

Matthew031317-012311  
Bridge of Hope  
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## “Identity”

Introduction: Good morning! I’m David and I serve as one of the pastors here at Bridge of Hope. We are glad that you are here with us for worship today.

So I have been thinking about this series that we have been looking at over the last couple of months. And today we move to a really important part of the series. It is a really strong and bold statement that Matthew makes as He further commits Himself to the idea that Jesus is Messiah. In this section that we start to look at today, Matthew uses John the Baptist to directly state the case for Jesus as Messiah. There is no doubt about it. From this story Matthew then launches into the life of Jesus as he is taken into the desert for 40 days of temptation. We will get to that soon enough. But for now . . . for now we get to see this incredible encounter between Jesus and John the Baptist.

Before we take a look at our text and the thoughts that come from it let me ask some questions:

- 1) Why do you think that Jesus came to John to be baptized in water?
- 2) What does Jesus say about Himself when He submits to someone else like John?
- 3) Why is this such a big deal anyway? Why did Matthew take so much time to build to this point in the story? Why did He make it the pivotal point from which he tells the rest of Jesus’ story?

Baptism is an interesting subject in Christendom. There are so many questions surrounding it. And there are so many objections to it. Yet, historically, the church has embraced this ordinance as something important for every believer to do. We argue over methods of baptisms and the name in which the baptism is done. We even argue whether we should baptize people in water. If you hang around long enough and have enough discussions you learn so much about the ideas people have surrounding this ordinance of the church.

It is funny how many people work so hard to avoid it. And even funnier when you see how nervous they get when God is dealing with them about it. It was new in the day of John the Baptist. It was given significance through the account we are studying today. And even in this world that we live; water baptism is a dividing line for many people. It is here that their commitment to a new way of living as a disciple of Jesus is expressed. And so, some 2000 years after this story has taken place, we still talk about it and follow this example as we commit to living differently than before. We follow Jesus Christ and do so even in baptism as we declare our identity to be like Him.

Let’s take a look at our text and get started.

**Matthew 3:13-17 (ESV)** *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all*

*righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."*

And now we see Matthew's primary point as he brings us to the issue of identity.

- **THE EXCHANGE** – Matthew records an exchange between Jesus and John through which he confirms his belief that Jesus is the Messiah.
  1. **This is an interesting interaction between the two main characters in this story.**
    - **JOHN** - We have John who the people are thinking very highly of and believe to be a prophet of God.
      - A man that some might even be wondering if he could be the Messiah.
    - **JESUS** – Then we have Jesus who is the newcomer on the scene and hasn't really become known by anyone.
      - He is most likely a disciple of John which places Him in an interesting position through this interaction between the 2 men.
      - Matthew uses this interchange of conversation at Jesus' baptism to settle the minds and hearts of people.
      - Actually, John settles the matter by the words he speaks, and Matthew simply relays to us his account.
  2. **It is through this exchange between John and Jesus that Matthew further supports his belief that John's role is subordinate to that of Jesus.**
    - We must keep in mind that there would have been a lot of discussion and questions in the minds of those who had lived through both of these men's ministry.
    - Many who did not believe had to struggle their way through figuring out if either of them was anything more than a good teacher.
    - Matthew answers the questions that the people around the believers in Jerusalem would have been asking and wondering about.
    - To understand Jesus as Messiah you have to understand John as the prophet who came to prepare the way for the Messiah.
  3. **There are a couple of really good questions that come up when looking at this exchange as it is recorded by Matthew:**
    - Why would a sinless Jesus need to go through a baptism of repentance?
    - Why would the Messiah come to a prophet and submit to the prophet's teaching and baptism?
    - Hopefully, we can answer these questions as we continue in our message.
  4. **Matthew develops the story by letting us see the exchange as John objects to baptizing Jesus stating that he (John) should be submitting to Jesus' baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire.**
    - John understood his job and his need for the Messiah and his objection allows us to see that he believed Jesus was the Messiah.
    - If the people believed that John was a prophet of God and John believed that Jesus was the Messiah then the people would have to conclude the same thing.
    - So take a moment and place yourself in John's position, this was uncomfortable for him and it made no sense to him because he was the subservient one.

- He knew his place and yet Jesus was asking him to do what should be the other way around. Jesus should be baptizing John.
- And on top of it, John most likely asked the same questions that we have posed.
- Why would the Messiah need to be go through a baptism of repentance?
- We get to see John's willingness to obey God as he was being tested in a really unusual way.
  - His response is the same we all should have when God tests us in unusual ways.
  - What an example is placed in this text to teach us what our own heart should be.
- 5. Then Matthew shares Jesus' simple response, it's because this is the right way to fulfill all that is required.
  - He is saying that this is the way God wants it to be.
  - Again, place yourself into this story and think about it for moment.
    - It would have been easy for Jesus to get caught up in the pride of being recognized for who He really was.
    - It would have been a great moment for Jesus to step in at the very beginning of His ministry on this earth and declare for all who He was.
    - But instead, He humbled Himself to John's baptism of repentance.
    - He responds with the kind of heart that we all need to respond with.
  - Jesus' submission to John's baptism allows Him to indicate His solidarity with John's call to repentance.
    - This was important for the people to understand that he agreed with the message of the prophet.
    - He too would call the people to the same commitments and even more.
  - By identifying with John's message Jesus lays the foundation for His own ministry which is to pick up where John's leaves off.
    - His message would continue to call this people to new levels of righteous living as He would call them to a radical form and expression of love.
    - He would challenge them to love God in ways they had never thought about.
    - Jesus would require love for one another in extreme and deep commitments.
    - And He would expect them to love their neighbors who didn't serve God; even the gentiles would be treated differently in His kingdom.
    - Jesus would pick up where John left off and take it to new levels of spirituality.
  - There is a strong connection between the messages as Jesus takes what John says and provides the way for restoration through His death and resurrection.
    - This is why the Messiah has come.
    - He has come to restore what God wanted to see in creation.
    - He has come to restore man to God.
  - By being baptized with the others at the Jordan River Jesus identifies Himself with all, who by accepting John's baptism have declared a new beginning with God.
  - It really is a new beginning because the Messiah has come.
- 6. In doing this He prepares for His own role as Messiah.
  - Jesus opens the way for His bearing our weaknesses and eventually laying down His life for the redemption of people as they experience the forgiveness of sin.
  - John cannot take them to this point because he is limited to the role of God's prophet.

- This required the One who would come after John that would suffer for the sins of the world and meet this need.
  - This is about the Messiah and Isaiah the prophet had talked about this in several Messianic prophecies.
  - While Matthew makes no attempt to quote these prophecies this exchange provides him with the opportunity to intimate this truth.
7. If Jesus is going to be their representative, He must first be identified with them.
- It was important that He establish that He believed what John said was true and there is no better way to show this than to embrace it for yourself.
  - By His example He led the people in the first steps they needed to take. He identified Himself with them even though He knew no sin.
  - Amazing love, this is what we see.
  - In addition, the language concerning the Messiah spoken by the prophets, like Isaiah, was that he would come from among them as one of no reputation at all.
    - It spoke of the common things.
    - It also spoke of one who would submit to the plan of God and a walk of humility and obedience.
    - The Messiah would be of such character that His life would submit to the plan of God which would result in persecution and eventual death on the cross.
    - He would lay down His life for them out of great love.
  - If He was going to pay the price for them, it would be the way that God had planned it to be, He would be identified with them.

Conclusion: There is no doubt that this exchange between John and Jesus was important and needed to be shared. It spoke of humility and obedience to God. How powerful for us to get to see such an example placed before us; both characters demonstrating the need to obey God in complete humility. This exchange between John and Jesus gives the snapshot we need as we see them working together to compliment and support one another. It is the plan of God unfolding before the people's eyes. And for Matthew's readers this gives more to share with the people they live next to or work with.

If they believed John was a prophet, which many of them did, then they needed to take the next step in following God. They needed to listen to what John had said himself concerning Jesus. John had pointed to Jesus as Messiah. And Matthew is making they knew about it.

We need to follow the example placed before us and people of love for God by obeying Him in real humility. To be a people who are willing to do the difficult things because God says it is right to do. And a people who can share the truth concerning Jesus Christ with others so that they too can believe and follow Him. This story is as much about mission as it is about Jesus as Messiah. Sharing the gospel was expected and not suggested. Jesus is Messiah and we have a responsibility to share that with others around us in love, humility, and obedience to God. Not in arrogance or pride or out of ambition. Simply because God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes shall be saved.

Today, you can believe, and that makes it a great day!

Matthew having established identification with both John's role and the people who have started a new beginning with God continues with his evidence for Jesus who is called Messiah through revelation. That is what we are going to look in 2 weeks when we return to this account of Jesus' baptism. We will look at point 2 of Identify as we also prepare to baptize anyone who comes that week wanting to follow in this example in scripture.