

Baptism of Our Lord C, 2013

Text: Luke 3:15-22

Title: Proud Parent

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As a parent, there are moments when I'm especially proud of my kids. When they do something new for the first time, and I can see when they're learning, when they are polite and well-behaved, when they say or do something cute, when Zachary's singing hymns at the top of his lungs and Elizabeth starts singing along I'm especially proud, and I want everyone to know- that's my son, that's my daughter. I'm happy and pleased with them.

On the other hand, there are times when I'm not anxious to take credit for my kids, when they do things that I'm not so proud of, when I hear a scream and I think, I hope that's not one of mine. I still love them no matter what, but I admit that sometimes I'm more proud of them than other times.

As children, too, we all want our parents to be proud of us; we want them to be pleased with us. No matter how old we get, we still look to our parents for approval. It might embarrass us from time to time, but we like it when our parents are proud of us and they let other people know about it.

Even more important than your parent's approval is God's approval. Is God proud of you? Is God happy with you? Is God pleased with everything that you do?

And how do you know? How can you tell if God is pleased with you, if He's proud of you?

In His Word, God tells you what pleases Him, what makes Him happy.

He's happy when you love Him with your whole heart and not other things, and certainly not yourself.

He's happy when you keep His name holy, when it's often on your lips in prayer and praise and thanksgiving.

He's happy when you take a day off to hear and study His word, to gather with others in worshipping Him.

God's happy when you honor and respect your parents, the government, and all those who are in authority over you.

God's happy when you don't hurt one another, but help one another in any way you can.

God's happy when you remain faithful to your husband or wife in thought and deed, when you avoid sinful sexually desires.

God's happy when you don't take things that aren't yours and you help your neighbors with their property.

God's happy when you speak well of one another, when you use your words to build one another up, rather than spreading lies and rumors and gossip.

God's happy when you are content with what you have, and don't try to get things that don't belong to you.

That's what pleases God. That's what makes God happy. It's not automatic. God's not a pushover. It's hard to please God, in fact, on your own, it is impossible for you to please God. There's no way that you can make God happy no matter how hard you try.

But there is one person who is able to please God. One person that God is proud of. And that is Jesus Christ.

At His Baptism, God spoke from heaven and said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased."

God is proud of Jesus Christ, and He declares His love for Him.

Now this is before Jesus has started His ministry. This is before Jesus has preached the good news. This is before Jesus has healed anyone. This is three years before Jesus will suffer and die for the sins of the world.

And yet here, now, at His baptism, God the Father declares His love for Jesus. Here, now, at His baptism, God the Father declares that He is pleased with Jesus.

What is it about His baptism that makes God the Father say these things about Jesus?

Well, why is Jesus being baptized in the first place? Matthew tells us that when Jesus came to be baptized, John didn't want to do it. "You've got it all backwards, Jesus," said John. "I should be baptizing you; you should be baptizing me."

Baptism was for sinners. Baptism was for those who wanted a new start, a new beginning, a chance at a new life. Baptism was for those who had messed up so badly, there was no fixing it, all you could do was start over.

Does that sound like Jesus? Does that sound like the one Gabriel talked to Mary about, the one who would be called the "Son of the Most High"? Does that sound like the one that the angels sang about to the shepherds, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Does that sound like the one John writes about in his gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God"? Does that sound like the one that Simeon took up in his arms and called "A light of revelation for the Gentiles and the

glory of the people of Israel”? Does that sound like the King of the Jews that the Magi traveled to see?

No! All of the stories from Advent, Christmas and Epiphany point to Jesus as the perfect, holy, sinless Son of God. Jesus doesn't need to repent. Jesus doesn't need a new start, a second chance.

But you do. You need to repent and start over. You need a second chance. But no matter how many chances you get, you'd never get it right.

So Jesus does it all for you. Jesus takes your place. Jesus takes your sin for you. That's what Jesus is doing there in the Jordan River. That's why He is baptized. He's baptized for you.

And that's why the Father declares His love for Him. That's why the Father declares His pleasure in Jesus Christ. He isn't on the cross yet, but as Jesus steps into that River, He takes His first public step on the road that will lead to Calvary. Here at the beginning, God declares to Jesus and to the world how much He loves and is pleased with His Son.

And that goes for you, too. Yes, you can't please God on your own. But you are baptized. And when you were baptized, you were connected to Jesus Christ. Everything that He did counts for you. You were crucified with Him, you were buried with Him, and you were raised with Him. You were covered with the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

God the Father loves you. God the Father is pleased with you. Not because you are such a nice person, not because you showed up this morning, while everyone else slept in, not because of anything that you've done, but because of what Jesus has done for you.

Over 98 years ago, in the town of Ava, Ohio, on the first of October, 1914, Mildred Clark was baptized. She became God's beloved daughter, and He beamed with pride. Tomorrow morning, Mildred will be brought here one last time. And as she enters the sanctuary, today's epistle, Romans 6 will be read once more, and she will be clothed in the white of a funeral pall, to point to the holiness of Jesus Christ that has covered her all her life.

God loves her, God is pleased with her, because she was baptized in Jesus' name, and the Holy Spirit descended upon her, as those words were spoken.

And you, too. You never have to doubt how things stand between you and God, your Father, He loves you, He is pleased with You, because you have been baptized in Jesus' Name.