

**You Are a Child of God, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. E1070107**

**Isaiah 43:1-7, Luke 3:15-17, 21-22**

**Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ, 7 January, 2007**

Please repeat after me: "I am."

"I am a child."

"I am a child of God."

"And because I am a child of God,"

"I am loved."

"And because I am a child of God,"

"And because I am loved, I will love others."

It feels good to belong to God's family. It gives us a sense of heritage, a sense of hope for the future, and a sense of belonging.

Second Isaiah writes, "Thus says the God who created you, . . . 'I have called you by name. . . You are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.'"<sup>1</sup> That is one of those passages to underline and mark in the flyleaf of your Bible.

Because we are members of God's family, we have each other to lean on when times get rough. We have brothers and sisters to care for, and we have brothers and sisters to care for us.

Today we heard Luke's version of Jesus' baptism. Have you ever asked yourself why Jesus was baptized? If baptism was a ritual cleansing, why did Jesus have to be cleansed? If it was immersion into the body of Christ, why would Jesus have to be baptized into himself? Jesus, by being baptized by John, indicated that he was human and needed to publically claim his need for cleansing and his relationship with God.

This story we heard from Luke is a defining moment in the life of Jesus the savior. This version is unique. "After everyone had been baptized," it says, "the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove and a voice called out, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'"<sup>2</sup>

This defining moment is as important as Jesus' birth at Bethlehem. Whereas in the birth story the angel told Joseph and Mary to name the child Jesus, here, it is God who does the naming: "My son!"

The descent of the Holy Spirit indicates that a special relationship between God and Jesus begins here according to Luke. This might even suggest that perhaps Jesus was not born a savior. It was at this defining moment that God's spirit entered Jesus and he became the savior of creation.

If you question what I'm saying, look at verse 23: "Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his work." "Began his work"? What had Jesus been doing during the past ten years of maturity?

One theory is that Jesus was himself a disciple of John the Baptist. Perhaps he lived with John and heard him speak out against the corruption of public leadership. Perhaps he saw the emotional and physical healings that took place when people took responsibility for their actions and changed their ways. Perhaps he did a lot of studying of scripture there at Qumran, and did a

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<sup>1</sup>Isaiah 43:1-2

<sup>2</sup>Luke 3:21-22

lot of praying, and allowed God into his heart. Verse twenty-one reads, “When Jesus was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him.” A prayer life is as vitally important for us as it was for Jesus.

This baptism of Jesus indicates to me that Jesus was human and was a person in need of cleansing and who built his relationship with God through prayer and action. This means that we should not hold him so high up that what he did is not attainable by you and me. God chose to come to us in human form to show what ideal humanity is. If that ideal were unattainable, it would not be an ideal.

We can do what Jesus did! We can teach peace. We can love our enemies. We can forgive those who have wronged us.

“You are my [child], the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” The first two clauses are so important. “You are my child, the beloved.” What kind of an effect did those words have on Jesus? What kind of an effect would those words have on our children? Take your child sometime today, and say to him or her, “you are my child, and I love you.”

Pleasing God. Now there is a novel idea! What if we asked, with every decision we made, every action we took, “Would God be pleased?” It is more important to please God than anyone else. I read one morning in a local paper about a girl named Jenna whose parents were giving as her sixteenth birthday gift, breast implants. She said she needed larger breasts in order to be successful, but she did not yet know what she wanted to be successful at! This is a reflection of the terrible pressure society puts on our children to be sexy and attractive. I do not know who Jenna was trying to please, but it was not the God who created her. I suspect her parents were trying harder to please their daughter than they were the God who named Jenna as God’s own child.

You are a child of God. That makes you special, and I hope you will do your best to please your creator.

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