



Jesus is Baptized/Definitions

8th Confirmation Class Lesson

Supplies Needed: Notebooks; Handout; Cards from the board game *Balderdash* (If you do not own *Balderdash*, you can use this website that lists 400 words rarely used or known in the English language: <http://phrontistery.info/clw1.html>. Take about 15 words and definitions and print the words out on a sheet of paper, then cut each word and definition onto its own slip and then you're all set!); 10 to 15 notecards per student; writing utensils; TV and DVD player; baptism clip from *O Brother Where Art Thou*; white board or easel and markers.

EXPLAIN OPENING ACTIVITY: Balderdash (the board game)

- The name of the opening activity is based on the board game, "Balderdash."
- The way it works is that one person will read the word from the card given to him/her and will also spell it out for us. This person is the "reader."
- We all write the word down on our note card and put our first name on the bottom of the card.
- Then we write our own definition for the word.
- While we are doing that, the Reader will be writing the REAL definition (found on the card they have) on their own notecard. Then all notecards are turned in to the Reader.
- The Reader then reads all the definitions without saying who wrote what definition. Then we go around and each person chooses the definition they think is the right one.
- You get 1 point for every person who chooses your definition, and you get 2 points for choosing the right definition. If you choose your own definition, you do not get a point for that. The Reader gets 3 points if no one chooses the right definition. You also get 3 points for writing a definition that is very close to the actual definition. I'll keep track of all points on the whiteboard/easel/piece of paper.

DO Balderdash Activity

TELL

- Can you imagine talking to someone who would be using these words?
- It might be pretty frustrating wouldn't it?
- What might be even more frustrating is if the person who might be using these words, might not necessarily know what they mean either, and are instead just making up their own definitions for the words.
- That would make communication even more difficult.
- This week, we're going to look at a story that has a number of words whose definitions and understandings have been changed (by the church, no less) during the last 2000 years.

OPENING PRAYER

REVIEW Challenge of the Week: What were some problems that you named and then invited God into this week?

REVIEW last few lessons

- When we follow Jesus there will be certain concepts that we will experience. In the last few classes, we've talked about the following experiences:
 - Abundance – When we follow Jesus, we experience the abundance of God's life through the Take, Bless, Break, Give pattern exhibited by Jesus.
 - Healing of unclean spirits (aka internal "stuff" that keeps us from being the truth of who we are) – By naming our problems to God, we are then better informed as to who to ask God and others for help (we can also ask God and others to help us better name our problems).
 - Physical healing – when we cry out for healing, when we tell God out loud that we need help and what we need help with, then – like Bartimaeus asking Jesus for mercy – we are placing ourselves in God's hands instead of the hands of those around us that may not be offering healing (like the crowd who told Bartimaeus to be quiet).

TRANSITION

- So we've been following Jesus around & have been talking about some stories that illustrate what is experienced when we follow Jesus.
- We're now shifting to Jesus stories that speak to how Jesus got to where he's at, rather than just what he did.
- In doing so, we'll also look at some theological words and concepts that we've probably heard before, but maybe haven't studied or thought much about before.
- We'll be starting with Jesus' starting point of his ministry: His baptism.

ASK

- Before we do that, we're going to be talking about some words that you've most likely heard before...let's do some more "Balderdash."
- I'll write down a word on the whiteboard/easel here and then ask you what you think it means. As you tell me your definition to the word, I'll write it down under the word.
 - What do you think "sin" means?
 - What do you think "baptism" means?
 - What do you think "repent" means?
 - What do you think "Kingdom of God" means?
- Let's read...

READ MT 3:1-6;13-17

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 2"Repent, for the kingdom of God has come near." 3This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" 4Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, 6and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

13Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. 14John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. 16And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the

heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

ASK

- In verse 2, what does John the Baptist tell the people to do? (Repent)
- What reason does John give for why the people should repent (Because the kingdom of God has come near)
- In verse 6, what do the people do to show their repentance? (they get baptized)
- So then what does Jesus do? (he gets baptized)
- Why do you think he gets baptized? (verse 15, Jesus says, it is proper and fulfills righteousness – righteousness means "right with God." Another perspective to ponder: Jesus is repenting....)
- After Jesus is baptized, what descends upon him? (God's Holy Spirit)
- If God's Holy Spirit was descending upon Jesus, does that mean it was *not* in/upon Jesus previously? Or is God being redundant? Or Jesus getting recharged? What do you think is happening here?
- What does the voice say? (this is my son, the beloved, with whom I am well-pleased)

TELL

Let's talk about some of the key words in this story.

- Surrender – This concept is implied and is not directly mentioned in the story. However, surrender is what allows this story to happen. Jesus surrenders to John, letting John baptize him.
- Kingdom of God - John the Baptist says "The Kingdom of God has come near." Jesus talks about the Kingdom of God (in Matthew, it gets translated as Kingdom of Heaven) all the time, especially in his parables. Jesus says that the Kingdom is at hand, which means nearby and soon. Jesus is not talking about a place where we go after we die. Jesus is talking about a way of life that is available for us right here and now when we live God's way, when we let God be king in our life. The Kingdom of God is wherever we let God be king.
- Baptism = *baptismo* (the Greek word for baptism) means to immerse, submerge or to wash/clean - what John the Baptist is doing is a new thing. Baptism was not something Israelites did as a religious activity. What they did do was go down to the river and "baptismo" their laundry. Notice that John is not baptizing babies to save their souls from hell. Baptism is an act that prepares the people to hear and receive Jesus and his ministry.
- In verse 6, the people confess their sins during the baptism event. The word, "confess" means to openly admit how one fell short or made a mistake.
- Sin = *Hamartia* in Greek. It means to miss the mark. It's an archery term.
- In the Old Testament (originally written in Hebrew) the word for sin in Hebrew is *khatta'ah* (root: *chata*) which means to miss the way/path or go the wrong way.
- In English, there are two meanings of sin. Capital 'S' Sin and lower case 's' sins. Capital 'S' Sin is a state of being – a state of separation from God.
 - Lower case "sin(s)" is the word used to define the acts that happen when we live separated from God. Uppercase sin causes lowercase sin, but its often lowercase sin that we think about (as English-speakers) when we hear the word. We usually equate it to, "bad behavior/actions."
- Before the people are baptized, though, John is calling the people to repent. The Greek word for repent is "*metanoia*." *Metanoia* means, simply, "To Turn Around." This is how baptism helps the people prepare for Jesus and his ministry. They turn around, face the right direction (which would

change their perspective, right?) - like a new start. Baptism symbolizes this new start. And then Jesus shows the people who are ready for a new start, how to precede, what to do next.

SHARE EXAMPLE

- Here is a modern day thought-experiment using these words that would be pretty similar to how the Israelites were hearing John the Baptist's message back in Jesus' day:

Imagine you are driving in your brand new car that has a GPS unit installed in it. Also imagine that you have different voices that you can choose from on the GPS. You choose the "John the Baptist" option.

Let's also imagine that you trust your GPS and listen to it. You surrender your thoughts of how to get to a destination (not an easy thing to do) and simply listen to John the Baptist's words on how to drive. However, one time, while you're driving, you start talking on your hands-free cell-phone device. When you miss your turn because you were distracted by the phone, John the Baptist tells you "You've missed the mark! You've sinned! Repent! Repent at the corner of [use two local well-known road names]!"

You say, "Oh no! Sorry I missed the turn. I confess I wasn't paying attention to you."

John the Baptist GPS says, "Recalculating." Then tells you where to go.

You then "re-surrender" to your GPS by following John the Baptist's instructions until you arrive at the correct destination (Jesus' ministry, which then leads you to the Kingdom of God).

TELL

- In verse 2, John says "the kingdom of God has come near."
- Then, when Jesus is baptized, the heavens open. Maybe when you hear this statement, you think of clouds parting (I do anyways). But another way to think of this statement is to think of the distance between this world and God's kingdom being eliminated when Jesus is baptized.
- What we see after Jesus' baptism is Jesus becoming a portal, an intersection between the Kingdom of God and this world. And it is at this moment when Jesus' work (ministry) begins – once he is filled with the Holy Spirit, then his healings, teachings, and wonders begin.

SNACK

Transition to movie clip:

- We're going to watch a video clip of a baptism.
- Then we'll compare and contrast what we've read and talked about with what we've just watched.
- We'll be watching *O Brother Where Art Thou* and in the scene the three characters have been on the run because they escaped from prison for stealing. And now they've happened upon a baptism scene.
- The smallest guy is named Delmer. Pete is the tallest and Ulysses Everett is played by George Clooney.
- Just a warning, there are some language issues – these issues are brief but, still, I apologize.

WATCH Movie Clip – O Brother Where Art Thou

TELL/ASK about the Movie

- The congregation is dressed and singing – expectant for their baptism. Do you think Israel came out to John singing?
- The person baptizing isn't much like John the Baptist is he? Yet there is something appealing about it for Delmer, isn't there? Why do you think it is appealing for Delmer?
- Is baptism (as you know it or as we're talking about it today) appealing to you?
- What happens after Delmer is baptized? (he confesses his sins.)
- And he does seem free, doesn't he, telling us about the Piggly Wiggly? And then Pete jumps in too – It's contagious! But why doesn't Ulysses Everett jump in? (Because he's got "other fish to fry.")
- In other words, Ulysses is focused on another destination, right? So he's choosing to not turn around (aka repent)...He's got a different perspective that will keep him from surrendering.

Summary (THE GOOD NEWS)

- Sin is separation from God
- God doesn't want us to be separate from God
- Sin is not permanent.
- Thus Jesus says, the Kingdom of God is at hand.
- John the Baptist and Jesus demonstrate ways we can address our separation from God: By naming the ways we miss the target of God, we can then turn around (repent) and try again.

CHALLENGE of the week

What are some ways you live in which you think you miss the target of God?

CLOSING PRAYER