

The Second Sunday in Advent
Sunday, December 10, 2017

St. Mark 1:8, (the words of John the Baptist) **“I have baptized you with water; HE will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”**

Dear Christians,

By now most of you know that I took a leave of absence from the Lutheran Church when I was in high school. I joined a Bible fellowship group that met in the back of a Christian bookstore in a neighboring town. We fancied ourselves to have the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit—speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophecy, the gifts of discernment and knowledge. As Luther might say, “We had swallowed the Holy Spirit—feathers and all.”

At that time I was convinced that the Lutheran Church had missed the boat when it came to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. After all those Lutherans, including my own father and mother, had only been baptized with WATER. I had been baptized with the Holy Spirit. I had more than Jesus. I had more than the fruits of His cross and empty tomb. I had the gifts of the Spirit—most notably speaking in tongues.

Thank the Lord, some of my fellow Lutherans from St. John in the cornfield invited me to go with them to a Lutheran Laymen’s League Rally in Des Moines. I went. I remember singing some of the great hymns of the Church—Crown Him with Many Crowns, The Church’s One Foundation, and others. I remember attending a discussion about the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed and what the catechism teaches about the Holy Spirit. I remember hearing Dr. Oswald Hoffmann preach on Romans 3:24—we have been justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. By day’s end, I was a Lutheran again, only this time for good.

The words of John the Baptist have been wrongly used to teach that there are two different baptisms—one, a baptism with water; the other, a baptism with the Holy Spirit. What would you say if a Christian friend asked you, “So have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit?” Most Lutherans would not know HOW to respond to that question. Most Lutherans would get a puzzled look on their face and say, “What do you mean baptized with the Holy Spirit?” If you don’t understand what that means you stand a good chance of getting duped into believing that you need something more—ANOTHER baptism, the baptism with the Holy Spirit, more of the Spirit and more of His gifts. And it’ll be “bye-bye” Lutheran Church, just like it was for me.

That’s why it’s important that you read the Bible at home and attend Bible study at Church. That’s why it’s important that you parents bring your children to Sunday school and, if possible, send them to DLS. That’s why it’s important to come to church and hear the preaching of the Word as often as you can. If you don’t know what God’s Word says, then, as St. Paul writes, you will be like a child, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine.

So what does John the Baptist mean when he says that Jesus, the One who is coming after him and is mightier than him, will baptize you with the Holy Spirit? John's words about Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit pointed ahead to Pentecost Day. In Acts 1, shortly before His ascension into heaven and ten days before the Day of Pentecost, Jesus ordered His disciples NOT to leave Jerusalem. They were to wait for the promise of the Father. Jesus said to them, **"For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."**

Sure enough, a few days later, Jesus baptized His disciples with the Holy Spirit. He poured out His Spirit upon them. They began to speak in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. They were telling the mighty works of God in all of the different languages of all the different people from all the different nations that had gathered in Jerusalem that day. Peter identified what was happening as the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Joel, **"And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh..."**

So how did Jesus pour out His Spirit on you? How is it that Jesus baptized you with the Holy Spirit? Was it through some separate event, some additional baptism, some personal Pentecost Day on which you began speaking in tongues and declaring the mighty works of God in some other language you had never spoken before? I don't think so.

Jesus poured out His Spirit upon you when the waters of Holy Baptism were poured out upon you. Jesus baptized you with the Holy Spirit when you were baptized with water. There are not two different baptisms. There is not a baptism with water and another baptism with the Holy Spirit. There is only one baptism--the one that Jesus instituted, a baptism with water and the Holy Spirit. St. Paul, writes to the Ephesians, **"There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, ONE baptism..."** The Church, for centuries, has confessed the same thing in the Nicene Creed, **"I acknowledge ONE baptism for the remission of sins..."**

In Holy Baptism the water and the Holy Spirit are both poured out on sinners. With the water comes the Spirit—and not just part of the Spirit, but all of the Spirit. When you stepped away from the baptismal font you did so as one who had been baptized with water and the Holy Spirit.

But don't take my word for it. Take God's Word for it. Take Jesus' word for it. Jesus says in John 3, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."** Jesus says that those who are baptized with that ONE baptism, the one He instituted, are born again of the water AND the Spirit. The water and the Spirit go together in Holy Baptism.

Take the Apostle Peter's word for it. St. Peter, on Pentecost Day, preached this, **"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."** Do you

remember what happened after Peter's sermon? 3000 people were baptized with water and received, as Peter had preached, not only the forgiveness of their sins, but the gift of the Holy Spirit. The water and the Spirit go together in Holy Baptism.

Take the Apostle Paul's word for it. St. Paul writes in Titus 3, **"But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior..."** According to St. Paul when the waters of Holy Baptism were poured out on you so was the Holy Spirit—richly! The water and the Spirit go together in Holy Baptism.

Likewise, St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12, **"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...and all were made to drink of one Spirit."** When we were baptized into the one body of Christ we were also made to drink of the one Spirit. The water and the Spirit go together in Holy Baptism.

Or think about St. Paul's own baptism recorded in Acts 9. After St. Paul had seen the risen Lord Jesus, he went into the city of Damascus, to the house of Ananias. Ananias said to him, **"'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.'** And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized..." How did Paul regain his sight? When something like scales fell off his eyes. How was Paul filled with the Holy Spirit? When He was baptized by Ananias. The water and the Spirit go together in Holy Baptism.

The Holy Spirit that was at work in the water and the Word causing you to be born again; the Holy Spirit that was poured out upon you along with the waters of Holy Baptism; the Holy Spirit that you were given to drink when you were baptized; the Holy Spirit who filled you at the font and who fills you still is the Spirit who gives you power to believe John the Baptist's Advent preaching as he proclaims Jesus' the coming One.

The Holy Spirit, through the preaching of God's Law, leads you to repent of your OWN sin and to prepare the way of the Lord to come to YOU as John preached so boldly back in his day. The Holy Spirit gives you power to believe that for Jesus' sake YOUR iniquity is pardoned, as John testified of Jesus, **"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."** The Holy Spirit gives you both the desire and the strength to produce fruits befitting of repentance and to live a life of holiness and godliness as you wait for and hasten the coming of the day of God. The Holy Spirit will bring you to that great Last Day without spot or blemish, and at peace. So, if someone asks you, "Have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit?" You say this, "Yes I have, along with the water, feathers and all."

In Jesus' name
Amen