

**SERMON**  
**By: Gail Fricker**

**New Beginnings (Baptism Sunday) Feb 12<sup>th</sup>**

**Matthew 3: 13-17**

Today we are celebrating the baptism of 4 young children in our church, Kenzie, Jack, Joshua and Charlotte. And so we think about the time when Jesus was baptized. The scripture that was acted out for us, is all about Jesus' baptism – and it is full of firsts!

To begin with – this is the first time, and only time, that Jesus is baptized. He prayed lots of times, he probably sang songs many times, he shared meals with his disciples and others many times – but he only got baptized once. It was a special event. It was sacred. And we still consider baptism to be a very special event. Every week in church we sing, pray, greet each other with the Peace of Christ, but we don't have baptisms every week. In fact the ceremony of baptism is so special, so sacred, that we call it a sacrament. Jesus went to the River Jordan to get baptized; we don't go down to the Nith River to do it (thankfully) – we have baptisms right here in church – but it is still a very sacred event. Today, we celebrate the sacrament of Baptism.

Secondly, when Jesus was baptized, it marked an important step in Jesus' journey. In fact, it marked the beginning of his ministry. Up until his baptism, Jesus had not performed any miracles. But shortly after Jesus was baptized, he began to start his work of teaching, preaching, healing and performing miracles. His baptism marked the beginning of his journey. In the same way, when we are baptized, it marks the beginning of belonging to a church community; it symbolizes the beginning of a journey of faith for Kenzie, Jack, Joshua, and Charlotte.

Another first, is that when Jesus was baptized, the people heard a voice from heaven speak out. Who was that voice? (God). And what did God call Jesus? (My son).

*This is my son* (Matthew 3:17)

This is the first time that Jesus was clearly identified as the Messiah, the Son of God. All the people around had been waiting for the Messiah, the Son of God to come – and when they heard this – they knew, and they believed who Jesus was. They believed that he was the Son of God. And when we make our statements of faith and our promises during baptism, we are also saying that we believe that Jesus was and is the Son of God.

Another first that happened in this story is that something came down from heaven – what was it (a dove). Yes – verse 16 tells us that

*At that moment, the heaven opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove” Matthew 3:16*

The dove represented the Spirit of Heaven – the Spirit of God. We often think of doves still as the symbol of peace. Well, when this dove landed on Jesus, everybody watching knew that Jesus was blessed with the Spirit of God. And in the same way, when we are baptized, we believe that we are blessed with the Spirit of God.

And the final thing is that when Jesus was baptized, and God called him his son, do you remember what else God said?

*With him I am well pleased (Matthew 3:17)*

This the first time that God gives his stamp of approval. God is pleased with Jesus. When we are baptized, we make a promise that we will try to live our lives, and try to bring up our children in ways that will be pleasing to God. We say that we will ‘follow in the ways of Jesus Christ, that we will speak up against oppression, that we will respect our world around us, and that we will love others.’ I know that sometimes we might not be able to do all these things; perhaps as these children grow, there might be times when God may not always be well-pleased with them, but I believe that God always looks down with an approving smile when God sees that we are trying our best to walk with Jesus.

And so, to the parents, god parents, family and friends of Kenzie, Jack, Joshua, and Charlotte – remember that this is a special, sacred day; a day full of firsts; and an opportunity for new beginnings. Let us make the most of them as we make promises to live a new life in Christ, through the power of his Holy Spirit. Amen.

