

Sermon Title: The Beloved Son of God  
Scripture Text: Mark 1:9-11

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 12-17-17

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We have recently begun the Gospel According to Mark, and at first you might think, Wow, that's really brilliant to start a gospel just before Christmas, because we can study the birth of Christ—only, Mark doesn't mention it! That's not what his gospel was all about. We will, in our time next Lord's Day, look at something in Matthew or Luke at the actual birth of Christ, but today, a big event is before us in the Scriptures.

I remember when I was a kid and the new models of cars were revealed every year. Now, I know, nostalgia isn't what it used to be, but nevertheless, in those days that was a big deal. Some of you remember that. That was when car design actually changed from year to year, and you could tell them apart without a magnifying glass. There would always be one popular TV show sponsored by Ford and one sponsored by Chevy and one sponsored by Chrysler, and on those shows they would extend them about a half hour, and they would, at that key time in the fall, reveal what was their brand new models. It was a big deal. They built up lots of hype and suspense for weeks and they'd show a car underneath a tarp or something like that, and then they'd reveal it, and a certain amount of ceremony came with the new models finally being shown in public, and our family would gather around the TV set. Sometimes we'd have to endure the program that we otherwise wouldn't have watched, just to satisfy our curiosity and offer our critiques of the latest thing that was going to be on the street next month. Of course, the *real* critiques—the ones that mattered—came the next day at school, when you'd find out if you were really believing the right thing was "cool" or not.

Well, today we're going to look at a passage that describes something like that, but way more fantastic. Bigger, better—the most crucial unveiling of all human history so far. There's going to be a bigger one when He comes back, but today we're going to look at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus Christ. It is Mark's record of the moment that Jesus was unveiled in public to begin His three-year-plus ministry. Remember, Mark is validating his premise that he stated in Chapter 1, Verse 1, which is kind of like his title for this book: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." He's going to show us the inauguration of the earthly ministry of the King. Now, we're going to take it in three bites. We're going to ask the question, "Why was Jesus baptized?" and for that we're going to take a short side-trip to the Gospel According to Matthew. Then we're going to see Jesus comes to John, and the Father identifies the Son.

But we want to ask, "Why was Jesus baptized?" Now, we have the privilege of four Gospels to compare and to harmonize with each other. For his Roman audience, things did not matter that mattered in other situations, so Mark didn't include something that I think we do well to consider this morning as a supplement to our passage. So to get ready for Mark 1:9-11, let's look at Matthew 3:13-15. Matthew put it this way: "Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?' But Jesus answering said to him, 'Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he permitted Him" (NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted).

Now, John the Baptist, or, as the text literally describes him, "John the Baptizer," has been on the scene for several months, probably around six months. He is faithfully fulfilling his special

Sermon Title: The Beloved Son of God  
Scripture Text: Mark 1:9-11

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---

role as the forerunner of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. On the day that's recorded in this passage, he at last gets his chance to introduce his friends and his disciples to Jesus. This probably took place in the summer of A.D. 26. Jesus arrives and, frankly, I think He shocks John the Baptist by coming to him *to be baptized*. And the text specifically says He came "to be baptized by him." Now, Matthew doesn't give us a lot of specifics about when, he just uses the word "then." Mark simply says, "In those days" (vs. 9), referring to the days when John the Baptist was baptizing people every day out by the Jordan River. Jesus apparently arrived at the height of John's ministry.

Now, it's interesting that we're told He came from Galilee. Mark adds the detail that He "came from Nazareth in Galilee" (Mk. 1:9). Why is that significant? Well, that confirms to us that Jesus remained in the hometown of Joseph and Mary from childhood until He began His public ministry (see Matt. 2:23; Lk. 2:51). It says He "arrived" (Matt. 3:13). Now, there's a significant choice of words there—it's the same word that we've seen for the arrival of John the Baptist; it's the same word that you find in Matthew 2 for the arrival of the Wise Men, the Magi. It's the word that was often used to describe an official arrival or an important public appearance. And wow, is this one ever important!

Notice Jesus comes alone. Why? Well, He had no disciples before this time, and this took place, it says, "at the Jordan" (vs. 13). That's another nonspecific reference. John 1:28 says it was at "Bethany beyond the Jordan." Now, there's a couple of Bethanys—there's the one right outside of Jerusalem where Mary and Martha and Lazarus lived, and Jesus stayed when He was in Jerusalem, but this is a different Bethany. It's "Bethany beyond the Jordan." Now, "beyond the Jordan" would be from the frame of reference of Jerusalem, so probably, on the east side of the Jordan River, but archaeology has so far not been able to tell us the precise location of "Bethany beyond the Jordan." All we know is that it was somewhere between Jericho and the Dead Sea on the shore of the Jordan River. Obviously, you can get to heaven without knowing where "Bethany beyond the Jordan" is.

But He came "to be baptized by him" (Matt. 3:13). Jesus intentionally made sure that He connected the beginning of His ministry to the ministry of the Forerunner, John the Baptist. But when He got there, "John tried to prevent Him" (vs. 14). Now, that's not really a surprise, because John was careful to be faithful to his message. From his perspective, if he was baptizing people "as they confessed their sins" (vs. 6), well then, Jesus had no need to be baptized. So it's no surprise that his first response to Jesus wanting to be baptized was to resist it. It says he "tried to prevent Him" (vs. 14), and the word "prevent" is actually in the imperfect tense in the Greek, meaning that it went on a little while. John persisted for a while in trying not to baptize Jesus. I'm sure that there's a lot more to this conversation that took place between John and Jesus that is recorded. I can just picture Jesus coming to John, and John finds out who it is and says, "Now wait a minute, hold on! Sidebar!" And I can just see them going off and talking and I wish I could have heard that conversation. I know it took some explaining before John agreed to baptize Jesus. And he had a valid point: why would he baptize Jesus when he was the one who needed a Savior and Jesus was the Savior? Shouldn't it be the other way around?

Sermon Title: The Beloved Son of God  
Scripture Text: Mark 1:9-11

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---

There were two occasions when John resisted baptizing someone, but the reasons were very different. There's this time, where he doesn't want to baptize Jesus because Jesus is without sin. The other time, he didn't want to baptize the Pharisees and the Scribes and the Sadducees who came to him because they were flaming hypocrites! They weren't worthy of John's baptism, but John felt he certainly wasn't worthy to baptize the Son of God. He was a humble man.

And you can learn from his humility. On the one hand, he was the most important character to show up on the scene for over 400 years, and yet he immediately submitted himself to Christ. He knew his own sinfulness and he never thought of claiming to a position other than what God had wanted for him. And by the way, you realize that later on, Jesus would say no one has ever lived who is greater than John the Baptist (Matt. 11:11). So one of the great lessons of the Bible to learn is that, contrary to everything our world screams to us, greatness—spiritually speaking—begins with humility, and it never forgets it. Do you share the humility of John the Baptist? He first meets Jesus, and the first thing he has to do is have a theological argument with Him. "Why? Me baptize You?" He brought his question to the Lord, but he worked it through, and then he did the right thing. The summary of what convinced John to baptize Jesus is in Verse 15 of Matthew Chapter 3: "But Jesus answering said to him, 'Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he permitted Him." Now, the difficulty isn't in understanding the words, it's figuring out what He meant by them. "Permit it at this time"—well, it was the right time, that part we can figure out—"for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." There's an "us" there—Jesus and John together needed to do something, and it was described as "righteous."

A lot of suggestions have been made about what that means, to fulfill all righteousness, and some of them are pretty silly. Some have suggested that Jesus's baptism was an initiation into His role as a high priest. Now, that's really tempting for a preacher because I could get up and preach that and you'd say, "I never thought of that. Wow, is that guy smart!" Well, the reason you never thought of it is that you were looking at the Bible in front of you. There's nothing here about Him being a high priest! John wasn't a priest, anyway, and Hebrews explains that Jesus's priesthood was different and superior to the normal priesthood of His day (Heb. 7:1-28), and so that's obviously not it—that's just completely made-up. Some suggest that Jesus wanted to identify Himself with Gentiles by being baptized in the manner that a Gentile would have to be baptized in order to convert and become a Jew. Well, that's better—there's at least a kernel of truth in there, because the gospel is and always was for Gentiles as well as Jews (Is. 42:6; 49:6; Gal. 3:8), but it's still quite a stretch to find that in the text here. Still others say that Jesus was baptized by John to give His endorsement to John's authority as a prophet. Now, I'm going to give that one about a C-minus. I mean, at least there's *something* there—Jesus did say, "Let *us* fulfill all righteousness." He was connecting with John. He was including John in the plan that He was fulfilling, so that's closer, but it still means you have to read something into the text that isn't really there. Another idea is that Jesus wanted to be baptized vicariously for the sins of the world, so what He was doing when He was baptized by John was beginning the process of sin-bearing. Well, kind of plausible, but actually, Jesus started His suffering when He was *born* into a sin-cursed world 30 years before this. I don't think that's what the context means, either.

Sermon Title: The Beloved Son of God  
Scripture Text: Mark 1:9-11

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 12-17-17

---

But Jesus said it rather precisely, even if it's not immediately easy to understand: "In this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." He's saying that, for God's plan to be fulfilled, it was *necessary* for Him to be baptized by John the Baptist. Now, here's what's going on. First of all, Jesus is setting an example of obedience. Hebrews tells us that He learned from His own obedience (Heb. 5:8). John was included in this because it was "us." Both of them did what was required. There would be a later time in Jesus's ministry when He made it clear that He was not obligated to pay the poll tax to Caesar, but then He said to Peter, "But lest we give them an offense"—and He told Peter to go pay the tax for both of them (Matt. 17:24-27). Now, the cool part of that story is, "Catch a fish and then you'll find a coin for you and a coin for Me," God has not taken care of *my* taxes that way, yet. Maybe I should go fishing someday—I never fish. But what I'm saying is, Jesus set the example of obedience. The first act of His public ministry on earth was to identify with the prophet of God, His forerunner, and to identify with sinners. His first act was to show people that they were right to listen to John's preaching. They were right to confess their sins and to be baptized. He did it to "fulfill all righteousness," but face it, the confession part didn't take long—there wasn't any! It was purely an act of obedience. One day, He would go to the cross and it would become true what it says in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." You see, when you come to Christ, you get His righteousness credited to your account by faith (see Rom. 4:3, 23-24). So, He was committing an act of righteousness, it was part of the righteousness that you now have in Christ. He obeyed the Father.

A second reason I can see for Jesus being baptized is that baptism symbolized just what your baptism as a believer symbolizes: death and resurrection (Col. 2:12). So He was, in a sense, maybe pointing to where He was going. When you're baptized as a believer in Christ, you proclaim your identification with the death and resurrection of Christ on your behalf—you're buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him to newness of life (Rom. 6:3-5). So when Jesus was baptized, maybe He was showing that, from the very beginning, He understood that His purpose on earth was to die and to rise again, to pay the penalty for your sins so that you can be forgiven and have eternal life as a free gift from God and you can be credited with His righteousness (see Rom. 3:24-26).

But there's another important reason here. Jesus not only obeyed the Father by submitting to the cross and bearing your sins there (Is. 53:6, 10; Phil. 2:8), He not only forgives us our sins and cleanses us (1 Jn. 1:9), but He actively obeyed the Father perfectly in everything (Jn. 8:29) so that He has a perfect righteousness to credit to you. Let me show you a couple of cross-references to help you understand how significant it is that Jesus did righteousness. Philippians 3:9—Paul is saying, "that I may be found in Him"—listen carefully here—"not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith." You are *given* a righteousness. When you become a Christian, you don't get a "boost," you don't get "help," you get raised from the dead (Eph. 2:5-6)! You're brought to life. "You were dead in your trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). You had no righteousness—the *very best* that you could conjure up is, as far as worthiness in the sight of God is concerned, "filthy rags." Isaiah 64:6—"All of our"—and it's literally "righteousnesses"—every single thing you could do to try to earn

Sermon Title: The Beloved Son of God  
Scripture Text: Mark 1:9-11

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---

righteousness is worthless. You need something you can't come up with. That's why Romans 1:16-17 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by faith.' " Theologians call this "alien" righteousness. That's because it comes from outside you. It is alien to you, but you receive it as a gift. Contrast that to the self-righteousness of the system that the Pharisees had twisted the Old Testament into. Paul was writing about them when he says in Romans 10:3, "For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God."

That's what we need—the righteousness of God, and so Jesus says "it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Permit it at this time." And then in just four words—three Greek words—we have another lesson to learn from John. It says, "Then he permitted Him" (Matt. 3:15). Now, I doubt there's any possibility that John could fully comprehend the cosmic significance of it at that very moment, but he does show us the perfect example of what to do when the Word of God tells you what to do and it feels awkward to you—*obey*. Do the right thing. It's one of the favorite things I ever get to do—to baptize people as they proclaim their faith in Christ. I've done it somewhere in the hundreds of times. It's a very special thing. To be there with someone, and it's outside the routine, and you're there for one purpose and one purpose only—for them to declare their commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. Can you imagine holding the Son of God in your hands, and Him submitting to *you* at that moment? Can you imagine God choosing to use you to do something of that kind of eternal importance? And it was "to fulfill all righteousness" at that time. Why was Jesus baptized? To "fulfill all righteousness" at that time.

Secondly, let's move over to Mark now. Only three verses, Number 2 in our outline. Jesus comes to John, Mark 1:9—"In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan." So, a little different from Matthew. Matthew doesn't include the detail of Nazareth. Nazareth was called "Nazareth of the Gentiles." There were a lot of Gentiles there, and so Jesus came from this very obscure place that a lot of people wouldn't even have known of in the Roman world, and so Mark specifies it. And Mark just says He "was baptized by John." Matthew explains that He came *for the purpose* of being baptized so he could explain that little conversation that John and Jesus had. Now, we know from Luke Chapter 1—that's where you work your way through the miraculous pregnancies of John the Baptist's mom and dad, Elizabeth and Zacharias, and the virgin birth of Jesus Christ—we know from that chapter that Jesus and John were relatives. And since we know that Zacharias and Elizabeth—John the Baptist's parents—knew who Jesus was, and we know that they were told what John's role was going to be as the forerunner to the Messiah (Lk. 1:17), it's quite reasonable to assume that John's parents had explained this to him long before this day. They had 30 years to go over it and over it and over it, and make sure that he was ready.

But there's a lot of things that lead up to this that aren't explained in the Bible. For one thing, we don't know how well John knew Jesus before this. People hear that Jesus and John were relatives, probably like second cousins or something like that, so they picture them playing with their blocks as toddlers, or flying kites as little boys and playing and getting together on all their

Sermon Title: The Beloved Son of God  
Scripture Text: Mark 1:9-11

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 12-17-17

---

birthdays and the holidays and all of that. But this is the only place that we know of in the Bible that records John and Jesus being in the same place at the same time. We don't know how well John knew Jesus before this. So there are several unknown factors. Since Jesus grew up in Nazareth in Galilee, and John's father was a priest who served in the temple in Jerusalem, they lived about 75 miles away. Now, that's not really impossible for you to get your kids together with their cousins, but we're looking at a five-day walk, a five-day trip each way. So we just don't know if they had ever even met in person. How long did Zacharias continue his ministry as a priest in Jerusalem? Because, remember, the miraculous part of John's birth is that Zacharias and Elizabeth were well beyond childbearing age and had never had a child (Lk. 1:7, 18), and God allowed them to give birth to John. So, who knows if he retired. I suppose he could have moved to Nazareth, but we would have probably been told something like that, but, that would have had something to do with the possibility or likelihood—or unlikelihood—of contact between Jesus and John.

We also don't know how long John had been out there in the desert. He may have been there for years. I mean, he had a routine, he had a lifestyle, he knew all the ways to cook locusts and wild honey, and he knew that area. He might have been there for some time before he began his preaching and teaching ministry. Luke 3:2 says it was there that the word of the Lord came to him, so it implies that he was already there, *then* he was given the word about what to do and preach. Did God give direct revelation to John about when Jesus would arrive? We don't know—it would *appear* so from the text, but it could be that Jesus just came up and introduced Himself to John before this public appearance. Did God give direct revelation to John about what was going to become of him *after* Jesus had arrived? It's interesting—John didn't just shut down his operation and become the first disciple of Jesus after he baptized Him. John continued his ministry. That's curious, but he continued preparing people for the Savior as Jesus's ministry got started (see Jn. 1:35-37; 3:22-30). And we don't know that John was told what was going to become of him. It wasn't so wonderful. We're going to see more about that as we travel through Mark.

So why was Jesus baptized? He came to do it "to fulfill all righteousness," and then, secondly, He comes to John—we see that in Chapter 1, Verse 9, and now the final two verses for the day: the Father identifies the Son. Look at these three verses together. This is all that Mark says about it. "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: 'You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.' " So Mark's just matter-of-fact about it—He was baptized. John put Jesus under the water and he brought Him up again.

And in case there's any lingering doubt in your mind, that's what the word "baptize" means. It means to "immerse"—to place under and to pull out again. It's a word that's used in secular Greek for washing dishes. If you only sprinkle your dishes, let me know—I'll bring my own when you invite me over to dinner. For all the debate over all the years concerning the meaning of "baptize," the meaning of the word is absolutely indisputable. The confusion is the creation of man, and there's a complicating factor, because the word "baptize" in English is not a translation. Even before the King James Bible, the word had been confused in translations

Sermon Title: The Beloved Son of God  
Scripture Text: Mark 1:9-11

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 12-17-17

---

into Latin, and then when it was brought over into English, it's not a translation of the meaning, because the meaning is "immerse," or "dip." But they brought the word over by transliteration—letter by letter from one alphabet to the other. The Greek word is *baptizo*, and rather than translating it "immerse"—and there's some fanciful stories about why the translators of the King James did not translate it, because they knew full well what it meant... we won't go into that—but it just got transliterated, and so that means that you could apply interpretations other than what it actually means. But there's an indication of the proper mode of baptism right here. Notice it says Jesus was "immediately"—and they teach you that in seminary: *bring them up immediately*; there's been some I've been tempted to hold under for that confession of sin part—never have done it! Okay, "immediately"—look what it says—"coming up out of the water" (vs. 10). You don't come up unless you're down. You don't come out unless you're in, okay? It's no question what baptism means.

But here comes the miracle. He was "coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening." Don't you wonder what it looked like? Mark used the most dramatic of all the words to describe this. He says, literally, "He saw the heavens *ripped open*," just torn open—I can hear the Velcro or the fabric tearing. The same word is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament when Ezekiel describes something similar in Ezekiel Chapter 1, and when he saw the heavens ripped open, he saw a vision of God, including four living creatures—angels, which show up again in Revelation; he saw a chariot and the wheels in the sky. When Stephen was being stoned, just before he died, *he* saw the heavens ripped open, and in his case, he saw "the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). So apparently when God decides to rip open the heavens and let you see something, you see precisely whatever He wants you to see at that moment.

Now, in this case, it doesn't say anything about what He saw. It just says "He saw the heavens opening," and the only thing He saw wasn't something *in heaven*, it was something *coming from* heaven. It was "the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him." Now, we do know from John 1:33 that God *had* told John—and that's why I think John did have some other special revelation about all this stuff—but, John had been told that when he saw this, that would be his confirmation of the arrival of the Son of God. And that text does help us, by the way, lean toward thinking that John and Jesus probably *hadn't* seen each other, at least for a very long time, maybe never, if John needed this to verify that that was the Messiah.

Now, notice this phrase, "as a dove." This is some sort of a visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit. And by the way, this is the only instance in which the Holy Spirit is represented as a dove—unless you count about a zillion bumper stickers and websites and television programs and Bible covers and tee-shirts and assorted other "holy hardware" that we have today. My friends, I hate to burst anybody's bubble—the Holy Spirit is not a dove, alright? And it doesn't even say that He descended *in the form of* a dove. It says His descent was "like a dove descending." Whatever John saw, his way of describing it, or the way of the witnesses of describing, it says, when it landed on Jesus, it looked kind of like a dove landing on a perch. So don't go weird about the Holy Spirit and doves. This visible representation descended and came to rest upon Him, looking kind of like a dove that descends on a perch. That's all we can say about it.

Sermon Title: The Beloved Son of God  
Scripture Text: Mark 1:9-11

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 12-17-17

---

But, a much more important question is, why the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus. Wasn't He God? Yes. Well, how does God come upon God? Okay, I'll admit there's a little element of mystery here, but one explanation—and this is a terrible one, by the way, but I mention it because it got a lot of traction in the first and second century—it's the heresy of the group called the "Gnostics." They were starting kind of by the close of the New Testament, and then they took full bloom in the early second century. They taught that Jesus was born merely as a man, and they said that at the moment of His baptism, this *very special* man, this *spiritually-enlightened* man—but only a man, nevertheless—at the moment of His baptism, the "Christ-Spirit" came upon Him, and He, at that moment, *became* Jesus the Christ. In other words, He was not *born* Jesus Christ, but at His baptism His last name got changed to Christ. They're saying that's when He *became* the Christ, and then they further explain that the Spirit left Him just prior to His crucifixion. Now, that's pure theological baloney, and many New Testament texts refute that belief (see Matt. 1:18; Lk. 1:35; Heb. 9:14).

But here's what was happening. Remember, Jesus was born fully God (Jn. 8:58; Col. 2:9) and fully human (Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:14). He took on humanity—He was with the Father from eternity past (Jn. 17:5; see Mic. 5:2)—He took on humanity in order to die for the sins of mankind (Heb. 2:17). Those who had seen Him in those first 30 years had no problem understanding: He's human. He is "the man" (Jn. 19:5). And so they had no problem with knowing that He is human, but now they have this visible representation of the Holy Spirit coming upon the man Jesus to demonstrate that the man was, indeed, God. He is, indeed, sent by God. He is, indeed, God Himself. The humanness of Jesus was constantly empowered and enabled by the work of the Spirit of God. Everything Jesus did, He did by the power of the Holy Spirit, and He says as much in plain language many times (Matt. 12:28; see Lk. 4:14,18; Ac. 10:38).

Now, the second part of this is way better. Not just the visual aid of the "like a dove descending" on Jesus; the second part of the miracle is the voice of God the Father. You see it there? "And a voice came out of the heavens" (vs. 11)—two things pop out of heaven: the Holy Spirit descending in the manner of a dove, and the voice of the Father—"You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." I'll give you another really quick little side-trip here. Mark and Luke record what we just said, from Mark 1:11. Matthew has it differently. Mark and Luke say, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased"; Matthew says, "This is My beloved Son, in *whom* I am well-pleased" (Matt. 3:17). So Matthew's is in the third person, Mark and Luke use the second person. This is one of those cases where unbelievers like to jump on you and say, "Aha! There's a contradiction in the Bible!" But, it's not a contradiction. It would be a contradiction if the message of the two passages was different, but it's not. The answer for how to harmonize these isn't difficult. It seems that Mark and Luke probably quoted the exact words, and Matthew recorded an inspired explanation. They're both inspired. If I was giving a lecture and you were taking notes on the lecture and we compared everybody's notes afterward, would they be identical? Of course not, but unless you were falling asleep, they would all say the same thing. So Matthew explained the importance of what happened, Mark and Luke quoted what was said. Now, if one of them said, "You are My Son" and another one said, "You are *all* My sons," we'd have a contradiction, right? Or, if one of them said "This is My Son who will soon learn how to please Me," we would have a genuine contradiction.



Sermon Title: The Beloved Son of God  
Scripture Text: Mark 1:9-11

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 12-17-17

---

Far more important is the fact that this is a great passage on the Trinity! All three members of the Trinity were present and participated in Jesus's baptism. Imagine John seeing this! I mean, did he let go of Him before the Spirit—was it like a *Taser* when the Spirit came on Him? Who knows? It's the public inauguration of the ministry of Jesus Christ, clearly the work of God. Jesus, the man, came up out of the water; the Holy Spirit, the Spirit, descended from heaven in visual form; the voice of the Father in heaven proclaims His pleasure and His love for the Son in the water. Now, would you like me to explain the Trinity to you? Well, just read through the New Testament and submit your questions—we'll talk about it. But, we know—and here is an illustration—that God is one God (Dt. 4:35), one essence, who exists eternally in three distinct Persons (1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 3:17-18). The Father is God, the Spirit is God, the Son is God, but the Son is not the Father, the Father is not the Spirit, the Spirit is not the Son.

It's a great illustration of the Trinity, and it's a great illustration of what's horribly wrong with the people who—a lot of them are called "Jesus Only" theology—that say that, "No, it's three different modes: sometimes the Son, sometimes the Father, sometimes the Holy Spirit." That was a heresy called Modalism a long time ago. Now, it's called "Jesus Only Pentecostalism" (a.k.a. "Oneness Pentecostalism"). It is a *blasphemous corruption* of the very nature of the existence of God! It's not *Christian*, it's *Anti-Christian*, totally non-biblical, and you don't need any more passages than this one to know that, but there are many more (see Is. 48:16; Matt. 22:43-44; 28:19; Lk. 10:21; 2 Cor. 13:14; Heb. 9:14; Acts 20:28 with 1 Pet. 1:2).

But I want to get out of the thinking of way back then. I want to get out of the thinking of, "What's the theology of this?" and think about, "Why is it here for us?" Mark's whole purpose—this is "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"—so you and I need to understand what is the "good news" that is here. Well, you're not John the Baptist. You are not a special prophet of God. You were not predicted in the Old Testament. There are not government leaders about to kill you because of your message, at least not *just* yet. They may be *coming*. But, you know what? You are a messenger of God. God *does* desire to use you to spread the gospel, just as certainly as John the Baptist spoke his message. Long before you were born, long before you heard the gospel, long before you could ever confess your sins—long before you even had a chance to commit any of them—Jesus had already lived a perfect, sinless life, and then He went to the cross to bear your sins (see Gal. 2:20). That fact—that He participated in the baptism of John the Baptist to "fulfill all righteousness"—means everything. You don't *just* have the forgiveness, you have His righteousness.

I already alluded to this passage, but look at it with one more verse attached. 2 Corinthians 5:20-21—"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ"—now, an ambassador represents a government on some other government's soil, alright? We belong to the "kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. 1:13, KJV)—"we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." You wouldn't need to be reconciled unless you were alienated, and you are alienated because of your sin (Is. 59:2; Col. 1:21). So he goes on to say, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf"—that's Him bearing your sins on the cross—"so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." How can that happen? Only if you are *gifted* that righteousness (see Rom. 3:24; 5:15, 19; Phil. 3:9). This is a big deal.

Sermon Title: The Beloved Son of God  
Scripture Text: Mark 1:9-11

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 12-17-17

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Yeah, we got here just before Christmas, and Mark was already sold out of angels and shepherds and wise men and all of that. That message isn't here, but, do you want to really celebrate the arrival of the Savior? Then if you have contact with *anyone*, anyone who doesn't yet openly proclaim "Jesus Christ is my Lord," then the very best thing you can do for Christmas is, *beg* them to be reconciled to God (Acts 10:42; 17:30; Rom. 5:1). *Beg them!* Why? Because it's the difference between the lake of fire and the new heaven and the new earth (Mk. 16:16; Jn. 3:18, 36; Rev. 21:8). This, my friends, was just the beginning unveiling, and He did it to "fulfill all righteousness" at that point. And we've got 15 more chapters to go.

Are you in love with the beloved Son of God? Let's pray.

*Our Father, thank You for Your Son, in whom You are well-pleased. We try to wrap our minds around the fact that, in Him, You are well-pleased with us, all because of Your grace and His righteousness. So have Your way with us, Father. Please, in these special days that come around just one a year when people will openly speak of Your Son, please, teach us to, in love, speak truth and to beg people to be reconciled by what You've accomplished. Have Your way with us to that end, for Your glory, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

END OF AUDIO