

The Deepest Sea

Mt 3:1-6

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. Several years ago a man named Myron was baptized in Lake Superior.
1. It was late October and about 9:00 PM.
 2. A preacher had been talking with Myron & his wife about being baptized for the remission of their sins.
 - a. Yet, Myron had been hesitant for a long time and then finally said, “Yes, I want to be baptized tonight—right now in Lake Superior.”
 - (1) In case you don't know—Lake Superior is **cold**.
 - (2) The average temperature all year is about 38 degrees.
 - b. This was late October and the gales of November had come early.
 - (1) The waves were running 3 feet high. The water was very cold.
 - (2) They were going to walk out waist deep into the water, but only made it about knee deep.
 - c. The preacher laid Myron down & the waves washed over him as he was baptized for the remission of his sins.
 3. They then went back to Myron's home for some hot cocoa & a hot soak for their cold feet.
 - a. The preacher then asked Myron was it was so important that he do this that night in Lake Superior.
 - b. His answer? “I was in the army, an officer in the infantry during Viet Nam. I saw & did things that no man should see or do. I wanted my sins buried in the deepest and coldest place”
- B. Because of our sinfulness, we need our sins buried in the deepest and coldest place.
1. Being in sin is a despicable, horrible experience. In Ephesians 2, Paul describes being in sin.
 - a. 2:1-3. Notice that those in sin are “dead” in their sins & they are “children of wrath,” ie., people upon whom God's wrath is coming.
 - b. 2:11-12. Notice here that those in sin are separated from Christ, alienated from God's people, without the promises of God, and without hope.
 2. Thankfully, our God desires to bury our sins in the deepest and coldest place.
 - a. In a time of judgment, Micah wrote, “He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities under foot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19).
 - b. This morning, we want to take a look at John's baptism to see parallels between the forgiveness God offered to the Jews & the forgiveness he offers us.
 - (1) We know there are great differences between John's baptism & the baptism of Jesus.
 - (a) Paul encountered twelve disciples in Ephesus who did not know that there was a Holy Spirit.
 - (b) Paul inquired & discovered that they had only been baptized with John's baptism. We then read: “Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord

Jesus” (Acts 19:4-5).

- (2) There are, however, several similarities between John's baptism & the baptism of Jesus.
 - (a) The greatest similarity is that both John's baptism & the baptism of Jesus are for the remission of sins.
 - i. “John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mk 1:4).
 - ii. At Pentecost, Peter explained the purpose of Christian baptism: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38).
 - (b) This morning, as we examine “The Deepest Sea,” we shall see other similarities.
 - (c) As we go to “The Deepest Sea,” we see that John's baptism was A BAPTISM OF PREACHING, A BAPTISM OF PENITENCE, A BAPTISM OF PROPHECY, A BAPTISM OF THE PUBLIC, & A BAPTISM OF PROFESSION.

II. A BAPTISM OF PREACHING, v 1.

- A. “In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea.”
- B. John's preaching preceded his baptism.
 1. Preaching is essential to baptism.
 - a. Paul makes quite clear that there can be no salvation without preaching.
 - (1) “How are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” (Rm 10:14).
 - (2) “It pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe” (1 Cor 10:21).
 - b. Because preaching precedes salvation, it makes perfect sense that John appeared preaching that the kingdom of God had drawn near.
 2. In this passage, preaching precedes salvation.
 - a. John appears in the wilderness preaching the kingdom of God & then the people of Jerusalem & all that region were coming out to be baptized by him.
 - b. It was only when the people heard of John's preaching that they went out to him.
- C. What does this text say to us this morning?
 1. If you have not yet been to “The Deepest Sea,” it is our earnest prayer that the preaching this morning pricks your heart & moves you to that “Deepest Sea.”
 2. However, this morning, most of us have been to that “Deepest Sea.” What can we learn from this passage?
 - a. We need more John the Baptists—people proclaiming the kingdom of God!
 - (1) We have already mentioned that without such proclamation people cannot be saved.
 - (2) Jesus taught us to pray for such individuals: “Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Mt 9:38).
 - b. Jesus expects us to be laborers in the Lord's harvest: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:20).
 - c. Are we leading others to “The Deepest Sea”?

III.A BAPTISM OF PENITENCE, v 2.

- A. “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
- B. There were many baptisms in the OT.
 - 1. Speaking of the OT sacrifices, the author of Hebrews writes: “According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation” (Heb 9:9-10).
 - 2. John's baptism differed significantly from those washings in that his baptism was a baptism of repentance.
 - a. John's message was the need for repentance in light of the kingdom of God.
 - b. His baptism was a baptism into repentance: “I baptize you with water for repentance” (Mt 3:11).
 - (1) The preposition “for” in Gr is the same preposition used in Acts 2:38 to explain the purpose of baptism as “for the remission of sins.”
 - (2) John's baptism, then, was in order for people to have repentance. John's baptism placed people into a state of repentance.
 - c. When one submitted to John's baptism, he publicly declared that he was repenting of his sin.
- C. Baptism into Christ is a public declaration that one is repenting of sin.
 - 1. Because of its very nature, repentance is a private & painful act.
 - 2. Yet, when we are baptized into Christ, we affirm to the world that we are turning our backs on a life of sin.
 - a. When the crowd at Pentecost asked Peter & the other apostles what they needed to do, Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38). It's not just baptism that is for the remission of sins—repentance is likewise necessary to have sins forgiven.
 - b. “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rm 6:3-4).
 - (1) Baptism is a very real re-enactment of Jesus' death, burial & resurrection.
 - (2) When we are baptized into Christ, we are turning our back on that old life of sin, burying it in the water, & we're being raised to a new & different life.

IV. A BAPTISM OF PROPHECY, v 3.

- A. “This is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.””
- B. While Matthew quotes from Isaiah, this entire passage flows from the Old Testament.
 - 1. John is preaching in the wilderness.
 - a. It seems odd to our modern culture for a preacher to gain a following in the wilderness. If I desire to tell the world of God's greatness, I'm not going to the middle of the Sahara Desert!
 - b. However, the people of John's day would have expected such a preacher in the wilderness.
 - (1) Speaking of Israel, God says, “Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt” (Hos

2:14-15).

- (2) The Jews of John's day believed the desert to be an appropriate place for prophets & messiahs.
2. Even though Matthew does not refer to John as Elijah until 11:14, this passage makes clear that John is the Elijah who was to come.
 - a. In 2 Kings 1, we have a description of Elijah's raiment: "He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist" (v 8).
 - b. John, in dressing like Elijah, points the Jews to the prophecies of the coming Messiah.
 3. John's baptism is, therefore, the fulfillment of prophecy.
- C. Christian baptism, like John's, is the fulfillment of the promises of God.
1. "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal 4:4-5).
 2. Notice that Scripture says that Jesus was born "when the fullness of time had come"--ie, when the time was right.
 - a. God had a great scheme of redemption he brought to pass through Jesus Christ.
 - b. When we submit to baptism, we are claiming that redemption God's Son brought forth for our own.

V. A BAPTISM OF THE PUBLIC, v 5.

- A. "Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him."
- B. The baptism of John was not for a select few.
 1. While it was only for the Jews, "Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan" were coming to be baptized.
 2. Every single Jew who was willing to repent could come to John for baptism.
- C. The baptism of Jesus is for every man & woman on the face of the earth.
 1. It matters not what nationality we are, Jesus' baptism is for us.
 - a. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19).
 - b. "In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one spirit" (1 Cor 12:13).
 2. It matters not what we have done, Jesus' baptism is for us.
 - a. There are many who feel they have been so evil that the blood of Jesus could never touch them.
 - b. Not so! Acts 2 makes that abundantly clear.
 - (1) Peter lays the blame for Jesus' crucifixion squarely at the feet of his audience: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom **you** crucified" (Acts 2:36).
 - (2) When those murderers of Jesus cried out for hope, Peter gave it to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38).
 3. Do you—whoever you are & whatever you've done—need to come & receive Jesus' baptism this morning?

VI. A BAPTISM OF PROFESSION, 6.

- A. "They were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins."
- B. Those who came to John confessed their specific sins as they were baptized.

- C. The NT makes no such demand on those who come to Jesus for baptism.
1. Instead of confessing sin, we verbally confess our faith in Jesus: “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rm 10:9).
 2. However, there is a very real sense in which we do confess our sins.
 - a. We don't stand before the congregation & give a list of the sins we've committed.
 - b. But, the very act of submitting to baptism is a confession of our sinfulness.
 - (1) Baptism removes sin: Ananias told Saul, “Now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16).
 - (2) If I have no sin, I don't need baptism.
 - (a) That is one reason—among others—that there is no need for infant baptism.
 - (b) Because infants have never sinned, they do not need to be baptized.
 - c. When I come to be baptized into Christ, I am—through my actions—proclaiming to the world that I am a sinner & that I desperately need the blood of Jesus.
 3. We all need to make that confession & have our sins removed, for we are all sinners.
 - a. “The godly has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among mankind; they all lie in wait for blood, and each hunts the other with a net” (Micah 7:2).
 - b. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 Jn 1:8).
 - c. There is no one here this morning—save the young children among us—who has not rebelled against God. All of us who have rebelled need the baptism of Jesus to remove our sin.
- D. In a tourist shop, someone once saw a button with the following statement: “To err is human, to forgive is out of the question.”
1. There is some truth in that statement when it comes to man & God.
 2. To err is human—we are going to sin.
 3. Without baptism, forgiveness is out of the question.
 - a. God stands ready to forgive. He sent his Son into this world to die for our sins. God has done everything he can to forgive you of your sins.
 - b. Have you been baptized into Christ in order to have your sins forgiven? Or, are you one of those who have never submitted to baptism & for whom forgiveness is out of the question?