

Today's Reading: Mark 1:4-11

“John [the Baptist] appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, 'After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'”

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'”

Simple Summary (for Parents):

God sent John the Baptist to prepare His people for the coming of Jesus, just as the Old Testament had prophesied (Malachi 4:5–6). John urged people to repent of (or turn from) their sins, and he baptized those who repented in the Jordan River. John's unusual clothing reminds us of the Old Testament prophet Elijah, a man who, like John, was used by God to deliver an important message to God's people (2 Kings 1:8). John was understandably surprised that Jesus came to be baptized, because John knew that Jesus was mightier than him and truly righteous. However, Jesus wasn't baptized because He needed to turn from His sins—He had no sin! Jesus was following God's plan, identifying with sinful people like us so that He could save us (ultimately through His death and resurrection). In His baptism, God identifies Jesus as His “beloved Son.” Point out to your children that all three persons of the Trinity are named in this story: God the Father speaks to God the Son, as God the Spirit descends on Jesus!

Discuss:

1. What is the strangest thing you've ever eaten? Did you notice anything strange about John the Baptist's clothes and the food he ate?

(Give your kids an example of something strange that you've eaten. You may need to read verse 6 again to remind them of John's strange diet and clothing, and point out that this is how the Old Testament prophet Elijah is described.)

2. John the Baptist was a prophet sent by God. What is a prophet?

(A prophet is someone sent by God to deliver a message to people. John was sent to tell people to get ready for Jesus.)

3. John was telling people to repent of their sins. What does it mean to repent?

(To repent of your sins means to turn from them. When we repent, we turn from our sins and we turn to Christ. You might demonstrate the concept of repentance by walking in one direction and then turning around completely and walking in the other direction. You could also illustrate this concept by contrasting a sincere change of heart with a forced apology.)

4. Why was Jesus baptized in today's story?

(While this can be a difficult concept for children to grasp, remind them that Jesus had no sin. He came in obedience to His Father, and through His baptism, Jesus is showing us that He came to save God's sinful people—people like us.)

5. Everyone needs to be able to answer the question "Who is Jesus?" In today's story, God the Father answers that question for us. What does He say?

(You may need to re-read verse 11, where the Father says, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." Tell your kids that God has a unique love for His Son, Jesus. Therefore, if we belong to Jesus, God's love is poured out on us! We can belong to Jesus by turning from our sins and trusting in Him.)

Pray:

Thank God for sending His Son to save sinners like us. Ask God to help you see your own sin and to trust in Jesus.

Sing:

["Jesus, Strong and Kind"](#) (See Week 1 Song Sheet for lyrics)