

Let it be So Now

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Baptism of Our Lord) is Matthew 3:13-17. It is the story of Jesus's baptism by John the Baptist.

In last week's text we see where the devil tried to use earthly enemies to still the life and ministry of Jesus. In this week's reading we see the devil using someone extremely close to Jesus (his cousin) to halt Jesus perfect mission here on earth. BUT, it doesn't work!

John refused to baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees because they failed to repent (v. 8). Because Jesus was without sin, John also wanted to refuse Baptism to this One who was mightier than he (cf. v. 11). John had proclaimed that Jesus would baptize all Israel with the Holy Spirit and fire on the Last Day (3:11). But now Jesus has come—not as the One who baptizes with the Spirit and fire, but as the passive recipient of John's own baptism. John's baptism is "for repentance" (3:11), that is, for conversion from unbelief to faith, and for entrance into the people of God. The people who received John's baptism had done so because they responded to John's preaching to "Repent!" (3:2) with true penitence. So Jesus' request to be baptized by John raises many questions: Does Jesus need to repent? Does Jesus need to be converted from unbelief to faith? Is Jesus among the lost sheep who were no longer members of the true Israel and who needed readmission into the people of God? John knows that the answer to these questions must be "No!"

Jesus does not let John hanging. He gives his answer in verse 15 where he says: "*Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.*" Jesus is assuming his office and so it is to be without delay. Jesus is agreeing with John, but though he is sinless, he is the sin-bearer, and therefore needs to do this so he can be our substitute. Jesus submitted to John's Baptism, the same that sinners were undergoing, in order to affirm His identity with sinners and to provide them with perfect righteousness.

A substitute has to go into the game to replace someone and get into the action and not mail it in, so Jesus needed to completely do all the things that is required of humans. Jesus took no short-cuts on the way to the cross.

What happened after the Baptism of Jesus was startling and completely unexpected. The entire Trinity was revealed when the Father's voice declared Jesus to be His beloved Son.

Because the Father looked on the Jesus with favor and accepted his sacrifice, He now looks upon us with favor because of the faith that has been worked within us.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You stood next to sinners in the waters of the Jordan. Stand with me now, and wash away my sins. Amen. (TLSB)