**Matthew 3:13-17 January 12, 2020**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes from our Gospel lesson, Matthew chapter 3 here re-reading these words. “But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We continue the festival days of the Church as we come to the first Sunday of the Epiphany season, where we move from celebrating the magi worshipping Jesus as King and instead see the entire Trinity on display in the Baptism of our Lord. It was the second Sunday in Advent where we heard about how John the Baptist came to prepare the people for the coming Messiah. John baptized the people with a message of repentance, that for their hearts to be prepared for the arrival of Jesus they had to turn from evil ways. They had to be purified or sanctified meaning that they had to be made holy, and Baptism is just that, a way to make clean and holy, a washing away of sin and shame. It is a cleansing flood of the Holy Spirit that marks us as ones redeemed by God himself. So why would Jesus need to be baptized? John is hesitant to do it, and who can blame him? John wasn’t higher than Jesus Christ, he wasn’t even worthy to tie his sandals. John himself says to Jesus “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” Jesus didn’t need his sins washed away, or to be made perfect or holy, he was already the Son of God and the Savior of the world before His baptism. So was this moment just a gesture? An example for us to follow, that just as Jesus was baptized we too should be baptized to follow in his footsteps throughout our lives? The answer is no. This moment wasn’t just an example to follow or done for show, it also wasn’t done to wash any away of Jesus’ sins, because that would deny his divinity and perfection. This moment that we celebrate today, can really be summed up in one word. Connection.

Now I don’t know about you, but when I think of that word connection pictures come to my mind of when I have had the misfortune of being disconnected. Technology has brought wonderful advancements in the world of being connected, sitting down at home and talking with a loved one may have been the main form of communication in the past but now you can be connected with loved ones at all times of the day. You can send a text message to someone no matter where you are or where they are, you can even see them face to face through video calls. As long as you have an internet connection or your phone is in service this line of communication is open. The only problem with technology is that once we are disconnected we usually are left with few options. The world can change in one instant if suddenly the internet connection in your house or work shorts out. You can be going along just fine with your GPS navigation system telling you where to go until you lose your connection. In that situation the loss of connection means that you are completely lost yourself because you were relying on that service to provide directions. This is a serious problem! Phone calls cut out, texts never answered, it all comes down to connection. And before we think that this is a contemporary problem, phone calls were dropped years ago as well as radio signals lost. Everything goes great, until you lose your connection.

Which is why Jesus was baptized, not for himself or to wash himself of his sin, but in order that we would be connected to him. Paul speaks of this unity that we have with Christ in our Epistle lesson. “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” We were connected with the work of Jesus Christ and why he came to this world through the washing of new birth by the Holy Spirit. We therefore were buried with him just as Paul says, and united with his death and resurrection. We are united or connected to Christ, in fellowship of faith, and in sharing the Holy Spirit in our hearts. The faith we have in our hearts unites us to all that Jesus is, the Son of God and Messiah that he was hailed to be at his birth, the King of Kings that was honored and worshipped by the Magi at Epiphany with magnificent and extravagant gifts, and especially in the picture that we see this morning in His Baptism, the fact that Jesus was not just man but also true God, second person of the Trinity and God himself, as the Holy Spirit descends on him as a dove, and God the Father speaks from heaven, of His beloved Son.

He is baptized so that you are connected to him, and while this is a marvelous and wonderful truth for us, the truth is he receives something from this connection. While in our Baptism we are connected to Christ and his perfection, his holiness and made perfect and one with him in the fellowship of faith, He is baptized so that he can be connected to us, and our unworthiness. It was fitting for Christ to be baptized in order to fulfill all righteousness Jesus says, and in order to save the world He had to take upon himself the sins of the world. He had to become sin itself to save you from your sin, in order to take that sin and shame to the cross to pay the ultimate price of sin which is death.

God’s connection to us is always strong, He reaches out to us with the gifts of His Word and Sacraments here in His House, He provides for us all we need, and loves us unconditionally, not expecting anything from us in order to save us from sin. Yet our connection to God doesn’t always feel that way does it? The greatest frustration of when you lose a connection in technology is trying to find out what the problem is. You can troubleshoot many different things but ultimately the question comes down to, is the problem on my end, or somewhere else? Is it my computer that’s malfunctioning or is the internet provider? Is it my phone connection that dropped the call or the person I was calling? Is it the antennae on my radio or problems with the radio tower? We don’t always know and that leads to accusations and frustration. In our own lives when we start to feel like we aren’t connected to God, His House, His Word, or even our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, we can have the same problem. We don’t know where the problem is, and it can lead to the same accusations and frustrations. Suddenly we start to wonder if God is still caring, loving, and providing as He did in the past. We see the problems of the world and wonder why God would allow those things to happen. Our feelings lead us to assume things about our connection and relationship to God as His child, and doubt creeps into our hearts and minds.

Sin destroys the connection because sin is separation. Satan wants to corrupt and destroy the faith in our hearts to make us believe in our guilt that God would never want to have a connection to us because of our disobedience. Sin wants to separate the connection we have with God as His child, to cause us to self-exclude ourselves from His presence, to believe that we aren’t worthy, when the truth is, Jesus created the connection between us and God through His Baptism. Jesus Christ shows us His love for us in that He came to take our sin upon himself. That the first official moment of His ministry, the first time we see him as a grown adult, the next picture and event that we see from the Epiphany, is His baptism, because it was the first step in the redemption of our lives from sin. He connects us to God, because He is the Son of God and second person of the Trinity. He is himself God and because he is also man, we are connected to God through Him.

The connection is strong, because he saved us from sin. The separation of sin is removed because we are made perfect through his actions on the cross and his victory over death in his resurrection. We are connected to him and therefore we share in his suffering, his death, his pain, we share in his victory, his glory, his perfection. As Paul says, “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

Which makes us what God the Father says about Jesus after His Baptism, we are His “beloved”. Just as Christ loves us and saves us we also see the love of the Father through this man who now has grown up and sets out on a journey to the cross. In Baptism we are adopted into a holy and righteous family where the Father looks upon his children equally and ultimately with love. Love that sent His Son to the world in the first place. Love that transforms our lives and attitudes. Love that transforms our connection to each other because we see how God works in all of our lives for His Will to be done. Paul ‘s message in the Epistle lesson from Romans is a transformation through a new identity as one who is connected to Christ and therefore God’s beloved. That we now see ourselves as dead to sin and a life that used to be inclined to the separation and sadness of sin, and alive to God by being connected to his resurrection and holiness.

On Earth the connection signal will change, some days you’ll have a strong and fast connection while others you’ll have one small bar, a hard to hear conversation on the phone, or a static connection to a radio station that jumps in and out. Our connections here aren’t always perfect even with each other, as we lose friends and have arguments and problems with friends and family. But the Baptism of Jesus reminds us that the very Son of God who came to this world, came to save us and be the connection between us and The Triune God. Jesus Christ loved us so much that he took our sin upon himself and in return gave us His perfection through this Holy Sacrament. Now no matter how bad our connections may be here on Earth we can know with certainty, that we remain members of God’s family, and united together in Christ’s death and resurrection so that we will never be separated from His love, ever again.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.