

The Baptism of the Lord ~ Sunday, January 11, 2026

“Living in the Light: Identity”

Romans 8:12-17 & Matthew 3:13-4:1

_____ is one of the deepest questions every human being carries. It _____ how we see ourselves, how we relate to others, and how we move through the world.

And yet, from an early age, many voices compete to tell us _____ we are...The problem is that these voices are always _____.

Scripture reminds us that our true identity can't be secured by achievement, _____, or circumstance. It can only be _____.

And that is the good news at the heart of the Christian faith: before anyone else gets to name us, _____ does. Before the world assigns us a label, God speaks a word of love over us. And when God tells us who we are, that word isn't _____ or conditional—it's faithful, lasting, and _____.

The Christian faith doesn't begin with _____ or a list of expectations. It begins with a _____.

3 LESSONS ABOUT IDENTITY

Lesson #1: Our identity _____.

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him...” (Matthew 3:13)

The fact that Jesus comes from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John is surprising because John's baptism was a baptism of _____, a sign of turning away from sin. And yet, even though He with without _____, Jesus insists on entering the water and being baptized.

Jesus' baptism was unlike the baptisms of all the other people who participated in the baptism of John. This moment was not about repentance. It was about _____.

God declares His love before Jesus does anything at all. And this love confers _____.

This statement of affirmation is the _____ of Jesus' entire ministry. Everything that follows this moment in the Jordan—Jesus' teaching, His healings, His signs and wonders, His obedience, even His suffering—_____ from this.

Jesus doesn't _____ the Father's love by obedience, He lives out of the love He's already _____.

Many of us grow up believing—sometimes without ever being told directly—that love is earned; that it's _____, and based on what we do or don't do. And so, we learn to associate approval and acceptance with _____: with grades, success, reliability, usefulness, popularity and perfection. Over time, it becomes easy to carry that same logic into our _____ life.

In doing so, we either consciously or unconsciously try to _____ God's love and acceptance. This not only goes against everything we read in the gospel, but it's also a rejection of _____.

Living in the light begins with receiving this truth: our identity is _____, not earned. Because of our _____ of the finished work of Jesus on the Cross, we're God's beloved children before we're faithful servants. When this truth sinks in, it changes everything. Faith becomes less _____. Obedience becomes less driven by _____. It becomes more about who are and less about what we do or don't do. We begin to live not to secure God's love, but because we already have it.

Is your faith rooted and grounded in your identity as a well beloved son or daughter?

Lesson #2: Our identity _____.

The voice from heaven at Jesus' baptism does more than just name Him as Son; it places Him firmly within the long story of God's _____ work.

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights.” (Isaiah 42:1)

Isaiah's servant isn't flashy or _____. He doesn't shout, throw his weight around, or crush the weak. Instead, Isaiah describes Him as a servant who walks _____, faithfully, and _____—One who doesn't break the bruised reed or extinguish the burning wick.

He's called to be a light to the nations, not by power or domination, but by being _____ to God's plan and purpose—even when that obedience is _____.

However, this _____ experience is followed by a walk through the darkest valley, as Matthew tells us that Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness—not into applause, but into _____. Not into visibility, but _____. The Light that reveals Him also leads Him into a place where His identity will be _____.

Jesus' temptation in the wilderness shows us that the affirmation of His identity that He received at His baptism doesn't remove _____ from His path, but _____ Him for what lies ahead; it doesn't shield Him from difficulty, but rather _____ Him through it.

Knowing who we are and whose we are, doesn't eliminate struggle, it gives us the strength to _____ it without losing ourselves or being undone.

The Jordan River isn't a stage where Jesus is admired—it's a place of _____, it's a threshold where He commits Himself fully to God's will and God's way. From that point forward, His life will be shaped not by self-protection, but by _____.

We live in a world that constantly pushes us to define ourselves by our _____; by what we achieve, how we're perceived, and how we compare or measure up to others. Even our _____ life can quietly become another arena for proving ourselves.

Identity rooted in God's _____ and delight leads to a life marked by humility rather than defensiveness, perseverance and _____, rather than panic, obedience rather than self-assertion, and faithfulness instead of fear. When we know who we are in God, we don't need to grasp for _____ or approval. We're free to walk faithfully, even when the road ahead is uneven or _____.

Living in the light of our identity means allowing God's _____ over us to shape how we move through the world and everyday living, especially when life is difficult.

Are we living out of our identity in Christ, or still trying to secure it?

Lesson #3: Our identity _____.

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God." (Romans 8:14)

Paul reminds us here that we haven't received a spirit of slavery or fear, but rather a spirit of _____.

Paul doesn't say that we're heirs and children of God because of anything we've _____, or because of how well we've lived, but because of what Christ has done for us. And because we're children of God, our lives are now shaped by the _____.

This is where the season of Epiphany becomes _____ facing because identity always carries _____.

The Light that has been revealed doesn't simply reassure us; it _____ us. God names us as His beloved not so that we can remain turned inward, but so that we can be sent _____.

"...as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations..." (Isaiah 42:6)

This pattern holds true in the life of Jesus. His baptism doesn't conclude His story, it _____ it. His identity as beloved Son doesn't lead Him away from the world, but more _____ into it.

Light is never meant for private _____, it's given so others can _____.

Light is most visible in dark places, and the darker the space, the more _____ even a small light becomes. Similarly, God places His people not where they'll be applauded, but where they'll be _____; where they can shine so others can see and be drawn to the same light.

Many of us imagine that bearing light means doing something _____. However, Scripture points us toward something quieter and more faithful: Light shines through presence, _____, and love lived out over _____.

Adopted children don't earn their place in the family; they _____ it. And because they belong, they begin to live differently—not as outsiders or slaves trying to secure approval or jockeying for position, but as sons and daughters who reflect the _____ of the household.

To live as children of light, isn't to perform spirituality for others. It's to live _____—honestly, humbly, and faithfully—in the confidence that we belong to God.

- It guards us from _____. When we know we're secure in God's love, we don't need to withdraw from the world in fear or _____.
- It guards us from _____. When we know we're already God's beloved, we don't need to _____ ourselves through busyness, activism, or spiritual performance. Instead, we can live _____, listening for where the Spirit is leading us, and trusting that God can use even small acts of _____ to bring light into dark places.

How can I live as who I already am—as a child of God, a person of light, and a beloved one who is sent?



Living in the light, then, isn't about living under pressure. It's about living from _____. It's about walking through the world _____ in the truth that we belong to God, and are upheld by His love.