

The Baptism of Our Lord
 January 10, 2010
 Is. 42:1-7; I Cor. 1:26-31; Matt. 3:13-17

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Grace, mercy and peace to you from God the Father and Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

“Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

If you have watched many sports, you have probably seen a post game interview where the MVP doesn't boast in his own performance, but boasts in the Lord Who created him and gave him such ability. While I have mixed commentary on such post game interviews – it is certainly true that there isn't one of us who deserve to boast in anything, but in the Lord. It would be hard to throw a touchdown had God not created your arms. It would be hard for you to have your job that puts food on the table had God not given you a brain. It would be hard to buy the food to put on the table had God not caused the sun to shine or the rain to fall. Yes, God does deserve the boasting, because without Him we would have nothing. But this isn't only true of our physical needs, but of our spiritual needs also.

So, maybe you have always thanked God for your bodily needs - and in all situations boasted in His gracious care – never second-guessing Him – never taking Him for granted – never boasting that it is you who have achieved such great things in your life. So, if you haven't sinned in this way, (hopefully the sarcasm isn't lost) what about in your spiritual life? Can you boast in yourself? Can you boast that you hold sacred and gladly hear and learn the Word of God as you should? Can you boast that you have praised, prayed, and given thanks to God as He demands? Have you boasted that God blesses you more because you are just a little better than the prostitutes and tax collectors? Maybe, you put on a good front. Maybe you even give God credit, but really think like the country song that says, “There ain't nothing that can't be done by Me and God... We're a team, Me and God.” Maybe you put on your Sunday best, live a clean cut life, give generously and charitably to your neighbor, and are a good American citizen. Yet, living a life that seems righteous by the judgment of men isn't the same as living a righteous life that is good enough for Holy God. God can see your heart, even though your friends and society can't. Would you have any friends if they knew every single thought you have had about them? Would you be so highly favored if everyone saw your lustful and covetous daydreams?

If you think that you can belly up to Holy God and boast that you deserve heaven because you think you are better than others or whatever self-righteous defense you come up with – you will go to hell. There is not one of us who can boast before God, no not one.

We could never do enough to fulfill the righteousness that God demands for heaven. This is why even St. John the Baptist who, from a human point of view, certainly had more to boast about than us, said to Jesus when Jesus came to be baptized by Him, “**I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?**” John was right wasn't he? We sinners need to repent and be baptized, not Jesus. But how does Jesus respond? **But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”** Did you know that these are the very first words of Jesus that the Holy Spirit inspired St. Matthew to record? Did you also know that the Baptism of Our Lord is recorded in all 4 Gospels? This is a significant event. This is something that God doesn't want us to miss. This is something to boast in.

The Baptism of Our Lord marked the beginning of His 3 year public ministry. So, what does it mean to fulfill all righteousness? To understand this, we must not forget Christmas and

the incarnation. Jesus is fully God and fully man. The Son was made man to take our place. He came down from heaven and entered into our stead. He became a sinner for us. As it says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, “For Our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”¹ When you picture sinless Jesus being baptized by John don’t picture Jesus having His sins washed away, because He had none. Rather, picture all of your sins being poured over and onto Jesus. Picture all of your lustful and covetous thoughts being placed on the scapegoat, Christ. Picture all of your ungratefulness, your hate of God and neighbor, your prideful boasting – being placed on the Lamb of God Who carries away the sin of the world. Picture the Triune God working His plan of salvation for fallen man. Think of the Father Who sent His begotten Son to save the world. The Father Who after Christ went up from the water said from heaven, **“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”** Picture the Holy Spirit descending on the Beloved Son as a dove.

Yes, picture the Triune God, but when you do so, picture Jesus. It is in Christ that God reveals Himself to us. So, picture Jesus Who is the Beloved Son. Unlike with Old Testament Israel and unlike rebellious you and me – The Father is well please with His Son, Jesus. He is well pleased because Jesus was there fulfilling His mission to save us. Jesus was baptized into our sins and carried them away from us forever. The scapegoat, Christ, carried them to the cross where He received every drop of God’s wrath. The Man, Jesus, subbed into the game and took our spot and received the hell on the cross that our sinful effort deserves. On top of that, during His earthly life when He had all of our sins covering Him, He Himself remained sinless. Though He was hounded by Satan and tempted to sin, He never did – no not once. Our Lord fulfilled the righteousness that God’s Law requires. Every sinless step that Jesus took, He took in your stead. It would be like Michael Jordan coming into a basketball game for you and scoring all the points never missing a shot, but after the game they interview you as if you played the perfect game. So, when you picture every sinless step that Jesus took, picture yourself taking them. He was there for you, doing for you what you can’t do. Jesus’ sinless life, death, and resurrection aint me and God working salvation. Salvation is God’s work alone leaving nothing for me to boast about in myself.

“Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” There is boasting in Jesus. Jesus entered our baptism to fulfill all righteousness. Since God declares the world righteous for Jesus’ sake, our baptism is something to boast in. Boast in the Lord in Your baptism. In Baptism you have His sinless life and you are covered with His righteousness. The blood of the Passover Lamb is smeared all over you in your Baptism. Since Jesus your scapegoat carried your sins away forever, the only thing that is left is His righteousness. So, when the devil boasts that you are a sinner and deserve Hell, say, “Your right devil, but I boast in Jesus alone. He has defeated sin. He has carried my sins away forever. He has defeated death and taken away its sting. With Paul and all the Saints, I can laugh and taunt death by boasting in my Lord’s victory over it. And I boast that my Lord has defeated you too. Devil, no matter what happens in my life; I know that God is not angry with me or punishing me since Jesus has received it all in my place. I boast in Jesus, Who fulfilled all righteousness as a man for me. And as fully God, I boast that His vicarious substitution was good enough for all of fallen mankind. Jesus’ resurrection tells me that God has accepted Christ as the substitute for the entire world. So as God says to me in His Word, **‘And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”’** So, I boast that in Baptism my garment has been washed white

¹ 2 Cor. 5:21

in the blood of the Lamb. I boast in the sinless Holy Lord Who covers me with His righteous and holy blood in Holy Baptism, sprinkles it into my ears in Holy Absolution, and gives it to me to drink in Holy Communion. Jesus is my righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”

All Christians Who Have Been Baptized, what can you boast about within yourselves? Christ’s saving work was done without your help. Christ saving work on the cross that is given to you in Holy Baptism, Absolution, and Communion isn’t you and God doing anything. It is God doing it ALL FOR YOU.

Yes, it is true that there is no man who can boast before God. However, eternal God, Who was made man, is a different story. Since Jesus was baptized into our sins and we are baptized into His sinlessness, we boast in the Lord. In Baptism His work is our work. I doubt ESPN will ever interview you about your Baptism and that doesn’t really matter. But when you are interviewed on the Last Day, your Baptism into Christ will be the only thing that matters. Until that day I leave you with the hymn we sang this morning where we boast in the Lord.

In Baptism we now put on Christ-Our shame is fully covered. With all that He once sacrificed And freely for us suffered. For here the flood of His own blood Now makes us holy, right, and good Before our Heavenly Father.

O Christian, firmly hold this gift And give God thanks forever! It gives the power to uplift In all that you endeavor. When nothing else revives your soul, Your Baptism stands and makes you whole And then in death completes you.

*So use it well you are made new. In Christ a new creation! As faithful Christians, live and do Within your own vocation, Until that day when you possess His glorious robe of righteousness Bestowed on you forever!*²

Amen. The peace of God, which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

² LSB, 596, *All Christians Who Have Been Baptized* by Paul Gerhardt