

Jesus' Baptism of Repentance

Mark 1:9-11

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This morning, as you already have heard, we intend to celebrate the Lord's Table together.

How exactly are we to prepare ourselves to take of the Lord's Table? Well, in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul reminds us that we are to first judge our own sins. Because if we fail to do so, if we come with unconfessed, unjudged, unrepented of sins, then we invite the discipline of Christ into our lives because "we eat and drink," as he says there, "in an unworthy way." And so, we are to confess our sins from a heart of repentance.

Now the moment I say that, if you're honest with your own soul, then you have to, like me, be a little uneasy about our own repentance. Because I think we intuitively sense the truth of what one Puritan once well said, and that is, "Even our repentance needs to be repented of." Our Lord, as we just read here in Mark 1, was baptized with what is called the baptism of repentance. And so I thought, as we prepare our hearts this morning to take the Lord's Table, there's no better place for us to turn because of what we can learn here about repentance from our Lord's own baptism.

Now Jesus' baptism is obviously very important. It is referred to and mentioned in all four of the gospels. It's part of the criteria in Acts 1 for those who would be Judas' replacement. They have to have been with Jesus from His baptism. Mark here, in verses 9 through 11, records this monumental event in the life of Christ, and he does so in two parts. In verse 9 we're exposed to the human part of it, and that is the baptism of Jesus by John. And then in verses 10 through 11 we're exposed to the divine part, and that is the testimony to Jesus by God.

So let's examine both of these important parts of the baptism of our Lord as it's recorded here in Mark's gospel. First of all, let's consider the baptism of Jesus by John in verse 9, "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan." Now "those days" obviously refers back to what we just read a moment ago in the previous verses, beginning in verse 5, it's when all of Judea and all of Jerusalem was streaming out to John to be baptized. It was the height of John's popularity, the height of his ministry. In fact, Luke puts it

this way in Luke 3:21, “when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized.” Verse 9 here says, “In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Now the reason that’s important is because it marks a change in the life of our Lord. All that has preceded this event are 30 silent years, 30 silent years when Jesus lived in a small backwater town of about 500 people. It’s where He had lived His entire life from a young age. And you’ll remember that for more than 10 years prior to this event, maybe 10 to 15 years, sometime after the appearance at the temple when He was 12, His father Joseph had died, and so Jesus became responsible, as the oldest Jewish male, for the rest of the family. He had led the family. He had run the family business, working as a carpenter. That’s why in the gospels He’s called the carpenter. It was in those days, as John was at the very height of his ministry, in those days when Jesus had lived in silent obscurity for 30 years, that “He came from Nazareth in Galilee,” verse 9 says, “and was baptized by John in the Jordan.”

Now, if you have been connected to the Christian faith any time at all, you read that and I’m afraid you missed the importance of it entirely. Most people have no idea why Jesus was baptized or what this baptism was about, so we need to look at the context. The background, the very important background for Jesus’ baptism occurs back in verse 4, “John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness.” Now we learned from Luke’s gospel that John was the only child of an elderly couple, a priest named Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth. Elizabeth was a relative of Mary, Jesus’ mother. John was, we learn in Luke 1, six months older than Christ. He was conceived six months before Jesus was. We learn from Luke’s gospel that Jesus began His ministry about the age of 30. That means, of course, John began his ministry about the age of 30 as well.

I’m not going to take you through all the argumentation, there are two views of when Christ died in the timeline of His life. One is that He died in 30 A.D., the other that He died in 33 A.D. And I’m not going to sort of build all that. I do believe that it was in the year 30 A.D. Now, if that’s true, then Jesus began His ministry in the year 26 A.D. and John probably did in the spring of 26 A.D. He appeared in the wilderness we’re told here, Matthew tells us it was the wilderness of Judea. If you’ve visited Israel you know what this is like. It’s the rugged land that is west of the Jordan and the Dead Sea, extending up toward Jerusalem. It is a barren,

rugged, dry land without trees. It was in that kind of land, down near the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.

Verse 4 goes on to say, “he appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” Now there’s a lot in the last part of verse 4. First of all, we see his method was preaching. The Greek word is *kerusso*. It means to proclaim as a herald. In other words, John’s ministry was exactly the same as Jesus’ ministry; Jesus came preaching. And what was he preaching? He was preaching an inward requirement, notice, “of repentance.” In fact, in Matthew’s gospel chapter 3 verses 1 and 2 it says, “John came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” The kingdom of the Messiah is almost here. Repent, turn from your sins. His preaching then was about the need for repentance.

The Greek word for repentance describes a change of mind and heart, but listen carefully, a change of mind and heart that is so radical that it leads to a change in life. In fact, if you doubt that, read Luke 3, for example, verses 10 through 14, where John the Baptist says, look, if you’re repentant, let me tell you what that looks like in life, and he demands a series of changes in the lives of those who came to be baptized by him. So this isn’t talk. Real repentance is a willingness to make real changes. This is what he preached.

Now, the outward sign of that repentance, you’ll notice in verse 4, was “a baptism of repentance,” “a baptism of repentance.” The word baptism is simply a Greek word that means immersion, to submerge in water, to plunge into water. Now the concept of submerging in water was not new to first century Judaism. In fact, they did it often. The Jews required numerous ritual washings. Again, if you were to visit Israel you would find that they’ve discovered hundreds of *mikvehs*, that is, ritual immersion baths near the temple so that as you went up to worship in the temple, you would immerse yourself in these pools, some of them small and private, one person at a time, others of them large and encompassing many people. And you would have submerged yourself to ritually cleanse yourself before you went to worship.

Now that happened often, but what John was doing only happened once. So the background for John’s baptism was not these ritual washings. Instead, the background for John’s baptism was

proselyte baptism. If you were a Gentile in the first century and you wanted to become a true proselyte to Judaism, with full standing as a member of the Jewish community, you had to do three things. First of all, you had to do what was called *corban*. That is, you had to make a sacrifice, a burnt offering to God. Secondly, you had to do what was called *milah*. If you were a man that was circumcision. And then thirdly, *tevilah*, which was baptism. Baptism was essential, male or female. And it was really the, sort of, crowning act by which you became a member of the Jewish nation as a proselyte.

Now, first century sources describe what was involved in this. There were three witnesses of your baptism. Ordinarily, they were members of the Sanhedrin. A person who was going to be baptized cut his nails and his hair and undressed completely, made the confession of his faith in the God of Israel, and then immersed his body completely in the water so that every body part was touched by or beneath the water. Women were, of course, attended by women. But the rabbis, this was so serious that the rabbis would stay just outside the door where they could hear the confession, they could hear the water, to make sure that this person was genuine and serious about this commitment. Now, as a person who wanted to become a Jewish proselyte stepped out of the waters of the baptism, in the language of the rabbis, he was “a child of one day.” This wasn’t spiritual renewal. Instead, it was as if you were beginning your life again. And now, not as a pagan who embraced the idols of the nations around, but as one who had come to believe in the true God of Israel.

It was into the background of that proselyte baptism that John came. John’s baptism was a proselyte baptism, not for Gentiles, but for Jews. It was a baptism of repentance. John was in effect, saying this: The Messiah is coming. I’m here to announce Him. He’s soon to be with us. You need to prepare for His kingdom. But even though you are Jewish, you are just as far from God as the Gentiles. You’re not prepared at all for Messiah’s coming. The only way for you to prepare is to renounce your sin and to acknowledge how desperately far you are from God. And you need to go through what’s really proselyte baptism. You need to essentially act like you’re not a Jew and say, I’m no better than a Gentile, I want to prepare.

The Jews did it to show that a Gentile was repudiating his old life and becoming attached to Israel’s God. John did the same thing, but to Jews, because they needed it just as desperately to

prepare for the coming of the Messiah, whom He was announcing. It had to be accompanied by genuine repentance. In fact, he only baptized those who were already repentant. But as they were baptized, notice what it says they were doing, they were “confessing their sins.” The spiritual result of this, notice verse 4, was “the forgiveness of sins.”

Now don’t misunderstand, it wasn’t that the act of baptism accomplished forgiveness. As D. Edmund Hebert writes, “The physical rite itself did not produce the spiritual result. But submission to the baptism as the outward testimony of personal repentance was the condition for receiving the divine forgiveness.” Ultimately, the divine forgiveness was predicated on true heart repentance, and that repentance was evidenced by the public act of proselyte baptism, saying, I am desperately in need of forgiveness, I’m as far from God as the Gentiles, I want to prepare for Messiah’s coming.

Now folks, that is the context for Jesus’ baptism. Go down to verse 9, “In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.” Jesus came to John to be baptized with a proselyte baptism, “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” Now stay with me, don’t think I’m a heretic here, this is what the text says, we’re going to get there. But I want you to get the point. This is the baptism that Jesus came to be baptized with.

Now, before John actually baptizes Jesus as it’s described here in verse 9, there was an important interchange that took place. Go back to Matthew 3, Matthew 3, and there Matthew tells us what happened. Verse 13,

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?”

So, before the baptism Jesus shows up and John says, no, I’m not going to baptize You.

Now, why would John refused to baptize Jesus? Understand that John already knew Jesus. He was His cousin. And yet he didn’t know Him to be the Messiah, according to John 1:33, until He was baptized. John 1:33 says, “I did not recognize Him,” that is, as Messiah, “but He who sent me to baptize in water,” that is, God, “said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’”

So, there are two possibilities here as to why John refused to baptize Jesus. One of them was that he still didn't know Jesus was the Messiah before the baptism; he didn't know until after Jesus was baptized and the Spirit came down upon Him. In which case, he's still refusing Him. Why? He says, "I need to be baptized by You." So, if this is true, then what John is saying is this, listen, I know You, You're my cousin, and I know You to be a far holier man than I am. That's one possibility. The other, and many commentators would say that at some point there in that whole interchange, even before the baptism, God made it obvious to John that Jesus, his cousin, was, in fact, the Messiah, and therefore he refused and said, no, I shouldn't be baptizing You, You should be baptizing me.

Regardless, I want you to notice verse 15, "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." So John baptized Jesus. We're going to come back to Jesus' answer in just a few minutes, but go back to Mark 1:9 and again look at how Mark puts it, "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan." In those simple straightforward words, Mark describes one of the most important events in Jesus' life. Jesus was baptized. He was immersed. He was plunged into the Jordan river in John's baptism of repentance, proselyte baptism for Jews, to prepare for the coming of Messiah. That's the baptism of Jesus by John.

Now that brings us to the second part of this passage, in verses 10 and 11, the testimony to Jesus by God. We've seen the human side, the actual event, now we see God's testimony to what's happening here. Verse 10, "Immediately coming up out of the water," that reinforces the idea that both Jesus and John had been in the Jordan and that John had plunged Jesus beneath the water. And Luke tells us that as Jesus was coming up out of the water, "He was praying." And as He was praying, three dramatic things occurred. The heavens opened above Him, the Spirit of God descended onto Him, and the voice of God spoke to Him.

Now the reason those things are important is because in Jewish thinking all three of those would be true of the Messiah. There's a document written 200 years before Christ called the Testament of Levi. It's not a biblical document at all, but listen to the Jewish expectation, "The heavens will be opened, and from the temple of glory, sanctification will come upon him with a fatherly voice, as from Abraham to Isaac, and the glory of the most high shall burst forth upon

him, and the spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him.” My point in reading that is saying that was what was in the Jewish mind and thinking when they thought about Messiah coming.

So in light of that, let’s look then at these three signs. First of all, we’re told that the heavens opened above Him. Verse 10, “He saw the heavens opening.” He is Jesus. Matthew tells us John also saw. And since Jesus was baptized when everybody else was being baptized, then there were probably others who witnessed this as well. The Greek word that’s translated opening is the word from which we get our English word schism. It means to divide or to tear. Jesus and John, and probably the others who were there, saw the heavens torn open. Mark uses this word in two places, here at Jesus’ baptism for the skies being torn open and the other place is in chapter 15 at Jesus’ death, when the veil in the temple is torn. Both of them supernatural events designed to serve as supernatural testimony to Jesus as the Son of God. In one case, God tore the heavens. In another case, He tore the veil before the holy of holies. The heavens opened above Him.

The second significant sign that occurred is the Spirit descended into Him, the Spirit descended into Him. Notice what Mark says in verse 10, “Immediately coming up out of the water, Jesus saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him.” Now there’s something strange about that. Notice, He saw the Spirit. Now, a spirit, by definition, is invisible, right? I mean, you don’t see a spirit, it’s a spirit. In John 3 Jesus says the Spirit is like the wind. You don’t see the Spirit, you simply see the effects, the results of the Spirit’s presence. So the Spirit was invisible. And yet here He saw the Spirit. The Spirit could have descended on Jesus without being seen. The same thing could have happened with no visible indication whatsoever. But all three synoptics make a point of telling us that the Spirit manifested Himself in a visible form. The accounts say He descended as or like a dove.

Now there are two possibilities for what that means. One of them is He descended like a dove in manner. That is, He hovered over Jesus, like that picture of the Spirit in Genesis 1 hovering over the waters in creation. That’s one possibility. I don’t think that’s the correct one though. The other one is that He was like a dove in shape or form. In other words, the Holy Spirit took on the appearance of a dove. I think that is to be preferred because of how Luke describes it in

Luke 3:22, “the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove.” In other words, the Holy Spirit descended from heaven in a visual image resembling a dove.

Now, obviously He appeared visibly for everybody else to understand certain things. The question is, why? Why did the Spirit appear on this occasion? First of all, He appeared to testify to who Jesus was. We know that because, remember, John was told, you’ll know it’s the Messiah when you see the Spirit descending on him like a dove, John 1. So, the Spirit’s descent identified Jesus for who He really was, He was the Messiah, the Son of God.

Secondly, the Spirit appeared to empower Jesus for ministry. Mark literally says, “the Spirit descended into Him.” John 1 describes it as “remaining on Him.” The Holy Spirit lighted on Him, remained on Him, and rested on Him. Why? Well, in the Old Testament the Spirit of God rested on men to give them power for their assigned roles. Mostly it was for kings, for priests, and prophets. Well, you’ll remember that the Messiah was to fulfill all three of those roles. He was to be a king, a priest, and a prophet. And so, the Spirit prophesied in the Old Testament that He, the Spirit of God, would rest on the Messiah in a unique way. Isaiah 11:2, “The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,” speaking of the Messiah. Isaiah 42:1, God says, “Behold, My Servant, My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him.” Isaiah 61:1, here the Messiah Himself is speaking and He says, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me.” So the Holy Spirit came to empower Jesus for ministry.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit came to initiate Jesus’ ministry. It’s interesting in Acts 1, when they’re talking about replacing Judas, they say it has to be somebody who was with Jesus and saw Him from His baptism. Why? Because that marked the initiation of His ministry. Jesus’ ministry officially began with this public act, so “the Holy Spirit descended into Him.”

There’s a third dramatic sign that took place that day, and that is the voice of God spoke to Him. Verse 11, “and a voice came out of the heavens: ‘You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.’” I think we get the idea that God spoke audibly from heaven all the time in Scripture. The truth is, that’s not right. Look in the Old Testament and you’ll see just a handful of times when God audibly spoke. In the New Testament, only three times during the ministry of Jesus did God speak audibly, once at Jesus’ baptism, at His transfiguration, and then John 12 tells us,

during the passion week. In those times, only those who truly believed not only heard the voice but understood the voice, according to John 12. So here is one of three times during the ministry of Jesus that God audibly speaks from heaven.

Now, we know it's God the Father, because the voice comes from heaven, it refers to Jesus as the Son, and the other members of the trinity are already present in this scene, you have Jesus and you have the Holy Spirit descending like a dove. Mark and Luke says the voice spoke to Jesus, "You are My Son." Matthew says the voice spoke to John and probably to the others who were there, "This is My Son." Why? Because Matthew understood that this wasn't happening primarily for Jesus. On another occasion, Jesus explained in John 12:30, this was during the passion week, God spoke from heaven and "Jesus answered and said, 'This voice has not come for my sake, but for yours.'"

At Jesus' baptism, God spoke to Jesus, but clearly not primarily for Jesus, but for others. Why? I love the way R.T. France puts it, he says, "This voice comes out of the heavens, and the words spoken leave no room for doubt that the speaker is God Himself. These words are, therefore, of the highest importance. Whatever the verdicts, which people in Mark's gospel may reach on the question of who Jesus is, the reader is left with no option when the identity of Jesus is declared explicitly from the highest possible authority." In other words, when you hear God speak from heaven, and say, "This is My Son," there's not a lot of question left.

Now notice what the Father said to Christ. First of all, He said, "You are My beloved Son." Beloved here is used obviously not only in the sense of love, I think, but in the sense of my special son, my unique son, which is, by the way, what "only begotten" means. That expression gets in the way of a lot of people. It simply means one of a kind, unique son, my special son. Jesus has a unique relationship to God. This goes to His identity. He is God's special, unique, only Son in this way.

Most agree that this expression that the Father uses here comes from Psalm 2. In Psalm 2:7, "I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me," this is the Messiah speaking, "He said to Me, 'You are My Son.'" The Jews of the first century understood that Psalm 2 was about the Messiah. So understand what happens here. God the Father audibly speaks from

heaven, He identifies Jesus as His unique special Son, and He uses language that is intentionally Messianic.

He adds, ““in You I am well-pleased.”” That expression too comes from the Old Testament. It comes from Isaiah 42:1 and following. It’s one of the suffering servant passages about the Messiah. So God the Father also identified Jesus as the promised suffering servant of Isaiah, the one, according to Isaiah 53, who would lay down His life for His sheep.

Now, before we leave this verse, there’s one important theological point. Although this passage is primarily about Jesus’ baptism and God’s divine affirmation of His divine identity, it also at the same time clearly teaches the doctrine of the trinity. You perhaps have heard there are some people who will say, very few of them and they are heretics, they’re outside the orthodox Christian faith, they are not Christian, but they will say there is no such thing as the trinity, this is created by human beings, you know, some later generation came up with this idea. It’s right here in this verse, notice all three persons are present, they are all clearly represented as distinct, and yet at the same time the Bible clearly teaches, Old and New Testament multiple times, that God is only one. Where does that leave you? It leaves you with there being only one true God, eternally manifest in three distinct persons. That’s the doctrine of the trinity. It’s right here. It’s not derived from tradition. It’s derived from a genuine exegetical approach to the Scripture.

Now, that’s Jesus’ baptism and that’s the Father’s testimony, but there’s an important question we haven’t answered yet and that is, why? Why was Jesus baptized? Do you have any idea? I mean, if you profess to be a follower of Christ, if I marched you up here and put you behind this pulpit, could you explain in any cogent fashion why Jesus was baptized? Well, let’s see if we can help that. There are three reasons. There are other reasons, but let me give you the three primary reasons. Number one, it confirmed the identity of Jesus as Messiah and God’s Son. It confirmed His identity. John identified Him in His baptism as the promised Messiah. Read John 1, John says, God told me when He sent me, when you baptize someone and the Holy Spirit comes down upon Him like a dove and remains on Him, that’s the Messiah, and John saw that happen. And by the way, his whole generation considered John a holy man, a trustworthy witness, and John says, that’s Him. In fact, just a short time later, John 1:29 records, after he had baptized Jesus, he saw Jesus walking by, and he pointed to all of his disciples And he said,

there He is, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” But we don’t just have John’s testimony, we have the testimony of God the Father who said, that is My Son whom I love. And in another place He says, “listen to Him.”

You know, there are a lot of people who kind of kid themselves and say, you know, I’m attracted to Christianity, I’m attracted to Christ, but there’s just not enough evidence for me to believe. I understand that you’re tempted to believe that or to think that, but I want you to think of what it will be like someday to stand before God Himself, who spoke from the heavens in the face of witnesses and said, this is My Son, listen to Him. Try telling Him there’s not enough evidence.

I plead with you today, hear the evidence, hear the call. There’s really a call here. Do you understand that? There’s an invitation to you, to say you’ve seen it, you’ve seen who He is. Read the gospels. Repent of your sin. Turn from your sin. Put your faith in Jesus Christ. For what? For the forgiveness of your sins. That’s my plea with you today. He is the only hope for forgiveness of sins.

There’s a second reason Jesus was baptized, and that is, it fulfilled a perfect, righteous life for His people. It fulfilled a perfect, righteous life for His people. By submitting to John’s baptism, Jesus obeyed the Father, and He identified Himself with sinners. In fact, this is the first public identification with those whose sins He would eventually bear. His obedience in being baptized was a part of that righteous life that would one day be imputed to believers in justification. Remember what Jesus told John back in Matthew 3:15? He says, “Permit it for now.” Why? “In order that we may fulfill all righteousness,” “fulfill all righteousness.”

You see, it was not for His own sake that He needed righteousness. It was for the sake of His people who needed righteousness. Throughout His entire life, including His baptism, Jesus did everything He did to accumulate a perfect record of human righteousness that would one day be credited to all those sinners who believed in Him. You see, if you’re a Christian you don’t just get the benefit of Jesus’ death for you, in which He paid the debt for your sin, you get the credit for His righteous life. Second Corinthians 5:21, “God made Christ who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf,” that’s the cross, “so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

You see, there's a great exchange that happens in salvation. If you trust in Jesus Christ, if you repent and believe in Him, then God does this great exchange. God credits every single one of your sins, every single thought, word, and act you have ever committed against God, He credits it to Jesus Christ and on the cross Christ pays the penalty for every single one of those sins, so there's no debt left for you. But then He does something else, He takes the entirety of Jesus' righteous life. I mean, can you imagine never a sinful thought, never a sinful word, never a sinful act. He loved God perfectly every moment of His life. He loved others as He ought to love them, without exception. And that entire 33 years of righteousness gets taken from Jesus' account and credited to your account. And from this point forward God treats you as if you had lived Jesus' perfect life. Just as He treated Christ on the cross as if He had lived your sinful life. That's the gospel. And that's what Jesus was doing in His baptism. Romans 5:19 says, "through the obedience of one," that is, through the entire life of obedience of Jesus Christ, "the many," all who trust in Him, "will be made righteous," that is, will be treated as, constituted as righteous because of His righteousness.

There's a third reason for Jesus' baptism, and that is, it was repentance for His people, it was repentance for His people. Look at the context, go back to verses 4 and 5, "John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Verse 5, "they were being baptized, confessing their sins." Four verses later, verse 9, Jesus shows up and Jesus was baptized by John with the same baptism, a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. But look at the intervening verse, look at verse 7. John says the Messiah is such that he wouldn't be worthy to be His lowest slave.

So do you understand this? Think about this, Jesus was baptized with a baptism that had to do with sin, repentance, and forgiveness. But it wasn't His sin. He had none. It was ours. It was yours, Christian. Why was He baptized? It was part of His substitution. In His life He substituted for us so that we get His righteousness. In His death He substituted for us so that we get His atonement. On the cross He paid the full penalty in God's justice for every sin every believer has ever committed or ever will. So there's none left for us. And in His baptism He provided a substitutionary repentance.

Now don't misunderstand, we are commanded to repent. We are to offer our sincere sorrow over our sins and a genuine commitment and resolve to change, God will accept nothing less. To be saved we are commanded to repent and believe the gospel. Daily, as Christians, we are commanded to repent of our sins, confess them. When we come to the Lord's Table we are called again to confess our sins in true repentance. But although genuine, our repentance has never been thorough enough. Mine hasn't and yours hasn't. We find ourselves all too often confessing the same sins. Jesus was baptized with a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins not for Him but for us, so that God could accept an unworthy repentance when it comes from a sincere heart and genuine sorrow, with a real desire to change, although still not worthy. Christ's worthiness is accepted in its place.

In Christ we have a complete redeemer, a complete savior. That's what we celebrate at the Lord's Table. Take a moment and prepare your heart. Confess your sin and I'll lead us in just a moment.

Father, thank You for this incredible reminder of the Savior that we have. We thank You, O God, that while You call on us to repent, we confess that our repentance is never truly enough. It's never contrite enough. It's never full and complete from our hearts, even though it's genuine, sincere, even though it's marked by a desire to change, it never meets Your standard. And yet, Father, we thank You for those of us in Christ, His baptism of repentance stands in our place and makes our weak repentance acceptable to You.

Father, I pray for those who may be here this morning who are not in Christ, help them to see that if they will turn from their sin, as those Jewish believers in the first century baptized by John, if they will confess their sins before You seeking hope in the Messiah, not who is coming but who has already come, then they will experience the forgiveness of their sins because of Him, because of His life, His death, His resurrection. Lord, may they do so even today.

And Lord, for the rest of us, help us even now to truly repent of our sins, to express genuine sorrow for what we've done that displeases You, and express to You, Lord, from our hearts, a willingness to turn, to change. And yet, Father, even as we sincerely offer those things, we are so grateful that our Lord, even in this, has stood in our place and makes our repentance

acceptable to You because of His. His that was not for His own sins, but for ours. Lord, may we take of the Lord's Table in a way that honors His sacrifice. We pray in His name, amen.