



JESUS IS GOD

Part 12 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 3:15-22 | December 20, 2009

LUKE 3:15-22

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¹⁸ So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. ¹⁹ But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, ²⁰ added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

²¹ Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

INTRODUCTION

So what I'm going to do now, I'm going to preach out of Luke 3:15-22. It will seem weird because this is the baptism of Jesus. And some of you will ask, "Isn't it Christmas? What about baby Jesus?" That was a few weeks ago. Everybody gets baby Jesus. We love baby Jesus, but we think it's good to let him grow up and tell you to repent of sin. So I wanted to get to God-man-not just baby Jesus-before Christmas, okay? So that's what we're going to do. We've looked at the birth of Jesus. We've looked at all the infancy narratives and now we get to his baptism. It's going to be great. I'll pray.

Father God, thank you so much for this church. I love this church. I love what you're doing for this church. I love what you're doing in this church. I love what you're doing through this church. And God, as we look at the baptism of Jesus, this is an incredible section of your Word. And we ask that, Holy Spirit, you would descend on us as you did on Jesus, that you would anoint, appoint, and empower us as you did Jesus so that we could experience new life through him, new ministry with him, that we would enjoy a new identity because of him. And so, Holy Spirit, please help us to enjoy the Scriptures, which you've inspired to be written. And we ask this in Jesus' good name, Amen.

RECAP OF THE STORY

All right, here we go. You're going to look at the baptism of Jesus with me. Let me give you the main characters. There's God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, the whole Trinity's present, and there's John the Baptizer. Now John is a guy, we've met him earlier in Luke's gospel. His dad was a devout guy, loved God, was waiting for the Messiah Savior. His mom was a devout gal, loved God, was waiting for the Messiah Savior. They were barren, elderly; they lived in the hill country. These are rural, simple folk. An angel arrives, says, "God has chosen you to give birth to a son. He'll be the prophetic forerunner, preparing people for the coming of Savior Messiah Jesus." God opens her womb; she's able to conceive. Sometime later-not long thereafter-Mary is told that she will give birth to Immanuel God with us; God is coming into human history as the man Jesus Christ through the womb of the Virgin Mary. The two women come together. Mary leaves her town in Nazareth. She journeys some distance to the Judean hill country to meet with Elizabeth. John the Baptizer is filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. He leaps and worships Jesus in utero. The boys grow up. They're cousins, probably buddies and friends. We know very little about their early life. We read in Luke 2 that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and favor with men and God. And now they're grown men around the age of thirty.

And John the Baptizer starts his public ministry first, before Jesus does. He is the connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. He comes as the last of the Old Testament and the first of the New Testament prophets. The prophets prophesied for years-hundreds, thousands of years-and then there were four hundred years of silence. And one of the last prophecies in the Old Testament was that one would come preparing the way for the Savior.

And John walks out of the woods, preaching repentance, preparing the way for the coming of Jesus. And he was really good. He was a phenomenal, Spirit-filled, bold, biblical, passionate preacher. And crowds came to him.

JESUS IS GREATER THAN JOHN

And here is what they said and how he responded. Luke chapter 3, verse 15: "As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ." Verse 16: "John answered them all, saying, 'I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I

is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.” Everyone’s around John. This guy has crowds. He’s number one on iTunes. Everybody wants to be his friend on Facebook. They’ve got his head on t-shirts with the word “Hope.” He’s a big deal. [Laughter]

Everybody’s really hoping that he’s the guy. He’s going to fix all our problems. He’s going to be our Savior. It’s all going to get better now. And crowds come out, and John-you’ve got to get a look at him. He eats bugs and honey, wears camel-hair clothing, he looks like a Jedi knight, he’s a home-schooled kid from the woods. [Laughter]

You know? He’s scrappy. He’s intense. He’s committed. He’s devoted. And he’s yelling, “Repent, repent.” And he’s phenomenal at it. And the crowds come out. And they’re all wondering and having this discussion, “Is he the One? Is he the One we’ve been waiting for? Since Adam and Eve sinned and God promised that a man, a male child would be coming to crush Satan and to redeem sinners, is he the One?” So they all come to John, “Are you the guy? Are you the One we’ve been waiting for? Should we worship you? Should we serve you? Should we devote ourselves to you?” How many of you in that moment, it’d be very tempting to say, “Wow, that’s a pretty interesting idea. I’ve always wanted to be worshiped as God. Nice t-shirt.” [Laughter]

How many of you, that would be very tempting, right? John’s been poor his whole life, simple, humble, living in the woods, rural guy, not a big deal. He’s gone off like a bomb in Israel. Here’s what he says, “It’s not about me. It’s about Jesus. He is coming. He’s greater than me. He’s so much greater than me that I’m not worthy to untie his sandals.” Now, culturally this could be lost on us, so let us examine it. In that day, the roads weren’t nice sidewalks. They were muddy, well-worn paths, dirt mixed with rain. They were journeyed upon by animals. You’ve got feces and urine, garbage, it’s gross. How many of you don’t like feet to begin with? [Laughter]

Just to start-you know, like nice, clean, lovely feet, even those gross you out. You don’t like those. And some of you have horrible-you just start at nasty, funky feet. You just start there. Your best foot day is still a bad foot day. [Laughter] Bunions and calluses and various kinds of jam and, you know, just nastiness. Just funk and stinkiness and athlete’s footed-ness. Just all the gross-bleck. You just start there. Now imagine those feet in sandals. Not sandals with socks, like some weird people wear. [Laughter]

Just open sandals and they’re walking on the road. Now it’s mud and feces and urine and garbage. How many of you don’t want to untie that sandal and clean that foot? I married a gal, not a foot gal at all. And I have nice feet. They don’t stink. They’re a little furry, but altogether fairly cute, all things considered. [Laughter]

Even my nice feet, my nice girl won’t touch, okay? Now imagine you get one of those stinky, funky, smelly, walking, no socks, sandaled feet put in front of you. You don’t want to untie it. You don’t want to look at it. You don’t want to smell it.

What John says is “I’m not worthy to untie his shoes.” And in that day, the students would serve their teacher. And the one thing they would not do is untie their sandals and take their shoes off. Why? Because that was the job relegated to the lowest of slaves. And John says, “No, you don’t understand. The distance between me and Jesus is so great.”

And let me give you this as an excursus. Jesus will say, sometime later in one of the other gospels, that of all the men born of women, none is greater than John. John the Baptist is the greatest many who’s ever lived. And he says, “Jesus is so much greater than I that I’m not worthy to do the job of the lowliest slave: take his shoes off.” There’s great humility from John. In the moment of temptation for fame and power and pleasure and prestige, he said, “No, no, no, no, no. It’s about Jesus. He’s coming. Don’t get too worked up about me. I’m just the opening act.” What’s also amazing, you’ll remember a little later in the gospels, Jesus-God himself-gets down and does what? Unties the sandals of his disciples to wash their feet, including Judas Iscariot. Jesus is the most humble of all. If you worship Jesus, you worship the most humble person who ever lived. It’s amazing.

JESUS’ BAPTISM IS GREATER THAN JOHN’S

So John transitions all of this attention from himself to his cousin Jesus. So he says, number 1, that Jesus is greater than John; number 2, that Jesus’ baptism is greater than John’s. The end of Luke 3:16, he says, “He” – meaning Jesus – “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” But the big idea is this: John is saying, “I can work on the outside, but he works on the inside.” That’s the big idea. John is saying, “I can call you to repentance and I can convict you of sin and I can baptize you externally. But he’s coming to send the Holy Spirit. He alone can work internally.”

And it is the Holy Spirit who makes us a Christian. The Holy Spirit is “he,” Jesus says. Not “it.” The Holy Spirit is a person, not a force. The Holy Spirit regenerates us, causes us to be born again, gives us conviction of sin, gives us love for Jesus. The Bible says, “No one can say Jesus Christ is Lord but by the Holy Spirit.” He seals us for our salvation. He guarantees our inheritance with God. He gifts us for ministry. He sanctifies and matures us. He empowers us. To be a Christian is to receive the gift of the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit. You can go to church. You can read the Bible. You could pray prayers. But if you don’t have the Spirit, you’re not born again. You’re not saved of God. You’re not belonging to God in a saving, eternal way. You may just be externally religious but not internally saved. That’s, I think, what John is getting at. John says, “I’m preparing you for him, but he’s so much greater than I. He’s the only one who can really change you from the inside out. Take out the heart of stone. Give you a heart of flesh. Take out rebellion. Give you submission. He’s the only one who can do that. You need to wait for Jesus.”

JESUS’ JUDGMENT IS GREATER THAN JOHN’S

Thirdly, he tells us that Jesus’ judgment is greater than his. So Jesus is greater than John. Jesus’ baptism is greater than John’s. And Jesus’ judgment is greater than John’s. So the baptism here that he is promising is the baptism of the Holy Spirit that makes us Christians, and he goes on to say that Jesus’ judgment is greater than his. I’ll read it to you. Luke Chapter 3:17-20: “His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the

wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” – That may be a reference to the conscious, eternal punishment of hell. – “So with many other exhortations, he preached good news to the people. But,”- here’s the bad news – “Herod the tetrarch,” – that’s a political leader – “who had been reproved” – or rebuked – “by him for Herodias, his brother’s wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.” Here’s what John is doing. He’s preaching to everyone, “You’re a sinner, you’re a sinner, you’re a sinner. Repent!” to a bunch of good, well-meaning, well-intended religious people. And some did repent and some didn’t.

ARE YOU WHEAT OR CHAFF?

And he uses the analogy of wheat and chaff. And he’s taking it from their agrarian society, where at harvest time the grain would be brought into or near the barn, something called a winnowing fork would be used to throw the grain into the air, and it would separate. The wheat would fall to the ground and the chaff would blow away in the wind. What he’s saying is this, “Some people are wheat. Some people are chaff. Some people belong to Jesus and abide in him, and some are just blown away by temptation, religion, false doctrine, deception.” Here’s my question for you: Are you wheat or chaff? See, sometimes the misperception in our culture is that everybody in church is wheat, everybody outside is chaff. There’s lots of chaff in the church as well. There are people who have not received the Holy Spirit. They’re not truly born again. They’re not deeply, deeply committed to Jesus at the core, seat, center, sum of who they are. They’re about someone or something other than Jesus, maybe using his name and his people, but their cause is not Christ. He is their means, not their end. They want to use him for a better family or public morality or a good reputation, but they don’t love and worship and enjoy him solely, exclusively as God, or treasure him above all. That’s chaff. Temptation comes: blown away. Suffering comes: blown away. Hardship comes: blown away. False teaching comes: blown away. Religion comes: blown away. How many of you know people like that? They don’t love Jesus. They said they did, but they don’t anymore. They’re not worshipping with his people. They’re not reading the Bible, praying, repenting of sin. They’re not wheat that’s fallen to the ground; they’re chaff that’s been blown.

We really want you, Mars Hill, to be wheat and not chaff. At the day of final judgment-and what he’s saying here is that Jesus is the judge, the same thing that Jesus says in John 5. He said, “I don’t want you to think,” he says, “that anybody else will judge you. I’m going to judge you.” It’s where he says in John 5, “The Father’s entrusted all judgment to me.” You know who we’re going to give an account to at the end? Jesus.

Now, John is judging people: “Repent, repent, repent, repent.” That’s judging. And what he’s talking about here is, there’s a greater judgment. See, someone has a right to look at your life and say, “That’s a sin. That’s in disagreement with Scripture. If you say you’re a Christian, you’re not acting biblically, that’s a sin.” Some of you will say, “Well, you can’t judge me.” If you’re a Christian, we can judge your actions, but we can’t judge your soul. Only God judges your eternal soul. And so we’ll stand before Jesus and he’ll be the judge. We’ll all give an account to him. We’ll all be on the end of the fork. Some of us are going to fall to the ground and abide in him and some of us are going to be chaff, blown into the fires of hell. Who are you? Who are you? Are you wheat or chaff? You know whether or not Jesus is your Lord, God, Savior, and Christ and whether or not the Holy Spirit has caused you to be transformed and changed.

But here’s the good news. There’s not one person who would hear this sermon that would confess their sins to Jesus and ask him for salvation, that he would reject them. Do you know that God is a good God and he’s seeking worshipers and he’s at work all the time? And one of the primary reasons that we’re here is to offer salvation. We don’t save but we introduce the Savior. His name’s Jesus. Do you know that God is still saving people? It’s not the final judgment day. It’s not too late. You know, the fork is not in the pile yet. Today could be your day of repentance and salvation.

I saw it earlier today. I saw the coolest thing. A gal comes up to me. She said, “I’m an addict living in a transitional home. My life’s been very difficult and very sad. My mom had a vision on her wall.” She lives out of state. Never heard of Mars Hill Church. And the vision was, “Tell your daughter to go to Mars Church. She’ll meet God and become happy.” So she called her daughter: “I don’t know anything about this but you need to find some church called Mars.” I mean, weird enough. If I had to do it over again, I would pick another name. I know it sounds like a cult. I apologize. [Laughter] I would call it “Jesus’ Church” if I started all over again.

So, she goes to her Alcoholics Anonymous meeting and they ask her what-and she says “Well, it’s been a hard life and I’m addicted. But my mom had a vision and saw on the wall ‘Go to Mars Church.’” A guy in the group said, “I go to Mars Hill Church.” So he brought her. She said, “In AA they kept saying ‘higher power.’ It’s Jesus, huh?” Yeah. I met her this morning. She said, “That’s what I needed to know.” Yeah. They’re talking higher power? Jesus. Highest power. She said, “So, I need to live by the power of the Holy Spirit, huh?” Yeah. She says, “That’s what I needed to know.” You know what? It’s amazing what God does.

See, we hear this and some of you will immediately go to, “See, God’s just cruel. And he’s just got the fork on the pile and everybody gets to go to hell.” You know what? God’s here to love you, save you, forgive you, embrace you. He’s actually been doing it all day. He’s already at work in your life and the reason you’re here is to meet him, so that you can be wheat, not chaff; that you can abide in Christ and not be sent to unquenchable fire. Why do you think we’ve gone to all this trouble? Because God loves you and he has brought you here to meet his son, Jesus. To live as wheat, not chaff.

THE CALL TO REPENT

And there are two examples here. The wheat are those who are repentant. They’re coming down to the water, getting baptized, repenting of sin. And the chaff here includes Herod. Now Herod was a guy-political leader. And so he was a public example-a public figure-setting a precedent for the nation. He was married and there was another woman who was a relative of his-actually married to his brother-and she was married too. And he decided, “I want to have an illicit, adulterous affair with her.” Even worse than being illicit and adulterous, she was a close relative; it was incestuous. And so they left their spouses, destroyed their families, so that they could run off and be illicit, incestuous, adulterous lovers.

Now, John is preaching repentance and he went after Herod too. And he got in trouble because in his day, like our own, there is no resistance if faith is personal and private. The trouble becomes when you go public. See, in our day, no one will give any trouble if you say, "Jesus works for me. Maybe not for you. He's my God. Maybe not your God. You know, he saves me, but maybe there's another way for you." No trouble. As soon as you say, "You know, I'm a sinner, you're a sinner, I'm learning to repent, you need to learn to repent," there'll be a bit of a fight. If they ask specific questions like, "What do you mean I'm a sinner?" and you start answering the questions in great detail, "Well, Herod, that's not an alternative lifestyle. That's adultery. You've destroyed two homes. You need to take the rainbow bumper sticker off the back of your camel. You need to apologize and repent. You need to stop marching in the parade for diversity and tolerance and start practicing repentance and holiness." Herod didn't like that. It was very politically incorrect, insensitive, and so he did something that was very tolerant and diverse: had John imprisoned and then beheaded.

And that's what happens when you call everyone to repent of sin. Some repent; others fight. John ultimately was thrown into prison and beheaded. Can you fathom how much money, power, security he would have had if he simply would have gone on record and said, "You know what? They love each other, who am I to judge? They want to be together. They're consenting adults. It's an alternative lifestyle. Who am I to involve myself?" Instead, his private faith became his public faith and the only way to silence him was to chop his head off. John is an amazing guy. Are you getting a feeling for that?

JESUS' BAPTISM

And here is one of the most-if not the most-amazing moments of his life. He's in the river. There's a line of people. His ratings are high. Herod's ready to arrest him. He is the talk of the town. And there's a long line of sinners coming to get baptized, showing they need to be cleansed from their sin, and who shows up in the line? Jesus. Is it just me or is that unusual? Jesus shows up. I can see John like, "You're wicked. You're wicked. You're wicked. Uh oh, you shouldn't be in this line. You're in the wrong line." [Laughter]

Matthew 3:14 records the same event. In fact, the baptism of Jesus is in all four gospels. And it says that John looked at Jesus and was like, "Should we trade places? You know like, since you're sinless and I'm sinful, want to dunk me?" I mean, John was confused about this.

Why would Jesus get baptized? Well, let's read it and talk about it. Luke 3:21: "Now when all the people were baptized," – and he almost puts Jesus in another category – "And when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying," – Here's what's going on. Jesus is praying. He prays a lot in Luke's gospel. He prays in chapter 6, prays in chapter 9, prays in chapter 11, prays in chapter 22. He's praying throughout Luke's gospel. Jesus is praying. He's standing in line to get baptized. Why?

The commentators debate this point. This was the discussion at the Driscoll house last night over pizza. I asked the Driscoll Nation. [Laughter] We had our council meeting, our theological colloquium. I asked, "Why did Jesus get baptized?" I asked the kids, "Okay, who gets baptized?" Answer: "Sinners get baptized." "Was Jesus a sinner?" "No." How do we know that? Well, Hebrews 4: "He was tempted in every way as we are yet without sin." Second Corinthians 5:21: "God made him who knew no sin to become our sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." First Peter 1:18-19: "That he is a lamb without spot or blemish, without sin." In his own life he said, "Who can prove me guilty of any sin?" He dared people to come forward and show him any sin in his life. No one stepped forward. Even at his own trial, the political leaders said, quote, "I find no fault in this man."

Jesus didn't get baptized for his sin, so why did he get baptized? Well, here were some of the answers from the Driscoll kids. They actually did about as good as the commentators. One of my kids said, "Maybe it was endorsing the ministry of John." John got his ministry started first. Jesus was going to pick up his disciples and pick up where John left off, and maybe this was an identification with and an affirmation of John's ministry.

Number 2: If they're repenting of sin, they're repenting but God's forgiveness has not yet been secured. Jesus will need to go to the cross, die in their place for their sins, and in so doing he will grant the freedom of repentance to be actualized. He'll allow the forgiveness of sins through his atoning sacrifice. So they can repent all they want, but until Jesus is dead, buried, and raised there's not forgiveness from God. So maybe it's showing.

Number 3: It could be Jesus identifying himself with sinners. One of my kids said, "Well, he was crucified between two thieves. Why couldn't he be baptized between two sinners? If he could go to the cross and be identified with the sinners, why couldn't he go to the Jordan and be identified with the sinners?" I think that's true. We know for a fact that Jesus isn't sinful, but it may be that he's going to be baptized with the sinners to identify himself with them and show them how he will save them. Again, Roman 6 says that baptism shows Jesus lived without sin, Jesus died, was buried, that he was raised in newness of life and he cleanses us from sin. So as they're repenting, Jesus says through his own actions, "This is how your repentance will be made possible, through my death, burial, resurrection."

Number 4: One of my kids said, "Well, maybe he was just showing us how we need to get baptized." He was perhaps setting the precedent for Christian baptism. So at the end of Matthew's gospel when he says, "Go forth into all the nations and baptize people," you say, "Well, how do we baptize them?" Well, Jesus was an adult, buried in the water, taken out, showing his death, burial, resurrection; we get buried like Jesus in baptism, we're raised to newness of life in Jesus. That's how it works.

One commentator also says that when a king was being anointed, they would undergo ceremonial bathing and cleansing to prepare themselves. And as Jesus is here going public with the inauguration of his public ministry, being anointed as the King of Kings, maybe this is preparatory for his unveiling. All of that could be the case. Some of that could be the case. Any of these will work. Talk about it in your community group. Interesting discussion.

THE TRINITY AT JESUS' BAPTISM

What we do know is that Jesus was baptized and the whole Trinity was there. Don't miss this. There is an ancient heresy called modalism that things

like the United Pentecostal Church still teach. Churches will call themselves "Jesus Only." They'll only baptize in the name of Jesus and they-even some well-known teachers on television will preach basically what is called modalism or Sabellianism. It is that there's not one God, three persons, co-equal, co-eternal, ruling and reigning as one. It's that God puts on a mask and in the Old Testament he pretends to be the Father, and in the days of Jesus he pretends to be the Son, and in the days of the New Testament epistles he pretends to be the Holy Spirit. But it's not really that there's three persons, one God. It's that there's one God in three roles. And here we see that's not true because the Father speaks from heaven, the Son is baptized, and the Holy Spirit descends on him like a dove. The whole Trinity is there, present simultaneously. It's one of the strongest snapshots of the Trinity that the whole Bible gives for us. I'll read it to you. It's phenomenal.

Luke 3:21, the second half of the verse and into verse 22: "The heavens were opened." Okay, we can't miss this. This is prophetic language. See, speculation is religion and philosophy: "Maybe God's like this. Maybe he wants that." Revelation is where God speaks to us. We know that he does that through Scripture. This is the Word of God. This is God speaking to us through Scripture. That's why we love Scripture, we receive it as the very words of God, perfect and without error, and it's how God speaks to us, through his Word.

And so when the Bible says that the heavens opened, God's going to reveal himself. God's going to speak. He only does this three times in the New Testament: at the baptism of Jesus, the transfiguration of Jesus, and as Jesus is going to the cross. Twice to reveal Jesus is God, once to reveal Jesus as Savior through the cross. So when the heavens open and God the Father speaks, it's a big deal. It's a significant moment in the history of the world.

"The heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form." – We call that a theophany. When the invisible God makes himself visible we call that a theophany. – "Like a dove; and a voice came from heaven." – Here's God the Father speaking – "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Let's look at each member of the Trinity. Jesus goes to the water. He is Immanuel, God with us. The Son of God came into human history as the God-man, Jesus Christ. He is praying. He is going to his cousin John. He is the Greater One that John promised was coming. The One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire and he is baptized.

Secondly, as he is baptized, the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus in the form of a dove. We were talking about this last night and my eight-year-old son, Buddy Calvin, he asked, he said, "Dad, does that have anything to do with Noah?" And it might. Remember in the days of Noah? Sinners only sinned all the time. God was grieved in his heart that he made man. By sovereign election, Noah found favor, the Hebrew word for "grace," in the eyes of God. He was saved by grace. He was made to be a righteous man by grace who walked with God. Peter says that Noah preached repentance and no one repented. Well he built an ark. He and his family entered into it. God shut the door, sent the flood, destroyed everyone alive on the earth in that day, and in waiting for a new world, Noah sent out a dove, knowing that if the dove returned with a branch, that the water had subsided, that the land had returned, and that there was a new world of hope for those who belonged to God. And for those who knew their Bible, this may be reminding them "Ah, Jesus is the Greater Noah. Jesus is the One who brings a new world on the other side of judgment for sinners."

Some of the Puritans were fond of saying that a dove, as well, as the dove does in our own day, represents peace. That a dove doesn't have talons. It's not a predatory bird. It represents peace. And it may be showing that, though we are sinful and God is holy, in this man Jesus, peace is being offered to rebels and sinners.

I'm sure, as well, as the Holy Spirit was descending, those who new Isaiah would have remembered chapter 11, verse 2, which says, "And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him."

If you remember the question that was asked of John, "Are you the One?" He said, "No, One is coming who is greater than I." Then the question would have been, "Who is it?" And at the baptism of Jesus, it was made clear. He's the One we've all been waiting for. He is the Son of God, anointed by the Spirit of God, confirmed by God the Father. This is an amazing moment in the history of the world.

I do not believe that this was the first time that Jesus received the Holy Spirit. That's an ancient heresy called adoptionism. That he was just a great man who was adopted as the God-man at his baptism. We've already seen the Holy Spirit much at work in the ministry around Jesus. He's the One who enables Mary to be pregnant. He's the One who leads Zachariah, John's father. He's the one who fills John in his mother's womb to actually leap and worship to Jesus when they meet in utero. The Holy Spirit's already been at work.

I don't believe that Jesus received the Spirit here, but I believe that the Spirit was revealed here. I believe that up until this point, for thirty years, Jesus resisted sin and grew in wisdom and stature and favor with men and God by the power of the Holy Spirit. And here the Holy Spirit makes this publicly visible so that everyone would know and see, "This is God. This is the God-man. This is the Savior. This is the Redeemer. This is the Messiah." And if there could be any question, that God the Father would speak from heaven, that settles it. Right? There is no higher authority than heaven opens and God says, "Hey, that's him, right there." That's pretty clear. What else are you going to do? Say well, "Where else can we double-check this fact?" Well, I don't think we're going to get a court of appeals above the one we just heard from. God the Father says, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased."

JESUS' SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

I'll tell you a little bit then as well. This reveals how Jesus lived his life: by the power of the Holy Spirit. It's why Matthew's gospel-and again I told you the baptism of Jesus is in all four gospels-it says this interesting caveat. It's says that the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon Jesus, as if to show that he never left Jesus. Now, Jesus is eternally the Son of God, the second member of the Trinity, God eternally. And he comes into human history, Immanuel, God with us. And the question is, when he's tempted, how does he say no to temptation? When he needs to grow spiritually, how does he grow and mature? How could that happen?

This week in your community group, go to Philippians 2:5-11. There you'll find something called the kenosis. It is that Jesus coming into human history as a man, he emptied himself-not of his divinity; he was still God. He emptied himself of the continual use of his divine attributes. See, God is everywhere, but Jesus chose to go to a place. God doesn't change, but Jesus was willing to grow in wisdom and stature and favor with men and God. He didn't cease to be God, but he set aside the continual use of his divine attributes. It doesn't mean he didn't have access to them. For example, when he forgives sin, he does so as God. But what it does mean is that the preponderance of Jesus' life on the earth was lived fully human. How did he grow? How did he worship? How did he say no to temptation and yes to God? Answer: by the power of the Holy Spirit. He did that humbly to serve us and to identify with us.

And that's what the baptism shows. And I'll tell you what, as we get further into Luke, you're going to learn more about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is connected to Jesus throughout all of Luke. I'll give you a few examples. As you're reading ahead-and I always encourage you, just be reading the gospel of Luke repeatedly for yourself-you'll hear things like this. Jesus was, quote, "full of the Holy Spirit," quote, "led by the Spirit," quote, "came in the power of the Spirit." After reading Isaiah 61:1-2, which says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach good news," Jesus says, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." The Holy Spirit is on Jesus for preaching. It also says on one occasion that Jesus, quote, "rejoiced in the Holy Spirit."

Some of you come from spiritually abusive, at least weird, churches, right? For you, the Holy Spirit is the equivalent of your drunk uncle who showed up on Christmas, said and did crazy things, and made all the nieces cry. You know, the Holy Spirit is- In some churches, as soon as you say, "Holy Spirit," it's like the bar is open. And everybody just gets to act like a wing nut. "Ooh, I'm full of the Holy Spirit. Ooh!" It's like, "No, no, no, no, no." No, no, no, no, no. Our God is a God of order, right? The Holy Spirit brings order out of chaos as he did in Genesis. He doesn't bring chaos. He brings order out of chaos.

So every time I say words like baptized in the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, led by the Spirit, some of you will immediately start twitching. Like, "Oh no, is he going to get a white suit? Are we going to do that? Like you know . . ." No. Because here's what it is. The one who's baptized in the Spirit is Jesus. Do you know what it means to be baptized in the Spirit? Be like Jesus. The one who's led by the Spirit is Jesus. Do you know what it means to be Spirit-led? Be like Jesus. Do you know who's Spirit-filled? Jesus. So what it means to be Spirit-filled is be like Jesus. Anytime what it means to be led by, controlled by, filled by, empowered by, transformed and renewed by the Holy Spirit, anytime the picture of what that's supposed to look like is anyone or anything other than Jesus, there's grave error. The Holy Spirit anoints Jesus, empowering him for his life of ministry.

And this sets it up in the sequel of Acts. See, Luke and Acts are a prequel and a sequel. The Holy Spirit descends on Jesus at his baptism. And the promise is made that he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. You know what happens? Jesus lives without sin by the power of the Holy Spirit, he dies for sinners, he is raised by the power of the Holy Spirit, he then ascends into heaven, and he and the Father send the Holy Spirit to the church on the Day of Pentecost. And just as the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus, the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus' people, empowering us as the church to continue the ministry of Jesus.

Do you see how Luke put those together? The Holy Spirit on Jesus. The Holy Spirit on us. To be Spirit-filled, Spirit-led is to be Christ-like. That's what it means. So you need to know this at Mars Hill. We love the Holy Spirit. We worship him as God. We're deeply grieved when false teaching gets out about the Spirit. When he is said to be the God of chaos and not the God of order, that's horrible. When someone is lifted up as the guru and to be Spirit-filled and Spirit-led means to be like them, not like Jesus, we are deeply grieved. The Holy Spirit is not to be grieved, quenched, or resisted, and with false teaching and bad examples tragically sometimes he is. But we still love the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is the one who imparts to us the finished work of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, the new life, the indwelling presence and power of God. And when we see the Holy Spirit on Jesus, it gives us so much hope.

And I'll be honest with you, friends. My hope for our church is in the power of the Holy Spirit. I've had people ask, "Well, don't you guys think you're in over your head?" We have been for a really long time. [Laughter] That is not a new revelation. You look around the room and say, "Well yeah, this will definitely get it done." No. Unless we're clowns at a rodeo, we are not fit for this task, right? If that was our job, we would nail it. Other than that, we're in over our head.

You know how we're going to serve God and bear fruit and leave a legacy and see people's lives changed and doors opened we don't even know about? By the Holy Spirit. He saves people. He gives people. He calls people. He empowers people. He chooses the leaders of the church. Our hope is just to be led by the Spirit, filled by the Spirit, on mission like and for and with Jesus. That's the key to ministry. It's no secret. The power's in the gospel. And it's imparted through the Spirit. That's how it works.

SONS OF GOD

Jesus is baptized. The Holy Spirit descends. And the Father speaks from heaven. This is amazing. Here's what he says: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." In recent months, I've been to Turkey and Greece and Israel and I'm studying and I'm going to archaeological digs and places where the Bible was written to and from and I'm meeting with professors. And I'm trying to figure out everything I can to be the best Bible teacher I can because I want you guys to love the Scriptures and know Jesus.

And one of the things that I found is that in ancient cultures, the king was like a god. I mean, he lived high above the people. They were somehow less dignified and deified than he. He was like a god. And often times when he died, they declared him to be god and they built temples to him. And so then his son would be the son of god. That's why some of the early Roman emperors didn't like Christianity. Jesus is the Son of God. "No, no, no, no, I am," would say the emperor. "No, no, no, no, no, no, no. You're a son of the devil," Jesus said. You can see where that would be potential conflict.

And so when your daddy would die, if he was the king, he would be deified as god. You would be the son of god, meaning you're the same stuff as god. You and your god-father, you're both co-ruling, co-reigning, you're equal. Whatever honor and authority and preeminence and power that he enjoyed, it was yours as well. You're the son of god.

And in the Father saying, "This is my Son," he is clearly, emphatically declaring, "He is the same as me. He's as much God as I am. He's as worthy of glory as I am. He is to be obeyed as much as I am. His dominion extends where mine does. He's my Son, come to inaugurate, rule, lead, unveil my kingdom." This is a clear statement of deity. "Son of God" means that Jesus is God. He's the same stuff as the Father. He's the same glory and preeminence and power and supremacy as the Father. This is the highest claim to deity.

Some would say, "Well, the Bible doesn't say Jesus is God." He was murdered because he wouldn't stop saying he was God. The New Testament repeatedly declares him to be God. He receives worship as God. And God the Father parts heaven and in front of a huge crowd says, "That's my Son. And with him I am well pleased. He is beloved to me."

Question: Did the Father say this before or after Jesus began his public ministry? This is very important for our understanding of identity. In so far as we can tell, has Jesus performed a miracle yet? Has he cast out any demons, raised any dead people, healed any sick people, walked on any lakes? No. Has he resisted Satan's temptations? That's coming. Not yet. Has he gone to the cross to die in our place for our sins? Not yet. So how could the Father be well pleased with him? What's he been doing? He's been working an honest job as a carpenter with his dad for about thirty years. Isn't that amazing? If you're a good plumber or electrician or mom, God's pleased with that. People like me are no holier than you, and people who are in paid vocational ministry are no closer to God than those who aren't because the truth is we all work for God. I love the fact that the Bible records that the Father loves the Son and is pleased with him before he does anything public.

That's the opposite of religion, Mars Hill, and I really want you to get this point. Religion basically says, "Work really hard. Try your best. And at the end of your life, maybe God will say 'I now adopt you. I will now love you. I'm pleased with your life.'" Our God is a God of grace. He reveals himself as a Father. And our relationship with him begins with love and approval and affection. I've got five kids; one in heaven, miscarriage. All of my children begin with this: "I am your Father. You are mine. I love you. I'm pleased with you." That's where we begin with God.

So many people, men in particular, their whole life they've wanted to hear from their Father what Jesus heard, "You are my Son. You are beloved. I'm pleased with you." I have good news: if you are in Christ, you are beloved, you are a son, the Father is pleased with you. That's where your relationship with God starts. Some of you say, "But I've sinned." I have too.

It says it in multiple places in the New Testament. I'll give you one example from Galatians 4:6-7, "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son," – that's the Holy Spirit – "into our hearts crying, 'Abba!'" – or Daddy – "'Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God."

Here's what he's saying: Jesus went to the cross and he took our place. And in so doing, he gave us his. Isn't that amazing? So Jesus goes to the cross and suffers and dies in our place for our sins. God made him who knew no sin to become sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Friends, Jesus went to the cross and took your place and gave you his place so that now you are a son of God.

Some translations will call us "children of God" in an effort to include the ladies. The statement here, "son of God," applies equally to the men and the women, but we don't want to be politically correct, we want to be biblically correct. And when the Bible says that in Jesus we are sons of God, what it is saying is that we hold that esteemed position that the Son did; that we get the full inheritance and the family name, Christian; that there are no second-class citizens; that we're all treated like sons. That includes the ladies. It's being in this privileged position: through Jesus, sin forgiven, adopted into the family of God, he says, the Holy Spirit placed in your heart so that you can cry out to God as Father. Even if you didn't have a dad, he's a Father to the fatherless. And he has an inheritance for us. Paul says the down payment of that inheritance is the Holy Spirit: the beginning of God's good gifts.

And the Holy Spirit will empower our new ministry out of our new identity. If our identity is son who is loved and the Father is pleased with us, and the power is the power of the Holy Spirit, now we are freed from sin to live a new life patterned after Jesus', one of great passion and joy, not powered by religion and guilt but the Holy Spirit in joy.

You probably don't believe that. I pray that the Holy Spirit would confirm that to you. If you are in Christ, you are his son. I'm not saying you're God and divine and equal to Jesus. I'm saying that you have been gifted the same position that Jesus enjoyed. The Father loves you like he loves Jesus. The Father is pleased with you as he's pleased with Jesus. And the Father has good things for you as he does for Jesus. That changes everything, does it not?

Does the Holy Spirit in you confirm this and stun you? "Jesus took my place and put me in him? And I am beloved by the Father and he speaks to me through the Scriptures and tells me that he loves me and he's pleased with me in Christ." As sinful, as wretched, as rebellious as we are, that's our identity in Christ. I really need you to know that. And if you're not a Christian, I need you to know you're chaff. You repent of sin, trust in Jesus, receive the Holy Spirit, enjoy the adoption as a son of God and live a new life by a new power to the glory of God like Jesus. Amen? I'll pray.

Holy Spirit, I request that you would impart the truth of Scripture to those who would hear me teach. Holy Spirit, I thank you. I thank you for this revelation of the Trinity. I thank you for this declaration of the deity of Jesus. I thank you for your anointing of our Savior and your anointing of our church and your empowerment of our lives. Holy Spirit, thank you for inspiring the writing of Scripture. Lord Jesus, thank you for living humbly among us by living through the power of the Spirit, by taking our place and giving us your own; that you are condemned and we are beloved. And Father, thank you that you speak from heaven, that you speak about Jesus, that you send the Spirit that we might know him and love him and live like

him to your glory and our joy. Please help us as a church to come to know these truths in such a way that they are not just information but transformation. That we would not live in such a way that you would love us, but we would accept your love and live in light of it. We know that you cannot love us anymore. You will not love us any less. And so God, please empower us to be transformed to your glory and our joy. Amen.

[End of Audio]

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.
