

Text: Matthew 3:13-17

Theme: Series-The King is Here: The Servant King

Sermon delivered by Reverend Dele Agbelusi during Holy Communion Service on 08/01/2017 at 10.30am

Have you ever had an experience where you were humbled because a person way above you in stature served you in an extraordinary way and you knew not only that you didn't deserve it, but that they were really letting go of their position to do it?

John got this treatment. Here comes Jesus submitting himself to a baptism of repentance. John's baptism is for sinners, those far from God who need to prepare for the coming kingdom of God, which the Christ will usher in.

Matthew's particular approach in his gospel is to present Jesus Christ as King, the anointed One, the Messiah, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. As we come to Matthew 3:13, we read the words, "Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John." And really, for the first time, the Lord Jesus appears upon the stage. Up until this time it has been preparatory.

In chapter 1, verses 1 to 17, we saw the ancestry of the King. In chapter 1, verses 18 to 25, we saw the arrival of the King, His birth. In chapter 2, verses 1 to 12, we saw the adoration of the King, the worship given to Him by the magi. In chapter 2, verses 13 to 23, we saw the attestation to the King. That is, He is attested to be the King by the fulfillment of specific prophecy. And in chapter 3, verses 1 to 12, we saw the announcer of the King, John the Baptist. And now, finally, after all of that, we come in chapter 3, verses 13 to 17 to arrival of the King. If you want to add another one, the anointing of the King.

This is His commissioning, the beginning of His ministry. It's a rich and a blessed section of Scripture. The King comes out of 30 years of seclusion, 30 years of obscurity, 30 years of being hidden, as it were, finally to manifest Himself to the world. John the Baptist, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, has made ready the path. The way is prepared and from the quiet seclusion of Nazareth, the Lord Jesus comes to inaugurate His work, to assume His office, and He is commissioned. He is crowned, as it were, in a very wonderful way right here as we begin in this paragraph.

Now, I want us to see three aspects to the commissioning of Jesus Christ. First, the baptism of the Son. Second, the anointing of the Spirit. Thirdly, the word of the Father, and you will notice that all the Trinity is involved - the baptism of the Son, the anointing of the Spirit, and the word of the Father. This is a very important passage for instruction on the Trinity, because all of them are here synonymously, all acting at the very same time; and if you're looking for a passage in which to find the Trinity, this is as good as any.

The baptism of the Son

It's amazing to me, as I thought about that, that Christ waited 30 years in the carpenter's shop in Nazareth, performing the simple duties of the home and the simple duties of the shop. And all the time knowing He was God incarnate, and all the time knowing there was a lost world, and all the time knowing that that world was waiting for Him, and never, ever being frustrated, because it was all in the Father's plan. Thirty years of obscurity, waiting for the Father's timing, patiently, in a complete kind of unquestioning submission to the Father. He waited for 30 years, and now the hour struck; and when it struck, He came forth; and it says He came to the Jordan.

So, He comes to meet John, and He has a very specific purpose in mind. Look at the end of verse 13. He came there "to be baptized." Now at first this is shocking, and it has really been a problem for a lot of people. It was a problem for John the Baptist, and it's still a problem for people unless you really examine the text carefully. He came to be baptized.

Now, what's shocking about it is from verse 6. "And when John was baptizing," it says, "he was baptizing in the Jordan, and the people were confessing their sin." This was based on his message in verse 2, "Repent." He was preaching repentance, and his baptism was a baptism of repentance with the confession of sin. Look at verse 11. John said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance."

Now, repentance admits what? Sin. John was baptizing people who admitted their sin, who confessed their sin, who repented of their sin, and who desired that God would transform them and prepare them for the coming of the King. His was a baptism for sinners. It was to symbolize a conversion, a turning away from sin.

Now do you see the problem?

(13-14) Jesus comes to John for baptism.

John was earnestly trying to hinder Jesus from getting baptized. He wouldn't hear of it. It made absolutely no sense to him whatever.

John's treatment of Jesus is the very opposite of the way he treated the Pharisees and the Sadducees. (verse 7), they came to be baptized, and "When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was for baptism, he said to them, 'You generation of vipers, who's warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.'" John refused to baptize the Pharisees and the Sadducees because they weren't repentant. You see that? They were sinful. Here, he refuses to baptize Jesus because He is sinless and has nothing to repent of. And so, the whole idea makes no sense to him. He who towered above the Pharisees and the Sadducees - who thought they towered above everybody - finds himself bowed in deepest humility.

When anybody wants to argue about the sinlessness of Christ, whether Christ was really without sin, this is a great place to start. Virtually, John is saying, "Look, You can't be baptized with my baptism, because mine is a baptism for sinners." And what is he, in effect, saying? "You're not a sinner." "You're not a sinner." He is declaring, on the other hand, that, "I have need to be baptized by You. I am a sinner. You and I are opposites. I," he says, "am in the class of the people I'm baptizing. You are not." And he is saying, "Not only are You sinless, but You are beyond even the very prophets of God."

People say, "Jesus was just a prophet." No, here is the only prophet of God alive in His time. Here is the greatest man who ever lived up until His time. Matthew 11:11, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist," the greatest prophet who ever lived. And he says, "Jesus, You aren't in my class. I am in a class with sinners. You're sinless." And the greatest prophet who ever lives exalts Jesus Christ above his category.

Jesus came to be baptised. No one compelled Jesus to be baptized. He came to John of His own choice.

(Verse 15)

But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness." Then he allowed Him. It is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness: Jesus understood why this seemed strange to John, but it was nevertheless necessary to fulfil all

righteousness. **It wasn't that this one act in itself fulfilled all righteousness, but it was another important step in the overall mission of Jesus to identify with fallen and sinful man, a mission that would only finally be fulfilled at the cross.**

The purpose was for Jesus to completely identify Himself with sinful man. This is exactly what He did in His birth, His upbringing, and His death. So here, as John allowed Him to be, Jesus stood in the place of sinful man.

"In baptism He confessed, as His own, sins which He had not committed, and repented of them before God. He was numbered with the transgressors and bore the sins of many." (Morgan)

Why Jesus have to be baptized is a minor question. The big one is, why did he have to die on a cross? Matthew grants that neither makes sense from a human point of view: thus, John tries to prevent Jesus' baptism and Peter tries to prevent Jesus' death (16:22).

In Isaiah 53,9, it says, "He was assigned a grave with the" - What? – "wicked" - sinners. The first thing Jesus did when He stepped out of obscurity into the limelight was to declare the very primary reason for which He came, and that was to identify Himself with sinners. He who had no sin took His place among those who had no righteousness.

John's objection to baptizing Jesus is related to a difference in status. John recognizes Jesus to be the "more powerful" one, the one he has been talking about for some time (3:11). John himself stands in need of what Jesus has to offer: a greater baptism of Spirit and fire (3:11); this is probably what he means when he says, "I need to be baptized by you" (3:14). John's water baptism is one of repentance, which prepares the way for the messianic judgment that establishes God's righteousness.

The Anointing of the Spirit (verse 16)

The second part of His commission is the anointing of the Spirit. "As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened., and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him." This was a dramatic experience with the Holy Spirit, with the Spirit of God coming upon Jesus in a way that could actually be seen (somewhat similar to the coming of the Spirit of God upon the gathered disciples in Acts 2:1-4).

How fitting that He is called Jesus here. The name means "Saviour." He shall save His people; the whole idea of this commissioning is to see Jesus as the Saviour, the One who identifies with sinners to save them.

And, finally, there was one other part to His commission - the word of the Father. (verse 17) " And a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

The heavens were opened: It was important for God the Father to publicly demonstrate that Jesus' baptism was not just like anyone else's, in the sense of being a display of repentance, but instead, a righteous identification with sinners, motivated by love and was well pleasing to the Father.

We should not miss the obvious point: God the Father loves God the Son, and communicated that love by God the Holy Spirit. Here we see the love relationship and cooperation between the Persons of the Trinity, in one occasion when the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were all manifested at the same time.

“God so loved his Son, that he gave him all the world for his possession, Psalm 2; but he so loved the world, that he gave His Son and all for its redemption.” (Trapp)

There is no suggestion that Jesus became the Son of God with this experience. “We need not assume that Jesus had no previous experience of the Spirit; the vision symbolizes his commissioning for his Messianic work, not a new spiritual status.” (France)

Now, listen, there's one thing about a sacrifice. Whenever a sacrifice is offered to God, it has to be the right one. True? Without spot, without blemish, and that is precisely what God is saying. "This One, who identifies with sinners, this One who is to be the dove (and lamb) of sacrifice. I say in Him I am well pleased. I accept Him as the sacrifice."

And so, beloved, what do we see in the commission here? He is chosen to be a king, but His throne is going to be a cross. He's chosen to be a king, but He's going to die as a sin offering. And so, He is commissioned. By baptism, He identifies with sinners and pictures His death. By being anointed with the Spirit, He is empowered to minister a ministry that ultimately will make Him a sacrifice. What an introduction. What a beginning. What a ministry was His.