

INTRODUCE

Alright. Well good morning church! My name is Kyle Knight for those of you that don't know me I'm the youth and digital minister here at Fathom. Welcome to all of you here welcome to those of you joining us online so glad that you are tuning in.

Hey welcome to 2021

- Hope you had a great Christmas and New Year's celebration ending off the year hopefully on a good note
- But hey, we are at the first Sunday of the new year And I am super excited to be up here this morning with you all.

Let's go ahead and jump into it we're going to be in the Gospel of Matthew so if you go ahead and open your bibles to Matthew chapter 3 we're going to be starting on verse 13.

For those of you that have been around here for awhile I know you might be thinking Matthew again?

- Yes I know we've been in Matthew for quite awhile
- We were in the book of Matthew as we were going through some of our disciplines this past fall
- And we just finished up going through the advent season and looking at the book of Matthew for Jesus is birth.
- But yes we will be in Matthew this morning and I hope you are not sick of Matthew because there will be more Matthew to come during this spring after we do a little bit of some Old Testament studying starting next week.

But yes we will be in Matthew again and this is actually a short little passage that I don't just want to skip over.

I believe what's in these short verses really goes along perfectly with this being the first Sunday of a new year.

So go ahead and open your bibles your tablets your phones to Matthew 3 but before we get into that

INTRODUCTION STORY

As many of you know or most of you know my wife and I had a baby this past fall in October.

- Now at two kids so this Christmas was a lot of fun even though we kind of had to navigate the whole COVID season we still had an absolute blast with our kids.
- Obviously having Christmas with a 3 month old is a lot different than having Christmas with a 4 year old.
- One has no idea what's going on, and the other is at the perfect age where everything around Christmas is so much fun.

But I wanna tell you a little bit about my son, Austin right now and what he's sort of into.

He is at the stage of really wanting to help.

- Whether that's helping around the house, helping me with things around the house like fixing things, or helping with his baby sister.
 - He has been such a great older brother to his little sister.
 - Helping pick out clothes
 - Get wipes and diapers for us when needed

- He has helped change one dirty diaper! Just one. But he made sure to get gloves on and use his hand sanitizer afterwards. Hey, I guess something good that might come out of this time is my kid will be super paranoid about germs and want to be clean. Silver lining? I don't know.

But I love it that our four year old actually wants to help. I mean I'll take it, I'm sure most parents would. His mom and dad really do appreciate it.

But one of the things Austin likes to help with that we actually just did this past week is shoveling the snow out on the driveway and the sidewalks.

So this past week it snowed a little bit at our house

- Usually I'm the one who does the shoveling at my house
- Not because my wife can't do it or that my wife even doesn't offer to do it because she does a lot
- I just have this little thing called OCD
- Which means when it comes to shoveling our driveway no one else can do it the way that I like to do it or the way that really it should be done in my mind
- And for those of you that are right there with me you know what I'm talking about when it comes to shoveling with OCD.
- Straight lines all the way across
- Getting ALL the snow, not leaving any snow behind
- There's a right way to do it right? And at the end it just looks so good and you feel great.

- Nothing better. It's close to the same feeling of mowing your lawn in the summer. You know what I'm talking about (if you know you know)

But anyways so my son really wants to help and he really wants to help shoveling and so being the good dad that I am I say of course you can help (just don't screw it up right?)

So I went awhile ago and even I bought him a little shovel that's his perfect size, so yes, come out and help me shovel the driveway and so that's what we did just the other morning.

So as I start shoveling my way with my OCD straight lines going straight across the driveway ,I look over and see Austin shoveling with his shovel...

- And you know what, it's safe to say that my 4 year old son doesn't have his dad's OCD...at least not yet
- He of course shovels the way a 4 year old would want to.
- And let's just say it took about twice as long to shovel than it normally does with just me because I had my perfect lines going back and forth and Austin's lines are going in every which way
- Pretty much he just put the shovel down and started walking around waiting for his shovel to get full and then he would just pick it up and dump it, wherever he was standing.
- So it did take longer, but doesn't everything when a kid is helping? Right.
- But he helped. And we did it together. It was a good time.

Another example of Austin trying to help out a lot more recently is we've gotten him to start cleaning his own room. Not easily.

- But even after a little bit of back and forth when it is time for Austin to clean his own room he reluctantly says OK
- Now we always say why don't you go start cleaning your room by yourself and then after a little bit will come up and help you with the last little bit.

So the last few times Austin has cleaned his room he is up there for quite awhile

- it's quiet, almost that too quiet
- Parents you know...
- But then after awhile Austin will come down and say hey I'm done cleaning my room.
- So the last time this happened I said OK let me come up and check now you're sure it's clean
- I come up and check and when I walk into his room I do see a fairly clean room.
- Everything is picked up off the floor all of his totes that holds his toys in his closet or organized and kind of put away
- So I am pretty impressed and I say way to go buddy good job.

But of course not everything is how it seems and on my way out the door I take a quick peek under his bed

- He has sort of a of a bunk bed
- It makes sort of a tunnel through the back where usually he has some of his stuffys and things and he likes to play back there.

- But on my way out I turn to sort of glance under there just to make sure and I pretty much see every toy and stuffy that was once on the floor of his room shoved behind that tunnel out of the way and hidden.
- It's almost like that one closet that some have maybe downstairs...
- This is exactly that but what my son did was take everything and just hide it into his tunnel under his bed.
- But hey he tried!
- He felt like he did a really good job too.

TRANSITION

You see being Austin's dad there are many times he tries to help with things and there are sometimes where he totally does help,

- But there's also those other times where to be honest he really didn't help and he maybe even made things more difficult but his intentions we're right on.
- He wanted to help me shovel the driveway...and he thought he was doing a great job.
- He went up to clean his own room...and in his mind he did and did a great job.

My point that I want to make here with these examples is it's a good thing that my love for my son isn't contingent on how well he helps out around the house. I love him so much even before he even tries to help out.

It actually doesn't matter how well he does at helping, or if he even helps at all, because he is my son and I love him already.

READ:

Now in thinking of those examples and remembering the scripture that was read just a few minutes ago you might be sitting here thinking well wait a second I thought the scripture this morning was about Baptism?

- And specifically Jesus's baptism
- What does this have to do with the story of Jesus being baptized?
- Well let's go ahead and read the whole passage together and then we'll dive into it so go ahead and open up to Matthew 3 we're going to start at verse 13

SLIDE

Then Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan to John to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him saying, "I need to be baptized by you and do you come to me? But Jesus answered him let it be so now for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he consented.

SLIDE

And when Jesus was baptized immediately he went up from the water and behold the heavens were opened to him and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him and behold a voice from heaven said this is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased.

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EXPLAIN

This story of Jesus' Baptism is only a couple verses long, and it seems to be sort of shoved in-between

- The story of Jesus' birth and Advent
- And the rest of Matthew which follows Jesus' adult ministry, then his death on the cross and resurrection

But even though this little story of Jesus being baptized is sort of shoved in the middle, sometimes it can get overlooked.

And if we just read it as a story about baptism, and specifically Jesus' baptism, and nothing else, which this passage is used a lot when doing a series or a talk just on baptism, **then we might miss something huge for us.**

But, in order to make sure we don't skip over verses or anything (we don't do that here at Fathom) I do want to look at this whole baptism thing first and go over that before we get into what this passage is really trying to tell us. So let's take a quick look at this baptism of Jesus

For those of you that have grown up in the church

- Or been a Christian for a long time
- Or even a short amount of time really
- And you have been baptized already and you really understand what baptism is
- You might be looking at this passage and be a little bit confused as to why Jesus is being baptized.

- Now for those of you that aren't confused by that let me explain what baptism is supposed to be for ok.

Baptism is

- an outward and public act of your inward choice in accepting Christ as your savior and following him with your life
- So as Christians when we put our life in Jesus and choose to follow him with our life we are called to be baptized like Jesus says at the end of Matthew in a very famous verse called the Great Commission when he says go and baptize people in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit
- As believers we are called to be baptized and that baptism is a public display of our choice in following Jesus.

Baptism is also

- A representation of us as sinful people, Christians that understand we are sinful and fall short of what God had planned for us
- And it means that we are repenting our sin (or turning away from our sin)
- Turning away from our old life of sin
- And have been washed clean into a new life with Christ.
- So baptism is for those who need to repent of their sins and be washed clean and that is why we use water (whether it's sprinkled or your dunked)

- That is why John the Baptist used water for his baptisms, to symbolize the washing away of our sins and our old life of sin and coming out into a new life with Christ.

Paul puts it perfectly in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 in verse 17

SLIDE

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Talk about a verse for the New Year huh?!

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EXPLAIN SCRIPTURE

So here we have this guy named John the Baptist whose whole life was about baptizing others in preparing the way for Jesus to come.

And what we see here is a crazy interaction between

- Jesus, who is the one John has been prepping everyone for!
- I mean, the person John has been talking about to his followers his whole life, telling them to wait for this guy cause HE will be the messiah
- And you got Jesus strolling up one day like...
- “Yep, it’s me”
- Or maybe he didn’t even have to say anything I don’t know, I’m sure John knew right as he saw Jesus walking up.

- Like “That’s him, that’s the guy, That’s the guy I’ve been telling you all about!”
- “That’s the reason I’ve been baptizing all of you!”

Now if that isn't weird enough when we think of baptism being an act where we as sinful people repent and turn away from our sins and be baptized...

Well then why is Jesus coming to be baptized? Isn't that sort of the elephant in the room? The big question here?

- Because as far as I know...Jesus never sinned!
- Jesus led a sinless life...so why would he come and be baptized.

Let me give a couple quick reason on why Jesus came to John to be baptized.

Let's go back to verse 15

- In verse 15 after Jesus said to John *“You need to baptize me”*
- John is saying
 - *Whoa whoa whoa, you should be the one baptizing me!*
 - *You were the one I'm doing this all for.*
 - *I'm not worthy enough for me to be baptizing you.*
 - *You should be baptizing me*
- Jesus says to him no no *“let it be so now for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness”*.

What Jesus means here about fulfilling all righteousness, is that pretty much him saying

- *“I need to obey my father and he says do it now!”*
- In verse 15 Jesus says, *“Let it be so now”*.
- This is Jesus stepping up and obeying his father and his father's will for his life.
- This obedience from Jesus to God his father is something that we can look at as an example.
- Even before his ministry began Jesus was submitting himself to an act that he will ask his followers to partake in
- So Jesus was really just setting the example for us in showing obedience to God the Father.

Yes, Jesus did not need to repent of his sins because he didn't have any sins...**however** he did need to fulfill Old Testament scripture and obey his Father in Heaven who had this planned out for him so that he could partake in this act before he started his ministry.

One commentary puts it this way that says

- *“Jesus is fulfilling scripture by doing this God's way. He does not need to repent, but by submitting to baptism Jesus begins his messianic work by identifying with the human need (that is of repenting of our sins and being baptized) and providing the means by which it can be accomplished.”*

So what can we take away from the act of Jesus being baptized?

- Jesus was setting another example. For us.
- In being obedient to God
- And in being baptized
- That shows us the importance of baptism!

- He's starts his ministry on earth with being baptized AND THEN he goes and tells his disciples after his resurrection to go and baptize everyone!
- The great commission!

So for Jesus if he was going to tell people to be baptized he was going to be baptized also.

TRANSITION

So that is why Jesus actually got baptized OK

- But like I said earlier if we just took this scripture as Jesus being baptized and nothing more,
- Than we're missing something **huge** for us right now.
- And what we're missing is our identity. Who we are.

You see after Jesus comes up out of the water after being baptized it says a voice from heaven can be heard

- From God the Father
- Saying something to HIS SON

Which by the way (side note) this is the first time in scripture that we see the Triune God actually working together

- The Spirit of God descending (The Holy Spirit)
- On the Son being baptized (that being Jesus the Son)
- And then the Father in heaven speaks (God the Father)
- So this is cool!

- And when God speaks, it's something to listen to! So let's take a look at what he says and see what this could mean for us today.

Let's look at verse 17, it says

SLIDE

And behold, a voice from heaven said "this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased."

Something so significant happened at this time with these words spoken from God to his son Jesus that goes beyond even just the words that he is speaking to Jesus. It's spoken to us too.

God is pretty much saying here

- *This is MY SON*
- *This is WHO HE IS*
- I'm acknowledging the SON OF GOD (*Pause*)
- *And I LOVE HIM.*
- For all of those that were there watching
 - and we don't really know how many were actually there in attendance to see this
 - but God wanted people to know whoever was there and to hear from HIMSELF that
 - *THIS IS MY SON*
 - *THIS IS WHO JESUS IS* once and for all

- AND, oh there's more...
- AND... I LOVE HIM SO MUCH
- AND... I AM SO HAPPY WITH HIM!
- “This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased”
- The message version actually translates it like this
 - *“This is my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life.”*

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What's crazy about this is that this act of Jesus being baptized was before Jesus started his earthly ministry.

This was the first thing he did before he actually started his ministry

- Calling his disciples together
- Sharing the love of God with everyone
- Healing people
- Performing his miracles.
- This is what he did first!
- And God the Father, HIS FATHER, identifies him in front of everyone and tells him how much he is loved...before he has even done anything.

And if God is looking down on his son Jesus before he has even done anything saying this...

This shows us how God views us even before we do anything to try and earn his love.

And that brings me to my main point today which is

SLIDE *Identity Always Precedes Action*

TRANSITION STORY

Almost every day when I come home from work I'm greeted by my little 4 year old

- And not just him but more specifically greeted by two flying fists right at my gut.
- Which I know is a sign that he wants to wrestle.
- Everything right now for him is who would win in a fight.
- “Dad who’s bigger?” “Dad who would win?”
- And so since he is always in the mood to wrestle dad when I get home, usually before I even get fully in the door he’s got these flying fists coming straight at me, saying “Let’s wrestle dad!”

And I want to kind of bring you into the world of our wrestling here just for a second

- So what usually how it starts is when I'm ready to go Austin will say to me, in his best superhero voice,
- “Who do you think you are?”
- And really what he’s saying to me is
- “OK dad who are you going to be this time?” which character are you going to be when we fight?
- And my first thought is

- “Go with The Hulk. Always gotta go with the hulk cause he’s the biggest and strongest and that’s what matter to him right now. So I always say “I’m the Hulk”
- And every single time I say that I get back “no you can be Spiderman and I’m going to be the Hulk.”

And I’m like ok fine.

So we start wrestling and fighting and within about 30-45 seconds he steps back and again he says

- “Now who do you think you are?”
- And at this point I'm supposed to change who I am and come up with somebody else because you know it’s the attention span of a 4 year old I’m dealing with here.
- So I will say “now I'm Black Panther”
- And again I get the same response “no you can be so and so and I will be Black Panther”.
- Fine

And on and on this goes as we are wrestling.

- He will ask me “who do you think you are?”
- I will say someone
- And he will pretty much tell me NO you can't be that guy
- But you can be this other superhero and I will end up being that other superhero.
- So pretty much what I want to say to him every time he asked me “who do you think you are?”

- I really just want to say *“you know what dude you're just going to tell me who I am anyways so why don't you go ahead and tell me first just so I don't say the wrong one and you have to switch it and you end up being the one I chose. It's fine you just tell me who I am.”*
- But that's not fun right?
- I've pretty much learned that when me and my son are playing my identity who I am going to be is up to him and he will decide that for me.
- Even if he asks me who I want to be, really it's up to him.

Church one of the things that a lot of us struggle with throughout the year and throughout our lives, but maybe more at the start of a new year is our identity. Who we truly are.

- You see, we live in a world, in a society
- That loves to tell us who we are.
- Loves to put labels on us or put names on us and tries to define who we are all the time.
- We might be OK with these labels like maybe it's a job title, or when I'm talking with teenagers about this maybe you're labeled as the popular one or something which we're usually fine with.
- But most of the time we aren't OK with who the world tells us that we are, and we shouldn't be!
- And what happens is we end up believing these labels and it puts us into sort of an identity crisis in our lives.
- We don't know who to believe about who we are.

- And even us as Christians we sometimes believe these other things of who the world is telling us we are.

At Jesus's baptism we see

- God the Father telling Jesus *who he is* (and making sure everyone else hears it too)
- identifying him as HIS one and only son
- who is beloved, absolutely loved by the Father
- And that's not all, he does this before Jesus has really done anything in his ministry.

Our identity always precedes action.

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As believers in Christ or identity is in Him.

- We are his
- We are his children
- We are his beloved
- and we are that before we even try to be that! That's the great part!

EXPLAIN INTO NEW YEAR

You see church we're starting a new year and usually at this time during a new year there's a lot of talk about

- New Year's Resolutions
- Bettering ourselves. Becoming a better version of ourselves in the next year
- Who are we going to be this next year?

- I want to be somebody different. I want to change this part of me. I'm going to work on that part of myself this year.

And what we like to do is during a new year we like to work really hard at doing things

- that will help us change who we are
- or get us to the point where we're actually happy with who we are.
- That we actually have figured out our identity and where we fit in in this world.

And I'm here to tell you that in Christ Jesus we don't have to do anything to get him to acknowledge us, to get him to love us, to earn our spot with him as his child!

We don't have to do anything to be called his children.

We don't have to try and get him to love us and call us his own.
BECAUSE WE'RE ALREADY HIS.

Some of us struggle with identity and who we are. And we buy into what everyone else says about who we are instead of looking to the one who gave us our identity in the first place. The one who gives us a name, the one who calls us his beloved.

Now I know this past fall we just went through a series here called

- The Disciplines
- How to train ourselves to be closer in our relationship with God right.

- And even just last week on our Fathom At Home recorded service pastor Chris talked about making a Disciplines Plan this new year
- Making a plan to do certain things and create disciplines in our lives to help us get closer to God.

So what I'm talking about here today sort of pushes back on that a little bit.

- With our Disciplines we're talking about doing things to become closer in our relationship with God.
- But what I want to remind us is that when it comes to *who we are*
- we don't need to work at that
- Who we are in Christ comes before any of the actions we would take to try and be God's children to try and be his.

Just like my son and his attempt at shoveling to be a good son and help out

Just like his attempt at cleaning his room to be a good son and help out

- Those things are great
- But guess what boy "You are already my son, and I am well pleased with you and I love you so much even before you try and do these things."

Identity Always Precedes Action

Even before Jesus starts his ministry God does something like this and says in an audible voice

- Well Jesus, you are mine, you are my son, my beloved son, and I am well pleased with you. That's who you are!

Now church I'm not saying we shouldn't do these disciplines that we've been studying because they don't matter...because they do matter!

- But what I am saying is, don't let those things become who you are!
- Don't let other things become your identity that will just change in an instant,
- Or that will change when someone else tells you something different
- Just remember that you are his children, you are his beloved first and foremost.

So church, in this new year I want to leave you with the question that my son asks me right before he's about to pummel me as we wrestle

- "Who do you think you are?"
- And maybe even a better way of phrasing that question cause sometimes that can seem like such an overwhelming, big question.
- Another way of asking to give you some peace about it is
- Do you know who God **says** you are? and

- Do you know that he says that to you, right now, even before you try to earn that? which we can't it is given to us
- we are his children we are his beloved.

I want to close us out with this scripture passage that pretty much sums up who we are and how nothing can change that!

Isaiah 43:1 says this

SLIDE

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Israel; "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."

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Hey church, let's go into this new year knowing and having peace in the fact that our identity in Christ always precedes our action

- always comes first no matter what
- let's go get this year church
- let's make it a great one.

Let's pray! **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER (we do this every week).
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

25. In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

26. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.