

Read: Mark 1:4-11

And So It Begins

Mark 1:9-11

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Every great story, every great adventure, every great journey has to have a beginning. Whether you are Bilbo Baggins walking out your front gate in *The Hobbit* or you and your family are pulling out of the driveway for a vacation, you have to start somewhere. The same was true for Jesus when he began his public ministry.

John the Baptist was preparing for all of this. God sent him to prepare the way for the coming Lord. He was sent to call people to turn away from their sins and live as forgiven children of God. He baptized people, young and old, in the waters of the Jordan River. John knew that he was preparing the way for the coming Lord, but he didn't realize how humbly Jesus would come to him.

One day, Jesus came to John and asked to be baptized, even though Jesus was holy and perfect. He had no need to receive forgiveness through the waters of Baptism. Yet Jesus was there to put himself in our place under the same waters of Baptism connected with God's Word that change our lives and bring us God's forgiveness and eternal life. Jesus's baptism looked like anyone else's with water poured over his head and the Word spoken by God's servant, but what happened next was very different!

"Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'" What a sight! The heavens torn open. The Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove. What a sound! The voice of God the Father speaking from heaven and pointing out Jesus as his chosen Servant sent to carry out the work of saving us and all people.

And so it began. Jesus' great journey would take him through temptation and suffering, miracles performed, and the Word of God proclaimed. In time, that journey would take Jesus to the cross to die and a tomb for when he was dead. But the journey would end with us saved from sin and death. But today we remember where it began, with baptismal waters poured over Jesus' head. And we remember the story of our salvation began exactly the same as Jesus' ministry.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Ask your parent or grandparent to remember what happened at your baptism.
- Recall one of the wonderful things that happened at Jesus' baptism.

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Reread Mark 1:9-11. How do we see God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at Jesus' baptism?
- Why did Jesus need to be baptized? Why do we need to be baptized?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Read Romans 6:3-4. What is the connection between our baptism and Jesus's life, death, and resurrection?
- Explain what God the Father meant when he said to Jesus: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for putting yourself in our place, even under the waters of Baptism. Forgive our sins and guide us on this great journey that will eventually bring us to you in heaven. Amen.