



## Sermon: Sunday, January 14, 2024

### “A Voice from Heaven!”

**SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:9-11** <sup>9</sup>In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. <sup>11</sup>And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.

#### Introduction: The Baptism of Jesus

Today is the second Sunday after the Epiphany in the church calendar. Today's text refers to the scene of Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist. Jesus came from his hometown of Nazareth to the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist. The writer of the Gospel of Mark is trying to convey to us through today's text, not a point about Jesus being baptized, but a special phenomenon that occurred during the scene of baptism. Today's text describes the visual and auditory phenomena that occurred during Jesus' baptism.

Verse 10 of today's text says: **“And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.”**

To the Jews in the era when the Bible was written, heaven was the place where God, who created and rules the universe, resides. Today's text describes the Holy Spirit coming down from heaven to Jesus like a dove. In this passage, the dove is a visual representation of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The fact that the Holy Spirit came down to Jesus from heaven means that the events in the text that happened to Jesus occurred not by human efforts but by the Spirit of God.

In fact, as Christians, we often have similar experiences. We believe that meeting a certain person is the result of the guidance of the Spirit of God. Also, we think it is because the Holy Spirit has given us wisdom that we have gained some understanding.

However, on the contrary, some people seem to live according to the temptations of evil spirits rather than good spirits. So we must be able to listen to the voice of the good spirit and reject the voice of the evil spirit.

Also, verse 11 of today's text says: **“A voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’** This verse describes two messages coming from heaven. The first is, **“You are my Son, the Beloved”** and the second is, **“I am well pleased with you.”** This passage is familiar to Jews. In the Old Testament Psalm 2:7, there is a similar verse to today's text: **“I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father.’** Early Christians experienced salvation, the completion of life, through Jesus, so they quoted the psalmist's expression, **“You are my son, the Beloved.”**

The **‘voice from heaven’** mentioned in today's Bible text refers to the **‘mystery of salvation’** that happened to Jesus Christ. We often think vaguely about the **‘mystery of salvation’**, but the **‘mystery of salvation’** is not vague. However, the **‘mystery of salvation’** through Jesus Christ can only be heard by those who have ears to hear. I hope that we all can experience the **‘Voice from Heaven’** abundantly.



## Body: A Voice from Heaven

However, even at the time of Jesus, there were many people who did not understand his words. Today's text describes Jesus Christ as **“the Son of God.”** But why is Jesus the Son of God? What basis do we Christians have that God's salvation was accomplished through Jesus?

In fact, the end of his life that Jesus showed to people was **‘death on the cross.’** This makes it difficult for us to acknowledge that Jesus is the omnipotent Son of God. This is because the end of Jesus, who died on the cross, does not match the glorious ‘Messiah image’ that the Jews expected.

1 Corinthians 1:22-24 describes people's perception of Jesus' death. **“Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”**

Are we living differently from the Jews and Greeks in this verse, acknowledging that Jesus is the power of God and the wisdom of God? Perhaps you and I might answer, **‘Amen.’** However, despite this, it is not easy for us to live the life of suffering on the cross that Jesus lived. This is because we do not hear the **‘voice from heaven’** very well. Another way to say that we are unable to hear the **‘voice from heaven’** is **‘despite our faith in Jesus, we are unable to enjoy the fullness of life.’** Why is this?

If we answer this question with the most basic Christian doctrine, the reason is **‘sin.’** In other words, it is because of the disconnection of the relationship with God. If our lives are disconnected from God, we cannot communicate with God, the source of true life. And as a result, we live without God, with our own strength and effort. This comes from our desire to place **‘the self at the center of life.’**

In fact, as Christians we must live a free, mature, and responsible life. But regardless of this issue, we must be alert and sensitive to the consequences of human sinfulness on our lives and on the world.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Please remember, the power of sin convinces us that we are the masters of life. When we admit it, we make an idol of ourselves. How will the results of this self-idolization appear in our lives?

These people try to find meaning and joy in their existence through endless consumption. However, even if we enjoy physical satisfaction through this way of life, it cannot fully fill our inner selves. This kind of life looks fine on the outside but is sick on the inside. Additionally, people who live this kind of life cannot hear the voice from heaven that Jesus is the **‘source of life’** and the **‘Son of God.’**

Of course, we cannot always live sensitively to **‘voices from heaven.’** This is because humans are not completely free from the nature of sin, which seeks to place them at the center of their lives, until they die. So what can we do in these situations?

It is to live according to the experience of the person who heard the **‘voice from heaven’** as a Christian. In other words, we must learn with all our mind and heart **‘what Jesus said,’ ‘what the events that occurred in Jesus' life meant,’ and ‘what is the basis for him being the Son of God.’** As the depth of our learning grows, the **‘voice from heaven’** will be heard more clearly in our lives. A person who lives this way will experience inner joy and fulfillment.

## Conclusion: How should we live happily?

Now let's summarize today's sermon. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! How should we live to experience true happiness in life? I encourage you to listen to the words of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Jesus spoke about eight blessings in Matthew chapter 5.



In conclusion, the happiness that the Beatitudes speak of comes to those who are poor, lonely, mourning, and persecuted. This is different from the happiness the world talks about. However, please do not misunderstand that Jesus glorified poverty. Through the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is saying that God is the source of blessings.

Please remember, people who have God with them can ultimately be happy even during poverty, loneliness, and failure that the people of the world regard as terrible. Understanding and believing this fact is listening to the **'voice from heaven'** of which today's text speaks. I hope we all have the blessing of fully experiencing the **'voice from heaven.'**

