

Waters > Wilderness (& beyond!)

November 20th, 2022

Intro: *Its baptism weekend at Southland!! **Welcome to our guests here this morning.** We have an exciting service ahead of us. We had 11 original registrations for baptism. After last weeks invitation from Pastor Stefan, we have an addition 10 people getting baptized this morning. God is good, and he is at work amongst us – amen?*

Main Point: *Baptism is a SIGNIFICANT moment in a disciple's life, but it's not the end of the journey!*

Big Question: *What happens next? Where do we go from here?*

Read aloud Luke 3:21-22, 4:1-14 (NIV)

a) Baptism: A Door Of Humility!

There is a Church in Israel, in the city of Bethlehem called “*The Church of the Nativity*”. Many people travel to see it; it’s a beautiful building with stunning architecture. However, there is one seemingly bizarre feature that draws quite a lot of attention: **that feature is... the front door**. It has been nicknamed “*The door of humility*”. This door isn’t famous for its grandeur, but rather for its lack thereof.

- The door of humility stands a modest **5 feet tall** (approx..). I read an article this week regarding this door that sums it up better than I could hope to. Here’s a quote:
- **Quote:** *“One of the first things that challenges pilgrims as they visit the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem, is the main entrance to the church, a small rectangular doorway less than 5 feet in height called “the Door of Humility.” In order to pass through this door, pilgrims and visitors are forced to bow down as they enter the church. The fact that visitors and pilgrims have to bow down in order to enter the Basilica of the Nativity has a theological significance: We must humble ourselves in order to approach God.”*

Source: <https://usml.edu/pilgrimage/the-door-of-humility-2/>

Today we are celebrating Baptism Weekend together as a church, and I would like to suggest that Baptism has a similar effect. Entering the waters of Baptism requires **humility**.

- At baptism there is a **HIGH BAR** set before us. The call to follow Jesus is a **HIGH CALLING**. Would you agree? **Here is what is asked in the tank:** *Do you acknowledge Jesus is Lord, that he died and rose again for you sins? Do you acknowledge that you ate living for him and will do so for the rest of your life?*
- But it is also a **LOW CALLING**, meaning – TO FOLLOW JESUS **WILL REQUIRE HUMILITY**.

Look at this verse: *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matt 28:19-20*

- Note that baptism is stated at the beginning of Jesus’ instructions to us. Its almost as if Baptism is the “Door of Humility” in a disciple’s journey with God.

- **To be clear**, we do not earn salvation via baptism, we are saved by faith (Eph. 2:8-9). However, for those saved by faith, Jesus says that one of the first things we are to do is repent and be baptized! And this is humbling, or at least it should be!
- ***“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 2:38***

Here’s what I found interesting... I watched some clips of people entering into the church in Bethlehem, through the door of humility, and you know what I noticed? Almost all of them had their phones out and would stop to take pictures of this moment.

- Okay, I am not trying to pick on anyone... but it kinda made me laugh. That’s what phones do to us! *“Look at this picture I took at the door of humility... yeah, I am super humble, and here’s the proof!”* I wonder if we sort of lose the point of the door if we turn it into an attraction?

Here’s my point: if we reduce baptism to a spiritual checkbox, something to mark off the list... OR, a “punch-card” to Heaven... we miss the point. If we stake our security with God on the baptism certificate we receive after baptism, or a photo of us being baptized as “proof”, we miss the point!

- **Here’s the thing:** Baptism is usually a one-time moment in a believer’s life, so it is unique and special. However, the choice to follow Jesus, to identify yourself with his life, his death, and resurrection, and our response to that being to forsake your own life and to choose to live for him... that is a **DAILY CHOICE** in the life of a disciple.
 - **Baptism is the doorway**; but there’s a journey to be continued on the other side!
 - It is for that reason, church, that I believe public baptism is significant not only for those being baptized, but also for those witnessing the event (including those who have already been baptized). We have the opportunity today to recommit ourselves to the choice of following Jesus!

b) From the Waters to the Wilderness

It is significant that Jesus himself was baptized. Let’s start by looking at that account again, although we won’t stay there long because in the time remaining, I want to focus on what happened **AFTER** baptism.

- ***“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.” Luke 3:21-22***
 - This was a BIG moment in Jesus’ ministry! In fact, this was the “marker” so to speak for his entrance into public ministry. In addition, it was accompanied by a miraculous moment – God’s audible voice. This was a confirmation moment!!
- **You might be wondering, why’d Jesus get baptized?** Scripture is abundantly clear that Jesus was sinless! That is very important to mention. So unlike us, Jesus did not need to repent.
 - ***“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.” Hebrews 4:15 (NIV)***
 - **Wish I had time for other verses...** 2 Cor. 5:21 (NIV), 1 Peter 2:21-24 (NIV)

So why is it significant that Jesus chose to get baptized? Here is what we can learn from this:

- It shows us that Jesus is **HUMBLE**. [*came through the same door as us...*]
- It also shows us that Jesus is **OBEDIENT** and in **SUBMISSION** to the Father. *"... it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."* **Matthew 3:15 (NIV)**
- It also shows us that Jesus intended to leave us an **EXAMPLE**, meaning, baptism is part of "the way" of Jesus. More than teachings alone, Jesus came to model a **LIFESTYLE**, including baptism.

But now we come to something very important that I want us all to take note of: **What does Jesus do AFTER he is baptized?** (*this is our BIG QUESTION*)

- *Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was **led by the Spirit into the wilderness**, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.* **Luke 4:1-2 (NIV)**
- **If baptism is a doorway**, Jesus shows us something on the other side: **THE WILDERNESS**.
 - o Don't you find that somewhat odd? Jesus just received this massive public confirmation and public endorsement from his Father, and the first place the Spirit leads him is to **OBSCURITY**? You'd think God would lead him straight to a big stage, right?
 - o Isn't this so opposite to how we often think?
- How many HS students and young adults do I have in the room this morning? How many of you were at camp? Jesus' invitation to us was to join him in the _____! Can you remember the camp theme verse?
- *"But Jesus Himself would often **slip away** to the wilderness and pray."* **Luke 5:16 (NASB)**

Throughout the gospels you will find many examples of Jesus stepping out of the demands of ministry and the rhythms of the world around him to retreat into the wilderness. The wilderness played a significant role within his life and mission, and it should in our lives too. We are *apprentices*, after all.

- Certainly, **Jesus did enter into the public sphere**, he didn't always stay in obscurity – but it was the Wilderness that prepared Jesus for what he did in public and sustained it.
- There is a reason why Jesus calls us to join him in the wilderness, and I will summarize why I believe this to be in two words: **SUBMISSION** & **FORMATION**. (*this answers our BIG QUESTION*)

Let's close by looking at these two purposes.

Purpose 1 – SUBMISSION:

- The first purpose of the Wilderness is **SUBMISSION**. Jesus was brought into the wilderness *to be tested – and he passed* (something that Adam, nor anyone after, could achieve).
- I wish we had time to unpack each of the tests that Jesus underwent, but we won't have time for that. Perhaps that's for another sermon. But here's what I want us to catch this morning:

Take note of who's leading:

*"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit... was **LED BY the Spirit into the wilderness...**"* **Luke 4:1 (NIV)**. It was the Holy Spirit's leading that drew Jesus into the wilderness!

- Jesus lived in submission to the promptings of the Holy Spirit – **we should too**.

- *During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his **reverent submission**.* Hebrews 5:7 (NIV)
- I love this verse – look at Jesus' prayer life. He wrestled in prayer.

But notice what happens afterwards as the devil begins to tempt Jesus. **Now the testing begins:**

- *The devil **LED HIM up to a high place** and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their **authority and splendor**; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you **worship me, it will all be yours.**"* Luke 4:5-7 (NIV)
- The Spirit isn't the only one interested in "leading" in this passage. What can we learn from this?
 - o **Where did the Spirit lead Jesus?** To the Wilderness. To submission + humility, to 40 days of fasting and prayer. This was slow, challenging work! "*fervent cries and tears*" ...
 - o **Where did the devil lead Jesus?** To a 'high place', to gaze upon the Kingdoms of the world and their power, authority and splendor. And this was offered in an INSTANT.
 - o The Devil offers us a **low bar** and **high "reward"**. God calls us to a **high bar** requiring a **low posture** (aka – humility).
 - o **IMPORTANT TRUTH:** The life of a disciple of Jesus doesn't just begin with humility and submission, it is SUSTAINED by humility and submission. **True submission requires humility! And humility leads to obedience.**
 - o **Warning:** The devil will seek to lead us off the path of submission. He will lure and tempt with promises of ease, comfort and power, if only we come out from under Gods thumb and worship him. (**ps. HE IS A LIAR!**)
 - **QUESTION: Which voice will you listen to?**
- **OPTIONAL:** *The devil **led him to Jerusalem** and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"* Luke 4:9-12 (NIV)
- Do you notice that the Devil quotes Scripture too?
- Jesus again averts the devils trap, for you see, Jesus understood something of significance: He was there to be tested by God, not to test God. Throughout the entire wilderness account, Jesus maintains his posture of submission to His Father.

Purpose 2 – FORMATION:

- **Church, God intends to form us** (by 'form' I mean to shape us). "*Yet you, Lord, are our Father. **We are the clay; you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.**"* Isaiah 64:8 (NIV)
- **And what is he forming us into?**
 - o **Simple:** God wants to form us to become more like Jesus; *the type of people he can use!*
 - o *And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being **transformed into his image** with **ever-increasing glory**, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.* 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)
 - o Or... I love the simplicity of John: "*This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: **In this world we are like Jesus.**"* 1 John 4:17 (NIV)

So that leaves us the question of HOW? Well, it's a process (not instant). God uses *the Wilderness* as a place to form and shape His people. Away from noise & distraction, hurry, and the illusion of control, we meet with God and he begins to shape and form us into the kind of people he can use.

- Therefore, submission is required, because **WE PARTICIPATE** in the process God is doing.

To be clear: God does the 'heavy work' – the deep work transformation (a work of the Spirit), but we participate with him in a couple of ways.

1 we participate by putting ourselves in a place where the work can be done. Or another way of saying it – we submit ourselves to God's *venue of formation*.

- o **Example:** say you needed surgery – you won't perform it yourself. You'd get a doctor to do it. BUT you'd submit to their venue – **YOU WOULD GO TO THE HOSPITAL.** (they don't come to you)
 - God's venue for formation is often *the Wilderness*. The inner room, the secret place. Call it what you want.

2 we participate by *embracing a lifestyle*, a set of practices. **Baptism is one of these practices**, but many others are mentioned in Scripture. These are often called Spiritual Discipline or Practices.

- o Just from our passage today alone, what do we see Jesus doing? Fasting, Praying, Meditating on Scripture, Solitude. But there are others! Much more could be said.
- o **There is a quote often said:** *Your system is set up perfectly to achieve the results you are currently getting. What results are you currently getting? Is there evidence of God's work in your life – are you becoming more like Jesus over time?*
- **The structures we live by will have a direct correlation to the form we are taking on.** Our "system" will produce results. **Formation isn't OPTIONAL: it is a reality.**
 - **HERE'S THE QUESTION: What is forming you?**
- **Important Note:** there is a uniqueness to Jesus' Wilderness experience. I'm not suggesting that all disciples must spend a literal 40 days alone in the wild. And remember, this isn't the only time that Jesus withdrew to the wilderness. There was a common practice throughout his life.
 - o **I am simply making the case that God is inviting us to embrace the practice of the wilderness as well.** Because if we want the LIFE of Jesus, we must also learn from the LIFESTYLE of Jesus.

c) Waters > Wilderness > and BEYOND!

But now to close. What's this got to do with Baptism?

Main Point: *Baptism's a SIGNIFICANT moment in the life of a disciple, but it's not the end of the journey!*

Big Question: *What's next? What happens afterwards?*

"...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Matt 28:19

- We are called to "the beyond", meaning each one of us exists ON PURPOSE, FOR A PURPOSE. Jesus didn't stay in the Wilderness, (although he frequently returned to it). God had a mission and a purpose for him. And God has a mission and a purpose for you!

- To those getting baptized here today: I have one request for you. Please do not settle for comfortable Christianity.
 - o Really, this request is for all of us, and myself included.

It was the Wilderness that prepared (& sustained) Jesus for what he did in public. Jesus submitted himself to that process! And it this is why he invites us to join him.

- **I intentionally left out one verse from our passage today. I will close by sharing it with you.**
- ***“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit... was led by the Spirit into the wilderness...” Luke 4:1 (NIV)***
- ***“Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.” Luke 4:14***
 - o Jesus came into the Wilderness **FULL**, and he didn’t just find a way to survive; He **THRIVED**. He came out of the Wilderness with **POWER**.

Passing through the waters of Baptism (the door of humility), may we continue to live in submission and humility towards God all the days of our lives. And may we submit together, as a body of believers, to the process of formation, participating with God in His work in our lives, so that we may live pleasing and fruitful lives unto Christ. And lastly may we live on mission with purpose in a world that so desperately needs Jesus.