

Matthew 3:13-17

January 8, 2017

“Monumental and Momentous Beginnings”
Baptism of Our Lord

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
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Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

[Introduction]

There are some monumental and momentous beginnings:

“Once upon a time...”

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...”

(Charles Dickens, “A Tale of Two Cities”)

“And it came to pass...”

“In the beginning...” (Genesis 1:1)

“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”

That is a monumental and momentous beginning.

[Invocation]

The first 15 words of the Divine Service,
officially called the invocation,
embrace everything we need to know about
the rest of the service.

In fact, all there is to know about worship is tied up in these words.
Magnificent promises and life-changing joy
await the Christian who understands the Invocation.

At the beginning of the Divine Service, the Pastor says
the Invocation while facing the congregation to show he’s acting as God’s representative.

Have you ever noticed which direction I face?

It really tells you a lot.

If I face you, then I am speaking for God.

If I face the altar, just like you, then I am speaking with you, speaking to God.

But when I face you and speak:

“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”

It is as if God is saying:

“I called you here in fulfillment of My ancient promise and mandate.

*You have been made My baptized in My name
and I adopted you as My children.*

*You have learned of My commandments and My salvation,
and I made you My disciples.*

You have been brought here under My authority by My promise.

*Since Baptism has made you My children,
you are heirs of the promises and gifts
I long to give to you during the next hour.*

These gifts will be yours forever and will bear fruit every day of your life.

You are My people. I am your God.”

All of that is said in just 15 words:

“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”

It is almost code. But we answer back in code too.

We respond and simply say, “Amen!”

But in saying “Amen,” we are really saying:

“Yes, that is why we are here, and that is who we are.”

The Invocation tells us the reason we’re in church.

We do not gather in church to feel a force, to study,
to learn morality or learn more about ourselves.

We gather to worship the Trinity whose name is “Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

The Invocation tells us the reason why we are in church, and

The Invocation tells us the Gospel.

Even in the earliest days of the Old Testament, God declared,

*“In every place where I record my name I will come to you,
and I will bless you” (Exodus 20:24).*

God’s name establishes God’s gracious presence and
where God’s grace is, there is life and salvation.

We invoke or call upon the name of our God.

When we do that, everything else follows.

[*Baptism*] The Invocation is also meant to point us to Baptism.
These words give us new life in our Triune God.

As they were first spoken to us in Baptism
God's Holy Spirit came to us and gave to us salvation.
"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."

For you and I, we have been marked....
*I now make the sign of the cross upon your forehead and heart
to MARK you as one redeemed by Christ the crucified.*

Baptism is not simply water,
but it is the water comprehended in God's command and
connected with God's Word.

...The Word of God which is in and with the water,
and faith, which trusts the Word of God in the water.
For without the Word of God the water is simple water and no baptism.
But with the Word of God it is a baptism, that is,
a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit.

The Invocation is, therefore, the purest Gospel reminding us of God's saving
presence among us as we worship and within us by virtue of our Baptism.

That is monumental and momentous beginning.

[*Baptism of Christ*] Our Baptism is important and
Jesus' Baptism is very important.

When Jesus was baptized, it marked the beginning of His mission
to save the world from sin
through His death on the cross and His resurrection at Easter.

As Scripture says,
Jesus' Baptism was the first of many things He did to "fulfill all righteousness."

Because Jesus never sinned,
He certainly didn't need to be baptized like we do.
But because He loved us so much,
He chose to be baptized with the Baptism of sinners in order to identify Himself
with us who are sinners.

Later on the cross, Jesus paid for all our sins,
and rose again to prove it to all the world.

In your Baptism,
Jesus has given you all the forgiveness He earned for you on the cross.
That is monumental and momentous beginning.

[***Each Day***] Like each day when you open your eyes...
Yes, most days,
it is the alarm, the urgency of the day, the unexpected that wakes you.

I suspect on the few days you get to lazily wake up, it might be easier to know...
This is the day the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

But the reality is... every day is given to us by the Lord.
And it is a ***monumental and momentous beginning.***

Each and every day we begin...
“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”

Each and every day we begin...
praying to our God.
*“I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil,
that all my doings and life may please you”* (Luther’s Morning Prayer).

Each and every day we begin...
confessing to our God.
*The old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance,
be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts,
and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise;
who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.*

[***Conclusion***] ***That is monumental and momentous beginning.***
And as followers of Jesus the Christ,
we get this every Divine Service, every Baptism, every day. Amen.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, ...
to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations,
for ever and ever! AMEN!