

MIDWEEK OF ADVENT 3

Jesus, the Life of Jesse's Tree

Matthew 3:13–17; Romans 6:1–11

INTRODUCTION

To Jordan came our Lord, the Christ,
 To do God's pleasure willing,
 And there was by Saint John baptized,
 All righteousness fulfilling;
 There did He consecrate a bath
 To wash away transgression,
 And quench the bitterness of death
 By His own blood and passion;
 He would a new life give us. (*Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* 401)

In previous weeks, we have seen that Jesus is the Seed and Root of Jesse's tree. This week we learn that He is the Life of Jesse's tree as well. While self-righteous sinners assume that their conduct makes them pleasing to God, St. Paul is emphatic that we are saved only by Christ's life (Romans 5:10). With a peek ahead to next week's lesson, we see the evangelist St. John says of the Word made flesh that, from the beginning, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). As we focus on Christ's Baptism, we see an essential part of Christ's life on behalf of us sinners.

QUESTIONS

1. Whenever we encounter the name *Jesus*, what should come to mind? See Matthew 1:21–23. According to John 1:43–49, why is it so surprising that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee?
2. With the mention of the Jordan River, what event would come to mind for those familiar with the Old Testament, and how does this relate to Jesus' work? See Joshua 3:14–17. What are two other "saving" events in the Old Testament that occur at the Jordan, and what can we learn from them? See 2 Kings 2:11–14 and 5:9–10, 14.
3. What element of John's response to Jesus' desire to be baptized was perfectly reasonable, given what John knew of Jesus? See Matthew 3:11 and John 1:15. What does Jesus mean by saying that His Baptism was necessary to "fulfill all righteousness"? See Isaiah 53:11 and 2 Corinthians 5:20–21.
4. Instead of trying to unravel the mystery of the Holy Trinity, what does Jesus want us to do? See John 14:6–11, 26–27.

The Baptism of Jesus is a crucial moment in Jesus' life that reveals to us wonderful things about our life as those baptized into Him. In Baptism, God adopts us as His own, looks at us as His beloved children, unites us with Christ's death and resurrection, credits His righteousness to us and forgives all our sins, and promises us everlasting life. This is why Dr. Luther, in the Small Catechism on Daily Prayer, suggests that we begin and end each day with the sign of the cross and the words, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." By doing this, we remember who we belong to, who and how we have been redeemed, and who will accompany us day and night. Thanks be to God for the gifts of Holy Baptism!

Close with prayer.

CLOSING

Pray: Father in heaven, at the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River You proclaimed Him Your beloved Son and anointed Him with the Holy Spirit. Make all who are baptized in His name faithful in their calling as Your children and inheritors with Him of everlasting life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for the Baptism of Our Lord; *LSB Altar Book*, p. 567)