friends, relatives who don’t know Him yet)
- Who will you reach out to this week to talk about your faith and disciple them in theirs?

Wrap up:

Whenever we talk about baptism, those who have already taken that step of faith and obedience may be tempted to check out. But baptism is more than just a one-time act – baptism is a way of life for those who follow Jesus, because baptism is the public declaration that we belong to Him. As we go about our day-to-day lives, God gives us opportunities to talk about Jesus and demonstrate our faith in, and commitment to, Him. But unless we’re actively looking for those opportunities, we may miss them...

Pray together:

[LN: These are just suggestions if your group needs some prompts. Feel free to pray whatever God puts on your heart!]

- Thank Jesus for dying for you, saving you from sin and death, and making you right with God.
- Ask God for opportunities to share Jesus with someone this week, and for open eyes to see those opportunities.
- If you haven't been baptized since making the decision to follow Jesus, ask God to give you the courage to take that step.

[LN: If someone in your group decides they are ready to be baptized, our next celebration will be April 30th, and registration is open online now. 😊]

Challenge:

[LN: Encourage your group to memorize Scripture as part of their own spiritual growth. For those who don't think they can do this, remind them it's not about perfection and knowing every word – it's about allowing God's truth to fill our hearts and minds! The Verses app is a great tool for this!]

Memorize Hebrews 10:23.