

I. Introduction

Good morning! Last Spring we had a retreat at 48 Falls and we had five baptisms in the river next to two waterfalls. It was a very beautiful place and we have decided to go again this year. So, please plan to come to the Spring Retreat during Golden Week, May 4th -6th. And if you are thinking about getting baptized, I think this would be a wonderful chance to get baptized out in nature.



Of course, as we discussed last week the most important thing for baptism is not the place or the method, but the condition of the heart. We repent of our sins and welcome Jesus into our hearts, trusting Him for our salvation. Then the Holy Spirit comes to live in our hearts and we are born again as new creations in Christ. Baptism is a public confession of faith and an outward sign of the inward change of our heart.

In today's Scripture, we will see that our Lord Jesus also received baptism from John the Baptist. But, we may ask, why did Jesus get baptized? John's baptism was a baptism of repentance from sins, but Jesus never committed any sin. So why did He receive this baptism? John the Baptist himself asked Jesus about this. In **Matthew 3:13-15**, we read, **"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented."**



Notice Jesus' answer to John. Jesus was not baptized in order to become righteous; there was no need of that, because Jesus was already sinless and righteous. Jesus got baptized in order to, **"fulfill all righteousness."** Jesus' choice of words indicate that getting baptized was the right thing to do, probably in order to demonstrate humility and to set an example for us. But Jesus' words also hint at another reason, a fulfillment of prophecy, or a completion of something necessary.

John the Baptist appears in the New Testament, but in a sense he is really the last prophet of the Old Testament era. We can see the baptism of Jesus as the beginning of the new era. John passes the baton to Jesus, and from this point on, the ministry of John begins to fade away. The new era begins when Jesus receives a baptism of repentance from John. Jesus has no sin of His own, but I think we can say that He receives this baptism as the representative of all mankind. Later, Jesus will take upon Himself the sins of the world and die on the cross for all of us. But before Jesus dies for us, He receives a baptism of repentance for us. When we believe in Jesus and receive baptism, we complete this act by accepting what Jesus has already done for us.

So we should see Jesus' baptism in the context of the cross. This artist has shown this idea in an interesting way, by drawing John the Baptist with a cross-shaped staff. Jesus receives baptism from John, God the Father speaks from heaven, and the Holy Spirit comes onto Jesus in visible form, represented as a dove. Let's read Luke 3:21 and following.



II. Scripture Luke 3:21-38 (NIV)

[21] When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened [22] and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." [23] Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, [24] ... [38] the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

III. Teaching

We mostly skipped reading the long genealogy, but we should notice that it goes from Jesus all the way back to Adam, and then the genealogy indicates that Adam was, “**the son of God.**” However, the meaning here is just that Adam is, “from God,” because God created Adam. The original language does not use the word, “son,” here at all, although many Bible translations add the word because the context is a genealogy.

Matthew chapter 1 also includes a genealogy of Jesus, but it differs from the genealogy in Luke. Matthew only goes back as far as Abraham, while Luke goes all the way back to Adam. From Abraham to King David, the genealogies are the same, but after King David, they are completely different. These differences may seem confusing at first, but if we consider the purposes of Matthew and Luke, then the reason for the differences becomes clear.



Matthew is writing primarily to a Jewish audience, and his purpose is to demonstrate that Jesus is the heir of the promises of Abraham and the throne of King David. To achieve his purpose, Matthew gives the genealogy of Jesus through Jesus’ legal father, Joseph, since the qualification for the throne was passed on through the father and not the mother.

Luke’s purpose is to show that Jesus is the Savior of all mankind. But, in the Old Testament, especially in the Book of Ruth, a prophetic model of the kinsman redeemer was established. The kinsman, or relative, was able to serve as a representative, or redeemer, for another person. Luke wanted to show that Jesus is our kinsman redeemer. To do this, Luke traces Jesus’ genealogy through Mary, Jesus’ physical mother, and goes all the way back to Adam, thus showing that Jesus is related to all mankind and therefore able to serve as a representative and kinsman redeemer for all people.

So, the differences in the genealogies are not a problem at all, they simply reflect the different purposes and audiences that Matthew and Luke were writing for. Let’s take a closer look at Jesus’ baptism.

Luke 3:21-22, “When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”” When Jesus was baptized, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit came down in the visible form of a dove and God the Father spoke, declaring, “**You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.**”

This is one of the places in Scripture where all three persons of the Trinity appear at the same time. Passages like these clearly show that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three separate persons, while other Scriptures clearly show that the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are all God and that each of them has a distinct personality. At first, this may seem to contradict the declaration of **Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”** But it only seems like a contradiction because our existence is more limited than that of the Lord God.



We live in a three dimensional world of height, width, and depth, plus time. But the Creator God who made the heavens and the earth is not limited to a three-dimensional existence; He transcends time and space and all of the things of this world. That is hard for us to understand. But if we think about it, we should expect that the Creator God who made the heavens and the earth and who created time and space would be beyond our understanding.

The Holy Trinity of God is beyond our understanding, but God Himself has given us models in nature to show that belief in a Trinity God, three persons who are One in essence and in their divinity is not unreasonable. H2O is one example. Water, steam, and ice are all very different and yet, when we look a little closer, we see that at the essence, water, steam, and ice are the same, really there is only one thing, a molecule which we call H2O.

We can talk about H₂O in a way that is closely parallel to how we talk about the Trinity of God. We can say, for example, that water is H₂O, ice is H₂O, and steam is H₂O. But water is not ice, water is not steam, and steam is not ice. They are all different, and yet there is actually only one thing, and that is H₂O.



This sounds almost exactly like what we often say about the Trinity. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God. But the Father is not the Son, the Father is not the Spirit, and the Son is not the Spirit.

Of course, all analogies have limits. Water can be placed in a freezer and it will become ice. But God does not change; the Father does not become the Son or the Spirit. Examples like this can help us to see that a trinity that is one in essence is not unreasonable. But no analogy can fully explain the Trinity because God is transcendent; He is present everywhere in His creation, but God is also beyond all time and space. God is bigger than the world He has created.

We have taken a few minutes to talk about the Holy Trinity of God today because it is very important. Since ancient times, the church has considered the teaching of the Trinity to be so important that any group which rejects the teaching of the Trinity is considered to have departed from true Christianity. There are many such groups today, for example, the Latter Day Saints group, commonly called the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses, also called the Watchtower, are two groups that have rejected the Trinity.

IV. Conclusion

At various times in history, the church has adopted formal statements of belief, or creeds, to protect against error and to declare the true teaching of the church. Three of these creeds are called ecumenical creeds because they are accepted by Protestants, Orthodox, and Catholics, the three major branches of the church. Of these, the Apostle's Creed is probably the most widely used in Japan and also in the USA, but worldwide, the most widely used creed is thought to be the Nicene Creed, as revised by the Council of Constantinople in AD 381. There is a copy of this creed in the bulletin for you to take home with you and I would also like to close for today with a reading of this creed.

V. The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God the Father, the Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen

VI. Closing Prayer

Nicene Creed in Japanese

ニケア・コンスタンチノポリス信条

(ニカイア・コンスタンティノポリス信条)

わたしは信じます。唯一の神、全能の父、天と地、見えるもの、見えないもの、すべてのものの造り主を。

わたしは信じます。唯一の主イエス・キリストを。主は神のひとり子、すべてに先立って父より生まれ、神よりの神、光よりの光、まことの神よりのまことの神、造られることなく生まれ、父と一体。すべては主によって造られました。主は、わたしたち人類のため、わたしたちの救いのために天からくだり、聖霊によって、おとめマリアよりからだを受け、人となりました。ポンティオ・ピラトのもとで、わたしたちのために十字架につけられ、苦しみを受け、葬られ、聖書にあるとおり三日目に復活し、天に昇り、父の右の座に着いておられます。

主は、生者（せいしゃ）と死者を裁くために栄光のうちに再び来られます。その国は終わることがありません。わたしは信じます。主であり、いのちの与え主である聖霊を。聖霊は、父と子から出て、父と子とともに礼拝され、栄光を受け、また預言者をとおして語られました。

わたしは、聖なる、普遍の、使徒的、唯一の教会を信じます。罪のゆるしをもたらす唯一の洗礼を認め、死者の復活と来世のいのちを待ち望みます。

アーメン。

—2004年2月18日 日本カトリック司教協議会