

First and foremost, I want to give all the Honor, Glory, and Praise to The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for giving us another day to see and for guiding me in preparation for today's lesson. I also want to thank Pastor Sunny for giving me the opportunity to share the Word of God with you all on this second Sabbath of the month and the new year.

Before I go any further, I would like to read today's Scripture Reading one more time so that we can hear it and be familiar with the verses.

Matthew 3: 13-17

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?' Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.' Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, 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. And a voice from Heaven said, 'This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.'"

If we look at the eleventh verse of this chapter, John says, "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come One who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." John the Baptist, who was sent before Jesus to prepare the way for Him, humbly states how he only baptizes with water. He acknowledges that Jesus is yet Greater than himself. So, when we hear that Jesus, the Messiah, goes to John to be baptized, we can understand why John tried to put a stop to this.

Jesus then responds, "It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness" (verse 15). Everything that Jesus did in His Life here on earth He did as an example for us. From teaching boldly and truthfully to washing His disciples' feet to obeying the Father even to His death and Resurrection, this too He did as an example for us.

"As soon as Jesus was baptized, 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" (verse 16).

What do you define baptism as? The blessing of a newborn baby? The forgiveness of ones' sin, to only have them go back to it? The Bible describes baptism as a symbolization of cleansing ones from their sin and making them born again or, in other words, a new life - that which is founded in Christ Jesus.

I am sure we are all familiar with the story of Noah. It begins with man's wickedness and the intentions of everyone being evil. The Book of Genesis says, this grieved the LORD that He had made man, and His Heart was filled with pain. So, He said He will wipe all mankind, but Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. God then spoke to Noah, gave him instructions, and Noah and his family and the creatures with him were saved from the flood.

After the rain, Noah sent first a raven to find land, but it returned with nothing. He then sent out a dove, but it returned with the same fate. After waiting seven days, Noah sent the dove one more time, and this time, it came back with an olive leaf! He waited seven more days and sent off the dove once more. But this time, it did not return. The dove in this context, I believe, represents a new beginning. The Lord had made the earth anew, and Noah sent out the dove in the assurance of this.

Today marks the second Sabbath of 2022 and of the month of January; praise be to God! We do not know what may come our way this year, nor do we know what will take place. But we do know who is in control of everything. If we wake up from our slumber, that is a blessing in itself. This year is a chance for a new beginning with God. An opportunity to make up for the times we have cut corners with God, an opportunity to get deeper into our relationships with God. An opportunity to be used by God, an opportunity to die to our sins and live in His Righteousness- an opportunity for new beginnings with God.

In the last verse of today's Scripture reading, it says, "And a voice from Heaven said, 'This is My Son whom I love; with Him, I am well pleased.'" There is no doubt that God loves Jesus. He obeyed the Father and glorified Him in all He did, and as a result, He is at the right hand of the Father. The people who passed by Jesus had Faith in Him that He was the One whom the prophets spoke about, and in return, their faith healed them. What does the Word of God say about how to please the LORD? Hebrews 11:6, "And without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."

In this new year, I hope that we may all seek the Lord in our good and bad times so that we may please Him, who by His Grace, gives us another opportunity. Do you hear the voice of God? I say all these things in Jesus MIGHTY Name, Amen.