

## ***What Kind of Lord? What Kind of Leader?***

Oak Grove Presbyterian Church

Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22 Pastor Bill Chadwick

Baptism of the Lord/Ordination of Officers

That Jesus' baptism is a vitally important element in the Jesus story is demonstrated by the fact that it is found in all four gospels, and not too many things are. But each gospel has its own emphases around the baptism.

There are a number of messages of encouragement for us in this Luke passage.

First. In Luke, as well as in Matthew, we find John the Baptist's warning about what kind of Messiah Jesus will be. "I baptize you with water...But he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

But was Jesus like that? No. In fact, he was so different from the fire-spewing, chaff-burning sort of leader that John the Baptist had hoped for, that after a time John started to question whether Jesus really WAS the Messiah or not. In chapter seven of Luke, John, who had by this time been imprisoned by Herod, sends some of his followers to Jesus to ask specifically, "'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'"

*At that very time, Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers, 'Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.'*" (Luke 7:19-21)

In other words, “Yes, I am the messiah. Just not the kind you expected.” Not lording it over people, but coming alongside to bless. Not a warrior wielding weapons, but a Lover, with heart and hands for healing. “I have come not to be served,” he will later say, “but to serve.” (Matthew 20:28 and cognates.) Jesus is the embodiment of *servant leadership*, the model for all pastors, elders, deacons and members of the Church. As much as we might from time to time be tempted to burn a little chaff, that is not the way of Jesus.

Second. As Robert Brearley notes, “According to Luke, all we know about the baptism of Jesus is that it was with ‘all the people’ ...Jesus presented himself for baptism as an act of solidarity with a nation and a world of sinners...At his baptism, he identified with the damaged and broken people who need God.” ... (*Feasting on the Word, Year C, Vol. 1, p. 236.*)

...Like all of us. In one of his books, Philip Yancey, perhaps my all-time favorite author of Christian literature, tells the story of a woman who was a victim of sex trafficking, a prostitute. She wanted to get her life back on track. Someone suggested to her that she go to church. “Church!?” she responded. “Church!?! I feel bad enough about myself already; why would I want to go to church?” That is a sad indictment of too many congregations. May we be a non-judgmental haven for the hurting.

And then, third, there is a vital piece that we find only in Luke’s account, verse 21: “Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was *praying* (italics mine), the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. He was praying; he was turning to God in prayer, for strength and for direction. And the Holy Spirit descends upon him, giving him power and wisdom, encouraging him all the way, even when the journey becomes grim and dangerous.

Throughout Luke's Gospel, we see Jesus' passion for prayer (5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28ff.; 11:1; 22:41; 23:46).

Friends, it is hard to follow Jesus in the best of circumstances. These days are not the best of circumstances. We can't do it on our own, follow Jesus. We need to humble ourselves in prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to fill us, lead us, empower us encourage us.

*Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.*

*Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.*

*Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.*

*Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.*