

BC art. 19; Mt. 3:13-17; Gal. 3:23-29; 2 Natures- 1 Savior I. Like Us II. Above Us

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how exactly is Christ like us- and how is He different from us? Along with the doctrine of the Trinity, the Incarnation and the 2 natures of Christ is perhaps one of the most difficult doctrines to grasp in the Scriptures. Over the last weeks we have seen that salvation has been foreknown- there is a group of people that God has chosen to save. This salvation is then foretold- the promise of a savior who would come from the line of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent is told to Adam and Eve in the garden. Now we press on to consider the specific identity of promised One who would crush the head of the serpent. And although we often consider Mt. 3 when we are looking at the Trinity since all three persons are present when Jesus was baptized, today we will focus on the identity of the One who was being baptized. When we read the word- baptize- in the Bible- we tend to focus on the mode or the action. And indeed- the word in Greek "baptizo" means- to wash, sprinkle or cleanse. But there is a range of meanings behind this action. Normally, we think of baptism as the washing away of sins. As dirt is washed away from our bodies by water, so surely does the blood of Jesus wash away all our sins. But what is the meaning behind baptism in our text today? Surely Jesus was not washing away His sins since He is and remains the pure, spotless lamb! Well, as we will see, baptism is also a means of identification. Baptism marks the person who receives the water. To be baptized also indicates union- to be united with a group that shares the same mark. For example, the Israelites were baptized into Moses when they crossed the Red Sea. So there is union- a shared identity in this washing as well. As we read from Gal. 3, as we are baptized into Christ we are actually putting on Christ! We could say that when we are being baptized, we are both washed by and united to Jesus Christ! Baptism also indicates a new identity- a calling if you will. Especially in our passage this morning, we see that in baptism Jesus is anointed- identified- set apart and marked by God as someone special! Receiving the seal of the Father- This is my Son! As the Spirit lands and remains on Him- He is being anointed by the Spirit to be our Messiah. So today as we come to consider the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, we find His identity! Both the Father and the Spirit identify- mark Jesus and make it known who He is. We consider this theme: Jesus is baptized to reveal His identity to fallen man!

I. Like Us

In our first point we see how Jesus is being identified as one with His people- like us in every way- sharing our humanity- and yet remaining without sin. In revealing the identity of Jesus in BC art. 19, our confession is drawing a connection between promise and fulfillment! What was promised back in art. 17 was this- that the Father would give us His Son who was also born of a woman. So our messiah is One who was born of a woman- as our article 19 says- Jesus was conceived- His human nature has not lost any of its properties- but He continues to be a creature. He has a finite nature in that He has a beginning of days- He has a real body. In other words, when Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, the child that was born was and remains a real, true- flesh and blood person. Fully human- retaining every aspect of our nature- even becoming a creature without losing any of that creature's properties. So Jesus rightly has a birth date- a beginning of days. So when we come to Mt. 3, who is it that is speaking with John? Who is walking down into the water- who was baptized with water- on whose head does the dove land? The answer is- must be- a real man! A person who has real body that felt the real water! Jesus is not ashamed to all us brothers- and as a man He is uniquely able to represent us- and even take our place! Now this gets to the heart of the question- why did Jesus need to be baptized? Notice what He says in 3:15- let it be so for now, for thus it is fitting to fulfill all righteousness. Permit it- because it must needs be to fulfill what is necessary. But what does this mean- to fulfill all righteousness? Well, the first way to answer this question is by simply stating the obvious. The Father's will must be obeyed- so the Son states that it is necessary. This baptism is required by the Father- and Jesus will obey in order to fulfill righteousness! Jesus is and must remain perfect- and in order to remain perfect He has to obey! Righteousness requires His baptism. Second, the reason Jesus is going to be baptized is because He is one of us! He is taking our place, if you will! As the head of a new humanity- being our representative in the eyes of God- Jesus would be baptized. Although Jesus had no sins that needed to be washed away- we do! If the body is dirty, the head also must be washed! We and our children are born in sin. We need to have our sins washed away! Little Kynslee needs to have her sins washed away! So Jesus was washed for her- on her behalf. Jesus says- those who are under me- those in me need to be

washed- so I will be washed. He was baptized for us! And now by His Spirit- we are washed by Him! We are baptized by Him- if you will- when His Spirit cleanses us from our sins! And since He is our leader and representative, He needs to be washed- baptized on our account! So this baptism is a covenantal fulfillment. In this act, Jesus is taking His place in the inauguration of a new humanity. As the second Adam, this seed of the Woman was taking His place as the head of New Humanity- a chosen people find their place under His headship! Let's pause for a brief application- in our baptism we are united to Christ! In His baptism, He is united to us! When we and our children are baptized, God is reminding us that we are not our own! We belong to someone else- we are baptized into Jesus! Baptism is a sign given those who belong to God- who are part of God's family- who are united to Christ as the body as He is our head! Baptism is a sign of union! As Kynslee and all our children need to be reminded- you belong to Jesus Christ! God's name and seal is upon you! Since the body and the head share this mark- all of God's children are baptized! Do you see the beauty of it! Jesus was- you have been- our children are also- baptized! Because God's family shares this mark! It is a reminder- you are not your own- you were bought with a price! You belong to God's family- and baptism reminds you of this truth! And finally, the third reason that Jesus was baptized has to do with His being identified and sealed as the Christ. Anointed to be the final and perfect prophet. At the baptism of Jesus, we should think more of anointing than washing. Here in Mt. 3, the baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of His public ministry. He is God's chosen messenger- His appointed and apparent Messiah! And the baptism with water is accompanied by the descending of the Holy Spirit who falls upon Him. In the OT, those chosen by God for a special office were anointed with oil- which signified the equipping of the Spirit and the power of God given for this person to fulfill their office. Now, Jesus receives the very sign and the very person of the Spirit falls upon him- coming to rest and remaining with Him. By this it is known, this is the Christ! The anointed One of God to be prophet, priest and king! One in whom the power of God remains and resides. That is how significant this event is- that this man Jesus was being exalted above all His brothers. The greatest King- even David, Solomon and Josiah- would bow to this their greatest Son! All of the prophets- from Able to Enoch and down to Nathan, Isaiah and Malachi- would listen to this One's Words! All the priests- from Melchizedek to Aaron to Zadok- would have their sins atoned for by the sacrifice

offered by His hands! Truly this one is the hope of the nations! There is no other man like Him! Every part of His person and work is vital- necessary in order for Him to fulfill all righteousness!

II. Above Us

But there is another aspect- another nature which we need to consider as well! Not only is Jesus fully and complete man- He is also greater than any man! One with us- yet- also Above Us! He is not just our representative- He is the one who has the power to save! As our article puts it, Jesus Christ has two natures. His divine nature remains uncreated, without beginning or end and filling the heavens and the earth. When the Spirit descended and came to rest on Jesus- our passage is revealing that the Spirit was at home with Jesus. Although it is true that the Spirit had fallen on men in the OT at various times, these vessels remain impure and unworthy recipients of the Spirit. But in Jesus, the Spirit find a perfect vessel if you will. The Spirit would remain on and in Jesus- uniquely equipping Him for the work set before him. We need to remember that strictly speaking, Jesus is the only man who does not need to be washed. In this sense, John was right when he said to Jesus that He- Jesus- should be the one to wash John and not the other way around. Jesus had no sins that needed to be washed away- no impurity that need to be cleansed. But that fact also makes Jesus the perfect recipient of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit- because the Spirit would find a ready reception and rest within the perfect man Jesus! But there is more in our passage concerning the origin of Jesus. As we read in 16, the heavens opened as the dove came down. A voice from heaven was heard. When the heavens opened, they were revealing the place from which this man had come. The Son was with the Father, in glory, before all world. Jesus came down from heaven when He became man- so as the heavens open it is revealed where the Son had once resided. Heaven is open to the Son- it is His home to where He will return. And as the Father spoke, it becomes clear- this is My Son with whom I am well pleased. My Son- my beloved Son- the perfect and only begotten one! The one who is well pleasing to the Father- perfect and wholly acceptable! Think of it- God the Father spoke this truth for those present to hear! Let the mouth of another praise you- and the Father praises His Son- defends His Son- claims His Son as His own! In this He honors His Son as the rightful Son of God! That is the Son's identity!

As our Nicene Creed puts it-the Son is God of God- light of Light- very God of very God- begotten and not made. One with the Father. So in His baptism, the identity of Jesus is being put on display. This is God's anointed Messiah- and this is the Father's beloved Son! But even in this declaration and identification, there is an implied application. This is the Father's Son- He is the Word of God- so we must listen to Him! Even as the Father more explicitly states in Mt. 17 on the Mt. of Transfiguration! This is my Son, listen to Him! So we could say that the voice of the Father is still heard today as we listen to the words of the Son. Although it is true that we are children of God as well- we are children by way of Adoption. We become children in time. Jesus was always the Father's Son. He remains the only begotten one- and this puts Him on equal footing with the Father. As the Jews in John 5 heard- Jesus also called God His own Father. They objected to this claim- but they rightly understood- to call God your own Father is to make yourself equal with God. Here we have the reverse- the Father calls Jesus His Son- making the Son equal to Himself. The Father is not ashamed to call Jesus my Son! When we call God our Father we do so only because Jesus has given us this right- teaching us to pray in this manner. In ourselves, we have no right to call God our Father. But Jesus has this right in His nature being one with the Father. So for Jesus, His divine nature always remains. This nature is not changed or lost when He took on our flesh. As such, He needs nothing! Although he might sleep and slumber in His physical flesh, His deity never sleeps and never slumbers. And although He has a birthdate and death date in his flesh- In His deity He has neither beginning nor end. Such is the mystery and marvel of the incarnation.

To conclude, confessing the 2 natures and 1 person of Jesus Christ is a truth rich in comfort. As our article concludes, he must be true God in order to conquer death by His power; and He must be true man so that he might die for us in the weakness of his flesh! Both His deity and His humanity are on display in His baptism. So He was baptized as a man- to wash away the sins of fallen man! He was anointed by the Spirit to be ordained as God's Messiah! He is identified as the Beloved Son- so we might worship Him! In baptism we are united to Him- and in His baptism He is united with us! We are baptized in Him and with Him our head! Praise God for this mysterious truth- that our Savior is fully God and fully Man- which is necessary for our salvation!