

Matthew 3:13-17

- 13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.
- 14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"
- 15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.
- 16 And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.
- 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased" (NRSV).

Today is a continuation of the message of last week. The question is presented, who am I? We will look at the answer from different perspectives of various individuals starting with John the Baptist. John is the divinely appointed forerunner of the Messiah. He does three very important things. We are all familiar with baptism today and know it is for the cleaning of sins. Back then it was a Jewish purification ritual that included immersing in water. John also teaches repentance. This is a major lesson of the Bible. God is always looking for repentance. It includes confession and a changed life. John also announces who Jesus is. John knows that he himself is the forerunner of Christ. He knows what his role is and what his responsibility is. His main duty is to point to Jesus as the one promised by God. Jesus is the one! Jesus is the one they have been longing for. John's job is to get people ready to receive Christ.

Matthew knows that Jesus is the Messiah that is promised by God. However, much more significant than this is the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. The dove is a "here is your sign" confirmation of this. Matthew's Gospel is a testament; it is his testimony. Matthew testifies that it is God that proclaims "This is my Son." So, it is not a matter of Jesus claiming to be the Son of God and then setting out to prove it and challenging those who dispute it. Matthew's testimony is that Jesus is the Son of God and it is declared by God. Son of God trumps everything. In societal hierarchy the rulers are top dog. Social status belonged to rulers and the wealthy and their families. Everybody knew where they belonged in the pecking order of social structure. Son of God beats everyone. Son of God is a higher social status than son of Chief Priest. Jesus tops everyone else. Political hierarchy didn't like it. They wanted to protect their positions of power and prestige. This is why both John and Jesus got so much resistance from the religious leaders. Son of God means absolutely everything. From a theological perspective the Son of God knows God and the will of God one hundred percent. The Son of God knows details of the kingdom of heaven, can save people from sins, and is authorized to forgive. It is the Son of God that is the only one that has enough value for the redemption of all of humanity.

A question for us all is who am I? Who am I as a Christian? When you identify yourself as a Christian, it is not just a matter of belief or confession, or continuing in your daily life as if there is no difference. As a Christian you are declared to be a child of God. This means that you are not just a human being. It means you don't just confesses and continue living the same way in this secular society. You are a different person with a Christ like persona. You are one with Christ. You are in communion with Christ. When you see yourself as a child of God then you see yourself as a member of God's family. This means that you have a divine heritage. You

have a personality that is in the likeness of God. A child of God has a God-like persona. A child of God is a changed persona that takes on the persona of the Son of God. You are a sibling of Christ. You model the behavior of Jesus. You adapt the attitude of Jesus. The whole essence of your identity, your self concept, the very essence of your being, is like that of Jesus the Christ the Son of God.

Understanding who you are determines what you do. You have two fundamental questions that govern life. The first one is what am I to do? We often ask ourselves, what should I do? We ask trusted friends and relatives, what do you think I should do? Often we get some very good answers such as: Pray about it. Turn it over to God. Read the Bible. Ask what would Jesus do? But I want to make a point to get you to a deeper level of theological understanding. Ask a much more fundamental question, who am I? Knowing who you are; knowing your identity, directs what you do. You are a child of God. See yourself as a child of God. This means that you live your life in the realm of God. A child of God has the virtues of Jesus Christ not the vices of the world. You don't have to ask, what would Jesus do? You already know because you live your life marinated in Christ Jesus. Others see you and they know automatically without a doubt you are a Christian because the love of Christ rules in your heart and governs your life.

You are a recipient of God's grace. You owe God an appropriate response to that grace. You are to continue the mission of Jesus by being like Jesus in the world around you. Show the love of Christ in your actions and teach others all about love of Jesus. Who am I? You are a child of God. Now when you leave here, go out into the world and live up to your heritage.