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Sermon Notes

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## **The Father Declares His Delight in His Son**

**Mark 1:9-11**

As we come this morning to contemplate just three verses in Mark's Gospel, the simple record of Jesus' baptism, we surprisingly come to the most sublime, the deepest, the richest topic in all of human experience, and the most satisfying yet ultimately incomprehensible theme that we could ever consider. The topic is LOVE... of course the best feature of all existence... but it is not just any love we are considering, but the love of God the Father for his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. I say to you that we can only begin to comprehend this love, and we will spend all eternity understanding it and drinking at its fountain. God the Father loves his Son... you already knew that! But the dimensions of that love neither you nor I have probed to its one millionth part.

As I was preparing to open this topic up for you, I was reminded of a passage I read some years ago written by C.S. Lewis. It is from his work *Reflections on the Psalms*, and he was wrestling with why it is that God seems constantly in the scriptures to be getting us to PRAISE him... Lewis found this problematic... as though God had some ego problem, or needed to be stroked or propped up continually with words of praise. But then a breakthrough occurred in his thinking:

I had never noticed that *all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise*

The world rings with praise — lovers praising their beloved [Romeo praising Juliet and vice versa], readers their favourite poet, walkers

praising the countryside, players praising their favourite game — praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars. . . . praise almost seems to be inner health made audible. . . . I had not noticed either that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: “Isn’t she lovely? Wasn’t it glorious? Don’t you think that magnificent?” The Psalmists in telling everyone to praise God are doing what all men do when they speak of what they care about.

My whole, more general, difficulty about the praise of God depended on my absurdly denying to us, as regards the supremely Valuable, what we delight to do, what indeed we can’t help doing, about everything else we value.

What Lewis is expressing here is how the love of God for sinners like you and me is ultimately made manifest. God desires our greatest good. But what greater good is there in the universe than God himself? If, therefore, God is truly to love us, he must give us himself

Now remember how Lewis said, “All enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise”?

I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because *the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation*. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed. It is frustrating to have discovered a new author and not to be able to tell anyone how good he is; to come suddenly, at the turn of the road, upon some mountain valley of unexpected grandeur and then to have to keep silent because the people with you care for it no more than for a tin can in the ditch; to hear a good joke and find no one to share it with.

So, the insight Lewis came to about praising God is that it is absurd to think that what we always do with anything we really love — namely, to praise it — we wouldn’t do with what we love the most — God himself.

It is reasonable for love to express itself – to speak itself – and to praise the loved one... and to involve as many others as we can in that love

Here's my insight: God is like that too! God LOVES his Son, O how he loves him! We will talk in this sermon about why he loves him so much! From eternity past, before there was a universe at all, God loved his Son. And after he created the universe, he loved his Son. And once Jesus was born into the world, God loved his Son. So God wants to EXPRESS that love to his Son, which he did at his baptism:

***Mark 1:11 "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."***

But God also wants to express that love to the world! So he also said at that amazing time,

***Matthew 3:17 This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."***

He is calling all the world to join him in his love for his Son... he did it at that time, then he had the Holy Spirit inspire Matthew, Mark, and Luke to put that statement in their gospels a total of SIX TIMES!!

As Lewis said, "The world rings with praise... people praising their lovers, their favorite athletes, their favorite movies, their favorite books, their children, their friends, their heroes... But at the pinnacle of all those lesser loves comes this greatest love – a love that preceded them all: God's love for his own perfect Son. And he wants to include us all in that love!

Remember how God boasted of Job to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him, blameless and upright, and man who fears God and shuns evil."

Friends, take all that and multiply it by a billion times a billion, and you have a fraction of the loving pride the Father has for Jesus... it's as though he's saying to the entire world, **"Have you considered my Son, Jesus? He is the one I love, with him I am well-pleased!"**

In all this, of course, we have to try to wrap our finite minds around the doctrine of the TRINITY, the deepest topic of Christian theology. We Christians believe in one God who has eternally existed in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Were Christians simply to teach that there are three gods, the world would not have difficulty understanding that, for many world religions over the millennia of human history have been polytheistic. But the clear revelation of the Old Testament is that there is one and only one God:

***Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.***

The concept that this one God could exist in three persons, co-equal, co-eternal, is one of the great mysteries of our faith. It could never have been derived by human meditation or investigation. No human philosophies could have reached so high, no human science could have drawn out this truth. It had to be revealed by God himself. And so it was... and that revelation was centered around the person of Jesus Christ. One of the clearest revelations of the Trinity was at the baptism of Jesus.

If we had been at the baptism of Jesus, we would have experienced this revelation... the person of Jesus at the center... heaven being torn open; the Holy Spirit descending as a dove and remaining on him, and a powerful voice from heaven – the voice of God – declaring Jesus to be the Son of God.

We would have experienced all that... but for the rest of our lives, we would never have been able to plumb the depths of these truths. The mystery of the Trinity.

Review:

The theme of the Gospel of Mark is the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God:

***Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.***

Essential to Jesus' mission was the Kingdom of God, of which he was revealed as the King. Kings have forerunners who go ahead of them to proclaim that the King is coming, and to prepare for his arrival. John the Baptist was that Royal Herald, preparing the way for Jesus. He did this by baptizing people in the Jordan River... huge populations of people went out to him, confessing their sins and being baptized.

John was plain in his verbal proclamation, preparing the way for the coming King:

***Mark 1:7-8 "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. <sup>8</sup> I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."***

Now today, Jesus himself will be introduced... and the occasion is his own baptism in water by John.

## I. God's Purpose in Jesus' Baptism

### A. Jesus Comes for Baptism

***Mark 1:9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.***

#### 1. Locations: Nazareth in Galilee; the Jordan

- a. The people in Galilee were seen by so-called purer Jews to be like a mongrel people; and Nazareth was just an insignificant town in Galilee

***John 1:46 "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.***

- b. The Jordan is the main river in Israel... connecting the Sea of Galilee with the Dead Sea; the Dead Sea is the lowest place on the surface of the earth, 1300 feet below sea level
- c. No one knows for certain where John was doing his baptizing, but it was probably toward the southernmost end of the Jordan River near Jericho

- d. One day, in the midst of John's busy ministry of baptizing people for repentance, Jesus suddenly came

## 2. John and Jesus

- a. This is the only physical meeting between John and Jesus recorded in the Bible
- b. John must have learned from his godly parents Zechariah and Elizabeth the significance of Jesus' birth, since they were relatives... John and Jesus were cousins
- c. And the angel Gabriel told Mary that the holy child to be born by her would be the Son of God
- d. When Mary went to visit Elizabeth, John leaped inside his mother's womb at the sound of Mary's voice
- e. But they grew up in different locations and (it seems) never set eyes on each other before that day
- f. In John 1:33, John the Baptist said he would never have recognized Jesus physically except that God marked him out

- 3. As we've said, huge crowds were coming for John's baptism... the whole Judean countryside and the people of Jerusalem

- 4. And in the midst of all that, suddenly Jesus comes for baptism

## B. John's Initial Reaction

***Matthew 3:14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"***

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; people were confessing their sins to John and then being baptized by him as a symbol of cleansing from sin's defilement

When John tried to stop Jesus from being baptized, he was testifying to Jesus' sinlessness... John knew that Jesus had no sin whatsoever

So John did not understand why Jesus would submit to John's baptism for repentance

This brings us to the two purposes for Jesus' baptism: 1) To fulfill all righteousness; 2) God's anointing of Jesus as King

C. Purpose #1: To Fulfill All Righteousness

1. Jesus' statement

***Matthew 3:15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.***

2. What does this mean?

- a. "Righteousness" = perfectly aligned with God's purposes, especially as revealed in his Law
- b. First and foremost, Jesus was being baptized because it was his Father's will that he do so... it was RIGHTEOUS for him to obey his father
- c. But even more, Jesus had to identify with us in our sinfulness in order to MAKE US RIGHTEOUS... fundamental to this was being numbered as a transgressor:

***Isaiah 53:12 he was numbered with the transgressors.***

To be "numbered with the transgressors" means to be treated just like them... to be plunged into their state:

***Isaiah 53:5-6 he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.***

Baptism means immersion; by being baptized by John, Jesus was immersed in the sin and death of his people, a symbol of the substitutionary death he would die to save his sinful people

***2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.***

In John's Gospel, John the Baptist proclaims this about Jesus:

***John 1:29 "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"***

In his baptism, Jesus symbolically immersed himself in the waters of sin, picturing the death he must die as the Lamb of God

#### D. Purpose #2: God's Anointing of Jesus as King

##### 1. The history of anointing

Some commentators have likened Jesus' baptism to a coronation ceremony...

Remember that in Israel's history, kings were identified and established by the ritual of anointing with oil; the King was called "The Lord's anointed."

The word "Messiah" or "Christ" means "Anointed One"... the one identified as King!

Indeed the anointing with oil symbolized the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the King, equipping him for his role:

***1 Samuel 10:1 Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him, saying, "Has not the LORD anointed you leader over his inheritance?"***

***1 Samuel 10:6-7 The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. <sup>7</sup> Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.***

So at his baptism, Jesus was anointed by God and by the Holy Spirit to empower him and present him as King of the World

## II. God's Power on Jesus

### A. Heaven Torn Open

1. The account of Jesus' baptism in Mark's Gospel is written from the perspective of Jesus... what Jesus saw



***Mark 1:10 As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.***

The Gospel of Matthew presents it from our perspective... as an audience, if we'd been standing there, what would WE have seen

Mark is focused on what JESUS experienced

2. He saw "heaven being torn open"
  - a. Surrounding us every moment is a spiritual world that we usually cannot see with our eyes
  - b. It's as though there is a barrier, a boundary between the physical world and the spiritual realms
  - c. At Jesus' baptism, that boundary was RENT... torn open
3. Isaiah's words:

***Isaiah 64:1-2 Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! <sup>2</sup> As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you!***

Isaiah yearns for God to rend the heavens, to rip them open and descend in power and wrath and fire, causing terror on all peoples and his enemies to quake

## B. The Descent of the Spirit

1. But instead of this, out comes the Spirit AS A DOVE
  - a. A dove is extremely peaceful, and in the account of the end of Noah's flood, it was a dove sent out by Noah through a window that returned with a freshly plucked olive branch in its beak... a picture of peace, the end of the judgment of God
  - b. Since as we just saw John the Baptist proclaims Jesus as "The Lamb of God", there is a double picture of Jesus' gentleness...

***John 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.***

2. The Gentleness and Kindness of God Our Savior

***Ephesians 2:7 in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.***

***Titus 3:4-5 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,  
<sup>5</sup> he saved us***

C. God Empowering Jesus for Ministry

1. In Saul's case, the pouring out of the Spirit changed his nature... he started acting better, like a king
2. However, in Jesus' case, the Spirit descending and remaining on him did not change his nature at all... he was already perfect, pure, ready to be King
3. BUT the Spirit was the POWER by which he established his kingdom and did all his great works

***Acts 10:38 ... God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.***

4. Jesus said that his exorcisms were done by the power of the Spirit

***Matthew 12:28 if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.***

5. New thought: Just as Jesus never did a single work apart from the will of his Father, so he never did a single work apart from the power of the Holy Spirit

***John 8:28 I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.***

D. It Was by the Power of the Spirit that Jesus did every act of his ministry

### III. God's Proclamation of Jesus

#### A. Two Aspects of the Kings' Coronation: Anointing and Announcing

1. Men were announced as kings when they were anointed... unveiled and presented to the nation
2. This was essential to their taking power in Israel

Solomon:

***1 Kings 1:39 Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted, "Long live King Solomon!"***

Jehu:

***2 Kings 9:6 the prophet poured the oil on Jehu's head and declared, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anoint you king over the LORD's people Israel.***

***2 Kings 9:13 [The people] hurried and took their cloaks and spread them under him on the bare steps. Then they blew the trumpet and shouted, "Jehu is king!"***

Joash:

***2 Kings 11:12 Jehoiada brought out the king's son and put the crown on him; he presented him with a copy of the covenant and proclaimed him king. They anointed him, and the people clapped their hands and shouted, "Long live the king!"***

***2 Kings 11:14 The officers and the trumpeters were beside the king, and all the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets.***

3. Without that announcement, there could be a challenge to the kings' authority... the proclamation of the King was essential
4. Now... no other king in the history of Israel was announced as Jesus was... by the mouth of Almighty God from heaven!!

#### B. God the Father Announces His Son

***Mark 1:11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son"***

C. Again... In Mark's Gospel, He Is Saying it TO JESUS

1. Infinite mystery: What Jesus knew and understood
2. When Jesus was born, he knew nothing
3. As he grew up, he learned more and more

***Luke 2:52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men***

Even at age twelve, he was aware of who his Father was and that he had work to do in his Father's house. His earthly parents, Joseph and Mary, were frantically searching for him. They found him in the temple asking questions, and astonishing the priests by his understanding of the Word of God. His mother rebuked him saying they had been searching everywhere for him:

***Luke 2:49 "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"***

4. This communication directly to Jesus helps establish in his mind who he is... the SON OF GOD... and how precious he is to God

D. But Ultimately This Announcement is for the Whole World

***Matthew 3:17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."***

***John 5:37 the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me.***

IV. God's Pleasure in Jesus

***Mark 1:11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."***

A. The Father's Perfect Delight in His Son

1. The Father loves the Son in every respect

*John 1:18 The only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.*

*John 3:35 The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands.*

WOW! Ponder that statement! Almighty God, the ruler of the universe, loves his Son with a perfect delight and has placed the entire universe in his Son's hands!

2. The Father's delight in Jesus is as he is the perfect reflection of himself

*Colossians 1:15, 19 He is the image of the invisible God... God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him*

*Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being*

God knows better than we do... there is nothing in the universe as perfect and powerful and worthy of praise as he himself... no creature is the equal of the Creator... God would be an idolater if he esteemed any creature as higher or more glorious than himself

And therefore, God esteems his Son, the radiance of his glory, above everything else in the universe!

3. Therefore, we would not say that the Father's love for his Son is "unconditional"
4. The Father does not love the Son IN SPITE OF WHO HE IS OR WHAT HE'S DONE... but **because of** 1) who he is and 2) what he's done
5. First... who he is—Hebrews 1:3 **the radiance of God's glory**; also his true inner nature

*Hebrews 1:9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.*

6. Second... what he has done... and what the Son does is constantly pleasing to the Father

The Son does everything he sees the Father doing

***John 5:20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.***

7. This started in the creation of the world

B. What Jesus Did Before the Incarnation: Co-laborer With His Father in Making the Universe

***John 1:3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.***

What an amazing picture of a Father-Son work project... crafting the entire universe. "Through the Son God made everything in the universe"

***Hebrews 1:10 He [GOD THE FATHER] also says [TO GOD THE SON], "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.***

We humans need a picture of this Father-Son work project

Picture the teenaged Jesus working as an apprentice in Joseph's carpentry shop. Remember that the Gospel of Matthew says that Jesus' neighbors said "Isn't this the carpenter's son?" But the Gospel of Mark says they said "Isn't this the carpenter?" BOTH WERE TRUE! Jesus' legal earthly father Joseph was a carpenter, but he trained Jesus so that he became a carpenter himself

Picture them working side by side on a furniture set... maybe a table and four chairs. Picture Jesus happily crafting each chair leg to a certain design that Joseph had taught him. Imagine the satisfaction Joseph must have had inspecting Jesus' final work... how beautiful each chair was!

Now extend that back to the creation of the universe... only now it is God the Father and God the Son crafting each star, laying the

foundation of the earth, making each tree, designing each animal – the lion, the eagle, the ostrich, as we discussed in Job.

### C. Jesus' Perfect Obedience to the Father

***John 8:29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."***

Jesus lived constantly in perfect obedience to his Father

All his life from the moment he was born until he was presented to Israel at age 30, he was sinless... perfectly walking in righteousness.

Then, day by day in his public ministry, Jesus did exactly what the Father was doing in people's lives

This perfect obedience would extend even to his death on the cross:

***John 10:17-18 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life-- only to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.***

### D. Our Salvation: Jesus Invites Us into That Love

1. By justification by faith, God sees us as united with Christ
2. Therefore, God sees us as perfectly righteous as Christ...
3. Therefore, Jesus loves us like the Father loves his Son!!!!

***John 15:9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.***

In salvation, God is inviting sinners into the infinite and perfect love the Father has for his own Son

***Ephesians 3:17-19 I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.***

Friends, this is our salvation. We are invited by faith into the eternal and perfect love the Father has for his Son

Heaven will be a world of love for us... an eternity of love for us... and the essence of that love is the love the Father has always had for his perfect Son

## V. Application

### A. Understand Jesus' Baptism was for the benefit of sinners

1. In his righteousness is our own righteousness
2. Jesus is identifying with us in sin
3. By his death we are washed clean

***Titus 2:13-14 Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup> who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.***

### B. Meditate on the Dimensions of the Father's Love for the Son...

1. Higher than the heavens... deeper than the oceans; hotter than the blazing sun... that is how fiercely the Father loves his Son
2. The more you comprehend this, the greater will be your sense of the love God has for you and me in Christ

***Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?***

### C. Understand Jesus' Baptism Was to Present Him as King of the World