Fulfilling all Righteousness

**Matthew 3:13-17**

*Pastor Paul Anthes*

**Introduction:** For some unexplainable reason the entire nation of Israel was dropping what they were doing to trek out into the desert to hear a curmudgeon tell them that they needed to confess their sins and make a radical 180 in their thinking and life style. He claimed to be the long awaited herald that would announce the coming Messiah. If so this was a once in a lifetime event. Actually it was a once in a creation event.

**Mk. 1:4-5** John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And **all** the country of Judea was going out to him, and **all** the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

He claimed to be the long awaited herald that would announce the coming Messiah. Isaiah had spoken of him centuries before. This was a once in a lifetime event. Actually it was a once in a creation event.

**Isa. 40:3** 3 A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

Had you lived in this day you would have been among the crowds of common, everyday, working people. They were your neighbors and family members. Most were devout, practicing Jews who believed the prophet’s prediction of a Messiah preceded by a God appointed herald. They came to publicly confess their sin by being baptized by John.

On this particular day, a band of Israel’s religious elites showed up to be baptized. John was a prophet, but even the average person standing on the shore that day knew that this was a band of hypocrites like no other. We discussed their beliefs and behaviors last week. John was shocked and appalled and rather than welcome them into the waters of baptism the Spirit prompted John to say this instead:

**Matt. 3:7b-10** …."You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; 9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. 10 "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Just as John is finishing his denunciation and condemnation of these extraordinarily evil men and while they are still standing there in stunned silence …. He looks up and sees Jesus coming down the bank toward him to be baptized.

**Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan *coming* to John, to be baptized by him [13]:** This scene could hardly be more intense. It is one of vivid contrast. The most despicable, evil, hateful and hypocritical men in Israel and the sinless, honest, loving Son of God have both arrived at the same time. They are both standing in the midst of thousands of other people who have come as well. There is a massive audience for what is about to take place. Jesus had come to be baptized, but John is just as shocked by Jesus’ request as he was by that of the Pharisees and Sadducees….but for an entirely different reason. John knew the Pharisees and Sadducees didn’t believe they had any sin to confess and he also know that Jesus actually has no sin. How can he baptize either one?

**But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" [14]:** John has a life long history with Jesus. They are probably cousins, relatives for sure and John first met Jesus while both were in the womb. The angel told Zacharias that John …

**Lk. 1:15-16** …. will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. 16 "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.

**Lk. 1:41-44** When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! 43 "And how has it *happened* to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? 44 "For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy.

Filling has to do with control. We use the word this way in English also. “He was filled with joy.” “Anger filled his heart and mind”…. Just to name a few. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God. Jesus is God the Son and then of course there is God the Father. All three work in concert together as we will see in the next few verses, but before we do let’s talk about John’s filling for a moment. Paul, who was intimately acquainted with the work of the Holy Spirit in the first century took pains to give us precise information about Him.

**Eph. 5:18** And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

Webster lists 70 synonyms for being drunk. They claim there are many more. We have all seen the results of total drunkenness. People do things they would never normally do because they are controlled or “under the influence” of alcohol. Scripture does not forbid drinking alcohol but it does insist and command us not to be controlled by it or drunk. Ephesians says do not be controlled by alcohol but instead be controlled by the Spirit. We all know what people are like when they are controlled by alcohol but what are they like when they are controlled by the Spirit of God?

**Eph. 5:19-20** 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

If ecstatic tongue speaking was an evidence of Spirit filling then this would certainly been the place to mention it. Instead God speaks of quoting psalms to each other and singing songs with one another from a joyful heart. Being thankful for everything and making everything in our lives about Jesus or Lord.

When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church it says the gathered believers were filled and began to speak with other tongues.

**Acts 2:4** And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

But these were not the utterances of modern tongues. There were 95-100 different languages gathered in Jerusalem on The Day of Pentecost. About 10 days before this event Jesus had made this promise to His gathered disciples.

**Acts 1:8** but you will receive power (ability) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

What took place at Pentecost was a miracle of hearing as much as it was a miracle of speaking. God began the fulfillment of the promise to spread the gospel to the remotest part of the earth, but making certain that everyone gathered on that day would hear perfectly and with understanding so as to carry the gospel of Jesus home to remote places that the disciples would not reach for years. This was how it happened.

**Acts 2:5-8** Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own **language.** 7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 "And how is it that we each hear *them* in our own **language** to which we were born?

“Language” is the word “dialectos” or dialect. If you were born and raised in Trieste you heard the gospel in your extremely narrow and precise Triestine dialect. If you came from some other obscure province your heard in your mother tongue. If you doubt this just consider that there are over 30 identifiable dialects just in The USA.

This is a profound miracle. It goes way beyond ecstatic utterances that nobody could understand. These were real languages that were easily understood by the hearers. The disciples often found believers when they finally got to faraway places. The Holy Spirit was exalting and glorifying Christ just as Jesus promised He would. The Holy Spirit was using mere men to exalt and proclaim Jesus as the only hope of men. Making Christ known, loved and worshiped is the main ministry of the Holy Spirit in the world today.

**Jn. 16:13-14** "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. 14 "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you.

**But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit *it* at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him [15]:** John (by the Holy Spirit Filling) knew that Jesus was sinless outwardly and in the deepest part of His being. Jesus does not dispute that here. His reluctance to baptize Jesus for repentance and confession of sins is a powerful testimony to the sinlessness of Jesus. John’s hesitancy was not rebellion or stubbornness but flowed out of a deep knowledge of who Jesus was and is.

Jesus gently overcomes John’s fear by saying, “Permit it this time…this once!” It is fitting (it is the right thing to do) for both of us. John did not fully understand how vital this was, but like any true believer he accepts what Jesus says. Here is how it validates both of them:

The nation was moved by the Spirit to accept John as “The voice crying, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; ‘Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.’” They understood that the Messiah was right on the heels of John and so it was fitting…it was the right thing for Jesus to appear and validate John’s ministry as absolutely true. By appearing as John preaches that He will appear, Jesus puts the stamp of divine approval on everything John has said, is saying and will continue to say.

Conversely, John validates (fulfills all righteousness) Jesus. is the Messiah he has been proclaiming. Here are the ways that Christ’s baptism by John validated the ministry of Jesus our Lord. Men in that day were expecting the Messiah to be a conquering Hero / King. But that would come later. His coming in John’s day was to condescend to His creatures and identify to the point of actually becoming a man.

Jesus identified with the plight and struggle of all men. The Creator of the Universe submitted to the universes realities. Jesus identified with that universal human condition while on earth.

**Matt. 17:25-27**  He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?" 26 When Peter said, "From strangers," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are exempt. 27 "However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me."

Jesus identified with sinners. Although He had no sin He came to us. Lived and suffered with us. Men are sinners and need to confess and repent. Jesus was not afraid to identify with sinners.

**Heb. 4:15** For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are, yet* without sin.

Most believers I have known are deathly afraid to identify, mingle and care for sinners, but Jesus absolutely was not. He was even willing to let God place all the filth of humanity on His spotless body so that He could bear it away from us. He chose the most degrading death possible and the Father even had to turn away as Jesus died. Isaiah spoke of it 5 centuries earlier.

**Isa. 53:12b** … *He* was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

Paul and Peter (under inspiration) both spoke of it.

**2 Cor. 5:21** He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

**1 Pet. 2:24-25 …** He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

This is the righteous ministry of Christ. It is the Gospel Demonstrated. The Creator became one of His own creatures, knowing full well they were fallen, broken sinners. He did not offer them religion, ritual or morality because every one of those things had already failed and continue to do so today. He offered Himself. He had to become a human man but without sin so that He could bear our sins. Christ’s baptism reveals in a matter of moments the entire Gospel Ministry of Christ.

**Rom. 8:3** For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

Isaiah prophesied of His willingness to descend into sin while remaining sinless so that He could receive those sins. Take them into His own body and bear them away from us.

**Isa. 53:11** As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it and* be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

He took this to its final conclusion by receiving the curse of sin (death) on our behalf

**Gal. 3:13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE "—

Finally, Jesus’ baptism cast a shadow or symbol of His death and resurrection. Jesus spoke of His still future baptism to His disciples. He equated it to His death both times. All men die and Jesus (by choice) would be no exception.

**Lk. 12:49-50** "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!

**Mk. 10:38** But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

**After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; [16a]:** The Greek word translated “baptize” means to dip or immerse. The Greek speaking church has never allowed for any other kind of baptism.

Jesus was down in the water because it says He “came up immediately from the water.” Even the Catholic church baptized by immersion until 1311. Thirteen centuries of doing it by immersion was changed at that time. John baptized in a river not on the shore.

**Jn. 3:23** John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and *people* were coming and were being baptized--

**… And behold, the heavens were opened [16b]:** The idea here is that God opened the door to heaven so that the throngs of people, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and John himself could see in. See into heaven! Wow!

**Acts 7:55-56** But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; 56 and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

**Revelation 4:1** After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound* of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."

**… and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove *and* lighting on Him, [16c]:** The Holy Spirit came through that open door. He is fully God, co-equal and co-eternal. Isaiah had predicted this also.

**Isaiah 61:1-2** The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners; 2 To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,

Jesus so humbled Himself and so identified with you that He required the anointing help of the Holy Spirit to live in this fallen world. This is full and comprehensive identification. He preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. Every preacher should know this and aspire to it.

**And behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." [17]:** This was not just a voice. It was a voice coming through the open door into heaven. Jesus pleases God. May God help us in our sin and weakness to know that Jesus pleases God and we are joined to the only God pleaser in Creation. He is a beloved (deeply loved) son and you are joined to Him by faith. This is the beginning of Christ’s earthly ministry. It will “fulfill all righteousness” because in love, Christ will take sin which is not His and give us righteousness that is not ours.

**1 Jn. 3:1-3** See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.