

"Anointing Leads to Temptation"

Scripture Passages: 1) Psalm 29
2) Acts 19:1-7
3) Matthew 3:13-4:11

God's Power: In Psalm 29, King David, talks about the power of God. David was a powerful king, wealthy, ruler of a growing nation; even so, as David reflected on the reality of God he was humbled and awe struck as he realized the unfathomable power of God. His own power, though great by earthly standards was nothing compared to the God of all creation. In his prayer, David reminds all of us to ponder our own place in relationship to God. It is so important to remember that God is God and we are not.

Have you ventured over to Lake Michigan during a storm? Have you watched the huge waves crashing on the beach, felt the strength of the wind tearing at your body? Such experiences are helpful. They remind us of who we are in relationship to the God of all creation.

Have you laid outside under the stars on a clear night away from the city lights? Have you tried to comprehend the nature of space and all that is out there? Have you reflected on the vast nature and mystery of God? Such moments are critical as we ponder our own relationship with God!

You see as we grow in our awareness of God's power and our own limited nature our eyes are opened and we too join in David's closing request, "May the Lord Give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!" All power, all strength, all peace comes from God. The astounding news is that God wants to use the Divine power to work in us and through us.

What We Have studied so Far: As you know we have begun a journey through Matthew's Gospel. We began by looking at the beginning words of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. We talked about how Jesus' Words are designed to become the foundation upon which we build our lives. Since then we have looked at Jesus genealogy and the birth narrative. Today as we consider this topic of power we consider Jesus' baptism and what happens right after his baptism. Listen again to and for the Word of God. **Read Matthew 3:13-4:11.**

Jesus' Baptism: Jesus came to be baptized by John. John found that as strange as we do. Why would the Son of God need to be baptized by John? Why would this person who has been conceived by the Holy Spirit need to be baptized? Those are great questions.

I think there are number of important happenings here. First we need to recognize that going out to John to be baptized was Jesus' initial ministry act. By submitting to baptism Jesus sets an example for everyone who chooses to become a follower. Baptism is important. Baptism marks us as children of God. Baptism unites us to the power of God.

Dale Bruner likes to call Jesus' baptism, Jesus' first miracle, the miracle of his humility. Right from the beginning we see that the power of God comes in humility rather than military fire power, or spectacular acts. Jesus kneels in the river and allows John control over him. Right from the beginning Jesus sets an example that the ways of God are upside down from what we might expect. Jesus wants us to know that if we choose to be followers of Christ we are giving ourselves to a life where the unexpected is normal.

The second thing we see here is that Jesus' words have power and authority. Even though John does not understand he follows what Jesus says. John trusts that the Word of Jesus is

essential to follow even though he doesn't fully understand. John had a deep faith. John knew in his heart that Jesus was the Word of God made flesh. John submitted. John too sets an example here for us. Will we submit to the Word of God made flesh?

A third important thing to recognize is that in Matthew's Gospel Jesus' ministry not only begins with baptism but also ends with baptism. At the end of the Gospel Jesus tell his followers: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Jesus sets an example which he charges us to not only do ourselves, but to share with the world. A key reason for that: baptism connects us to the power of God. Jesus says that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. That power comes to fruition through discipleship and baptism. Baptism and discipleship connect us to the awesome power of God. Our baptism should not be taken lightly. The questions raised here: "Are we living into our baptism? Are we living into the power of our baptism?"

In Acts we read where Paul comes across a group of people in the church in Corinth who were not living into their baptism. Is that us? Are we those people?

Eugene Peterson describes the situation from Acts this way, "It is one thing to look at the grandly profiled horizons and thrill to the weather gathering behind mountain ranges, launching huge light shows with sudden bursts of sunlight through fissures in the clouds, fireworks of lightning scored by organ thunder. It is quite another to leave the car or bus or train and walk into the forest and climb those mountains."

Baptism by the Holy Spirit happens when we get out of our churches, out of our houses, out of our comfort zones and enter the world of God's Kingdom. Jesus commands us to go, to take action. He calls us to follow. The water of baptism symbolizes our decision to act, not our decision to watch from the sidelines. Are we living into our baptism or are we just watching from the car? We will not know the power of the Holy Spirit until we choose to be people of action.

The Holy Spirit: Jesus sent his followers out to be baptizing people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. At Jesus' Baptism that same Triune God was present. The Spirit descended like a dove reminding us that God comes to us and its God's power that brings peace. The Father's voice named Jesus as the Son, with whom he is well pleased. Jesus was and is God's plan. And Jesus in baptism gives himself to the ministry of humble service, through which the power of God will transform creation. Jesus invites us to join him in this ministry of humble service which brings transformation.

So in baptism we give ourselves to the great mystery of our Triune God, the power of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In our baptism we give ourselves to being instruments of God's transforming power. In our baptism we become a part of God's living body working for the reconciliation and healing of the world. In our baptism the very Spirit of God dwells in us for the purpose of working through us.

The Wilderness: Immediately following Jesus' baptism we are struck again by the upside down nature of the Gospel.

The Spirit led Jesus out into the wilderness where he was tempted by the devil. Theologically it is critical that we see that it is not the Spirit who does the tempting or causes the tempting. No the Spirit of God goes with us into the wilderness where ministry takes places, and when we engage in ministry Satan, evil, the powers and principalities will seek to derail us, undermine us,

trip us up. When we give ourselves to the humble service of God's Kingdom we will know trials and temptations, because as humble servants we will live in the wilderness, in the heart of the struggle between good and evil.

You see there is nothing safe about being baptized. Our baptism leads into the heart of the struggle. The great news; we have the very power of God with us as we enter the fray. God's Spirit dwells in us and works through us. God's Spirit gives us the power to bring healing and peace to the brokenness of the world. God's Spirit gives us the power to bring reconciliation.

The devil tried to tempt Jesus with food when he was hungry. The devil tried to tempt Jesus with spiritual power. The devil tried to tempt Jesus with worldly power. Through the Spirit, Jesus resisted. Jesus knew that true power comes from the Spirit of the Triune God, from the Word of God, from the Creative Powers of God. Jesus knew that every temptation offered was a twisting of the truth.

You and I do not have the power to resist the temptations of this world. If we try to rely on our own power we will fail. We must trust in the power and authority of the Holy Spirit who is with us. When we give ourselves to the Spirit, when we open ourselves to the transforming work of the Spirit we will know the gift of God's power moving through us to change the world.

Conclusion: As we come to the Lord's Table reflect on the waters of your baptism. As you leave today dip your hand into the font and remember your baptism. When we give ourselves to the Spirit of God, God will work through us in miraculous ways. As we come to the table let us die to our earthly strivings, our earthly grabs for power and instead trust in God's Spirit working through us. In baptism we are God's children, we are God's body, we are God's hands and feet. So let us live into our baptism and be who God has created us to be. Amen.