

Public Affirmation & Private Testing

Pastor Jeremy Peters

Mark 1:9-13 NIV

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." At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Preparation and spiritual formation take place in _____
in _____, and in _____ to those over us.

Jesus' Baptism

Why was Jesus baptized?

1. To demonstrate supreme _____ and _____ with the people of Israel.
2. To fulfill the _____ requirements for entering into the _____.
3. To signal the inauguration of the _____ of God on earth.

Three things in Jewish tradition signaled the inauguration of God's Kingdom, all of which are seen in Mark 1:10-11:

- The heavens were torn open.

Isaiah 64:1 Oh, that you would *rend the heavens* and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! (NIV)

THE KINGDOM IN ACTION

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- The Spirit descended on him like a dove.

- And a voice from heaven spoke.
"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Psalms 2:7 The king proclaims the Lord's decree:
"The Lord said to me, 'You are my son.
Today I have become your Father. (NLT)

Isaiah 42:1 "Look at my servant, whom I strengthen.
He is my chosen one, who pleases me.
I have put my Spirit upon him.
He will bring justice to the nations. (NLT)

Jesus in the Wilderness

*Before the battle could be won outside, it had to be fought and won inside.
Before Jesus could establish the Kingdom of God in the world around him,
it had to be firmly established in the world within him.*

~ Sunder Krishnan

The primary battleground was not the physical WILDERNESS that Jesus found himself in; rather the primary battleground was his HEART.

"There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch; every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan."

~ C.S. Lewis

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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Mark 1:9-13

- 1) What stood out to you from this passage and the teaching on Sunday?
- 2) Pastor Jeremy talked at length on Sunday about how we are spiritually formed (for better or worse) through obscurity, routine and submission to authority.
 - a) Discuss ways in which you've experienced this in your own life or observed it in others.
 - b) Does this truth encourage you or discourage you?
 - c) How are you currently allowing your present life circumstances to form your heart to reflect the character of Christ?
- 3) Why is it significant that Jesus is our High Priest?
Have you ever considered the fact that Jesus is praying for you?
How does this impact your life?
- 4) On Sunday we saw in a fresh way why the public affirmation of Jesus at His baptism was significant.

In his commentary N.T. Wright says, *"The whole Christian gospel could be summed up in this point: that when the living God looks at us, at every baptized and believing Christian, He says to us what He said to Jesus on that day. He sees us not as we are in ourselves but as we are in Jesus Christ."*
 - a) Why does it matter that God "sees us not as we are in ourselves, but as we are in Jesus Christ?"
 - b) Can you remember a time where you were publicly affirmed by someone? It may have been a teacher, coach, parent, friend, pastor etc. How did this experience shape your life?
 - c) Share in your group who this week you could give the gift of public affirmation to. We often encourage people in private, but who this week could you esteem in the presence of others? (a co-worker, supervisor, child, friend, teacher, ministry leader, etc.?)
- 5) The characters in Mark 1 didn't fully realize the significance of the baptism of Jesus at the time it was happening. In response to this, Pastor Jeremy challenged us by asking, "Given what we know about Jesus, are we any more faithful, any more discerning, any more abandoned to Him?"
 - a) Is there an area in your life where you sense Jesus may be saying to you in love, *"Do you not know better?"* Be sure to pray for each other and for the Spirit's filling and empowerment to do what we know we are to do.

- 6) Have someone read Hebrews 4:15.

Responding to those who object to the truth that Jesus identifies with us in our weakness and temptation, discuss the following quote from C.S. Lewis:

"A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is.... A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in. We never find out the strength of an evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it, and Christ because he is the only one who never yielded to temptation is also the only one who knows fully what temptation means."

- a) Why is it so important that Jesus can identify with our weaknesses and temptations?
 - b) Have someone read 1 Corinthians 10:13. Discuss what it means in *practical experience*, that God will "not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear." What might this look like in reality?
- 7) Pastor Jeremy spoke of the reality on Sunday that Satan is our adversary. He is not an evil force in the universe indifferent to who we are and who we serve. He is personal and has a personal interest in subverting the Kingdom and rule of God.

In His book "Walking with God" John Eldridge says, *"We must be aware of this – Satan is an opportunist. He is always looking for open doors, opportunities, a chink in the armor. He'll seize what might otherwise simply be an event – an argument, an emotion, a loss and he'll use it as an entree for his lies, deceit and oppression."*
 - a) How often do you consider the reality that you have an Enemy who is out to destroy you?
 - b) How do we take seriously that we have an adversary without 'looking for the devil under every rock?' Do you think most people take Satan too seriously, or not seriously enough? What about you?
 - c) In understanding this reality, what are some ways that we can guard ourselves against him?
- 8) Take some time to pray together. As each person shares a prayer request, take turns bringing one another to Jesus, our Great High Priest who is interceding for us before the Father.