

Note: The following message will be shared by Reverend Caleb Kim this Sunday, September 20, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. for the congregation of St. Andrew's, Fenelon Falls, and our community on Zoom.

Title: The Relationship between Jesus' Baptism and Our Baptism

Today, we have a baptism in our worship service. One of the most significant events in the life of Christian parents is the presentation of their child for the sacrament of baptism. This morning, Hayveland Clayton will be presented for baptism. Before this sacrament takes place, I want us to explore the story of Jesus' baptism and reflect on our own baptism in Christ.

In our Gospel reading today, Matthew introduces us to John the Baptist just prior to the baptism of Jesus. In the wilderness of Judea, John preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Matthew 3:2). He baptized with water those who confessed their sins and sought to live fruitful lives before God. He also pointed them to Jesus, who would baptize them "with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11).

When Jesus came to the Jordan River to be baptized, John hesitated. He felt that Jesus should be baptizing him, not the other way around. We certainly understand John's hesitation. Baptism symbolizes the forgiveness of sins, and Jesus—being sinless—did not need to be cleansed. Yet, Jesus persuaded John to baptize Him to "fulfill all righteousness." As soon as Jesus was baptized and came up out of the water, the heavens opened, and the Spirit of God descended like a dove to rest upon Him. In that divine moment, God declared to everyone gathered there: "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). In Jesus' baptism, He is publicly identified as the beloved Son of God.

Now, consider what happens in the Kingdom of Heaven when we celebrate the sacrament of baptism today. Imagine a great company of our ancestors in faith gathered around the throne of Almighty God, witnessing the baptism of Hayveland. During this sacred sacrament, we can hear the voice of God saying, "This is my child, the beloved," spoken over Hayveland, over the Clayton, Nicholson, and Hicks families, and over all of us as a congregation.

At this point, some of us might wonder about the sacrament of baptism itself—specifically, whether it is designed for infants or adults. While there is no explicit command or verse about infant baptism in Scripture, we see that from the beginning of God's covenants, He addressed His promises to entitle households. For instance, when the jailer in the Book of Acts asked Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

they replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household” (Acts 16:29-31). The covenant grace extended to the home embraced the whole family.

What about the faith of a baby? Through Scripture, children are repeatedly blessed through the faith of their parents. Noah’s family was saved based on Noah’s faith in God (Genesis 6:18; 1 Peter 3:20). Abraham exercised faith on behalf of his descendants (Genesis 17:7-14). Moses was spared and blessed because of his parents’ faith (Exodus 2:1-10; Hebrews 11:23). In infant baptism, parents exercise faith and claim God’s covenant promise—the promise of salvation—on behalf of their child. Therefore, the sign of God’s grace is rightly administered to the child. As one theologian gently put it: “Understanding is not a prerequisite for a blessing. God blesses us not because we understand, but because He is gracious.”

Another question that often arises is mode: should baptism be done by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion? Some argue that because Jesus went down into the Jordan, immersion is the only valid form. Yet, when we examine the whole of Scripture, the imagery of pouring and sprinkling is deeply tied to God’s grace. The sprinkling of blood purified God’s people in the Old Covenant, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is described as water poured over us to cleanse us from sin (Acts 2:17-18; 1 Peter 1:2; Hebrews 9:19-22). The exact mode or quantity of water is not what gives the sacrament its power. What matters is the heart—the faith of the adult candidate, or the covenant commitment of the parents presenting their infant. Though Christians may differ on the outward form, we agree that baptism is a vital sign and seal of God’s grace.

In Romans 6:3-4, the Apostle Paul captures the profound reality of this sacrament: “Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Romans 6:3-4). Whether we fully grasp it or not, in our baptism we are spiritually united with Jesus. Through the fall of Adam and Eve, humanity inherited a sinful nature and a broken world. Apart from grace, we share in their mortality and separation from God (Genesis 3:19). But Paul reveals the incredible gift brought by Jesus Christ, our divine representative. When we repent and put our trust in Jesus—or, in the case of infants, as parents claim this faith on their behalf—we are united with Him in His death and brought to life in His resurrection. In baptism, “our old self” is crucified with Christ, and “our new life” begins. That is why we stand today to make baptismal vows—promising to renounce evil and turn wholeheartedly to Christ.

So, what is the ultimate connection between Jesus’ baptism and ours? Did we hear a physical voice thunder from heaven or see a visible dove descend at our baptisms?

Most of us did not. Yet, I believe that in every baptism, God declares over us: “This is my son, this is my daughter, whom I love.” Through baptism, we receive our true identity as God’s beloved children and the incredible privilege of being united with Christ.

Have you forgotten your spiritual identity? Today is the day to remember again who you are in God! The Apostle Paul echoes this divine truth in Ephesians 2:10: “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10). What a wonderful statement! You are God’s masterpiece!

We often estimate our worth by what we achieve or possess. But how is a masterpiece valued? It is valued by the reputation of the Artist who created it. The Psalmist tells us that humanity is the crown of God’s creation (Psalm 8). In Genesis, as God created the world step-by-step, He looked at the light, the land, and the stars, and said, “It was good” (Genesis 1:4,10,12,18,21,25). But when God created humanity on the sixth day, the text tells us he declared it “very good” (Genesis 1:31).

You are the crown of God’s creation. In God’s sight, you are precious and deeply valued—no matter what you look like, where you come from, or what your background may be. Your temporary circumstances do not define you. God has created you with care and purpose. You are worth far more than you realize because you are the work of the Master Artist, the Magnificent God.

As we prepare to celebrate this sacrament, let us ask ourselves: Do we live, think, and act as the beloved children of God? If we are honest, our answers are often mixed. Sometimes we walk closely with the Lord; other times, we struggle. One reason we face this battle is that we are in an ongoing spiritual conflict. The enemy attacks us by trying to deceive us about our true identity in Christ. He tempts us to define our worth by the world’s opinions rather than by God’s declaration.

Friends, today is a time to hear again what God speaks over you in your baptism: “You are my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased.” Let us remember who we are and to whom we belong. We are God’s beloved children, redeemed by Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit. As we witness these baptismal vows today, let us renew our own commitment to live as God’s masterpieces—instruments of His grace, building His Kingdom in our lives, our homes, our church, and our world. Amen.

*In this sermon, I have drawn some thoughts from various messages found in Matthew 3:1-17.