

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:13-17 NRV

In advertising, as well as in our culture, the programs, books, merchandise, television programs which succeed are the ones which make a connection with a vast majority. If I were to say the words "C'mon down !" you would immediately think of the television game show "The Price is Right". That phrase has made a connection to a lot of people. In the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC as well in the Rock and Roll hall of fame there are items there which made a connection to popular shows and people. There are two chairs in the Smithsonian that were used by Carroll O'Connor and Jean Stapleton in their roles as Archie and Edith Bunker. Those chairs help us made an instant connection with the show which in turn made a huge connection with a number of people. At the Rock and Roll hall of fame, I happened to see displayed a sequenced glove, of the of course it helped make a connection to the popularity of Michael Jackson.

Connections are really important because they help us identify and even feel a part of someone that is popular and we may never see.

The need for connection really answers John the Baptist's question as to why Jesus would take on the baptism for forgiveness of sin. First of all those who came really needed to turn their lives around, so they sought out John's baptism to prepare for the coming one. The only other "religious people" who came were not sincere, and more than likely were there to keep in "good graces" with the people.

Then there is John's build up to Jesus. According the last time we visited John the Baptist on the second Sunday of Advent, Jesus is built up as one "tough hombre", one John says he doesn't even have the privilege of untying the man's sandals (one of the lowest servant jobs to be done.)

Now here is Jesus wanting to be baptized. Matthew records that John tried to prevent him. Sometimes I think those words are polite "gospel shorthand" for what I say was a long and heated discussion by John that Jesus had no business taking a sinner's baptism.

Well John consents, and out of the humbling act of baptism comes a glorious affirmation from God ending with God saying "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased".

After thinking about this event, it seemed to me that a pattern is developing in the message of Jesus ministry to we should pay attention to as well as encourage our faith.

The greatness of Jesus is not just because he is proclaimed "the Son of God". The greatness and the power of Jesus comes from his willingness to make a "connection" with all of us from the most lowly, down and out, to the most important people. It seems to me this pattern of lowliness and humility ALWAYS seems to be affirmed by a God centered event. Jesus is born in a barn, and then come the Heavenly Host. Jesus is baptized, and then comes the presence and voice of God. Finally Jesus is tortured, and dies the death of a criminal traitor on the cross and is raised from the dead.

So let us give thanks to God that when we worship, when we pray, and live out our lives on this earth, we can rest in our faith because in Jesus, truly "God is with us", "Emmanuel".

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