Matthew 3

Reflection by Garrett Speyer

Notice Matthew 3

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” 15 Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented 16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

This is a famous passage, isn’t it? The baptism of Jesus. If you’re anything like me, you grew up hearing this passage used as a doctrinal proof for baptism — “You see there? Jesus came up out of the water! That means John dunked him. Complete submersion brethren.” Sound familiar? I think using this passage to simply win a debate on proper baptismal practices is a gigantic case of missing the point. Rather, I’d like to point you to the deeper truth of this passage, a truth about identity.

I love the words God speaks to Jesus, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” God wants the world to know He affirms Jesus for who He is, He’s proud of the man Jesus has become, and He loves Him.
What I find the most moving about this passage is that God speaks these words about Jesus before His ministry has even begun. Jesus hasn’t done anything yet. Think about it, Jesus hasn’t healed a single person, He hasn’t worked a single miracle, and yet, God still says, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” My question is, why? Jesus doesn’t really deserve these words, so why say them? What’s God after here?

Here’s why — because for God, what’s important is who we are. It is about our identity. We live in a merit based culture. You do something good, you get rewarded for it. That’s the way things in the world work. But for God it’s different. It is actually from our identity that our activity in the world emerges. Perhaps we could say it this way: What we do comes out of who we are.

Now that may seem obvious, but the question is, do we actually live like this is true?

How often do you find yourself looking for value in what you do? What you produce? Whether it be what job you have, how much money you make, what kind of car you drive?

Or how about with your relationship to the Creator? Ever find yourself thinking, “If I just prayed more or read more Scripture or went to church regularly or was part of a small group….” The list could go on forever, couldn’t it?

The beautiful truth of this passage is that there is a divine blessing that rests on each and every one of us that has nothing to do with what we do and everything to do with who we are. There is no need to earn or work or try harder. You don’t need to do anything. This gift is already yours.

We can do all we want. But in the end, it's who we are that really matters.

This means it’s okay to be you. There’s no need to apologize for all the things you aren’t because God is interested in who you are.

So may you know that you are His son, you are His daughter, whom He loves; with you He is well pleased.

Recalibrate

1. How can you live your life so that you can tap into this divine blessing every day?
2. What are some practical things you can do to remind yourself that it isn’t about what you produce but instead, about who you are?
3. How can you take steps to become more and more the person you are, instead of being distracted by all of the things you aren’t?
Feel free to send any thoughts or comments to Garrett Speyer.

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