

✠ Matthew 3:13-17 ✠

**IN NOMINE IESU**

For this one reason John was sent into the dessert: to baptize Jesus. Through this, Jesus was revealed for who He was, the Son of God in whom His Father is well pleased. All the other things of John, the fiery preaching and the warnings, all the other baptisms he performed, all the preparing of the way was in light of this one act, this one baptism. Yet when it came time to fulfill his calling, when it came time to do what he had been sent to do, he faltered and hesitated. Who was he that he should mark the One who would take away the sin of the world? Who was John that he should handle the things of God?

He was but a man; a sinner. Yet to this holy task he was called. John was called to fulfill all righteousness in baptizing Jesus. John knew he was inadequate to the task. He knew that he was unable to please God because he was a sinful man, born in iniquity and constantly struggling against the desires and temptations of the flesh. "Should I not be baptized by you?" He was in need of Jesus' cleansing touch, His healing words. Yet Jesus came to John to fulfill all righteousness.

God calls us. We are inadequate to the task, yet God calls us to fulfill all righteousness. He calls us to be fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, sons and daughters. These are holy occupations in which He finds pleasure and brings about good. He does not look at our qualifications. We have none. Were we to fill out a resume it would be accusingly empty in the "qualifications" and "reference" sections. We are liars and thieves, fornicators and drunkards. We hold grudges against our parents and pawn our parental responsibilities off to the lowest bidder. We avoid our wives and ignore our husbands. Our references are equally bad: the gossip circles we indulge ourselves with, and the rowdy groups we lie to our mothers about. We're a sorry lot of applicants, questioning God's motives and calling good things bad and bad things good, thinking we know better and are smarter than God. And worse yet, denying His Word by denying what He has said about us children of men, that we are all these things, born of the flesh. Yet God calls us to fulfill all righteousness.

No one knows this better and is troubled by this more than pastors, those who fill the Office of the Holy Ministry. Who am I to handle the holy things of God? Who am I to forgive sins or to retain them, or to baptize? Who am I to handle the Word of God, the power of God? I am no one. I am inadequate to the task. Pastors should like to sit and listen and be fed and be forgiven and remain silent. Yet they have been called. It is a pompous fool who makes himself pastor and undershepherd. He does not fear God. And if there is a pastor who carries out his calling without fear because he is inadequate, then he also carries it out without faith.

We deceive ourselves when we think ourselves adequate to the calling God gives us. To whatever God has called you, because you are a sinner, you are inadequate to the task just as John was inadequate to the task of baptizing the One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

And like the pastor who carries out his office without fear and so without faith, fulfill your duty, attend to your calling with fear and trembling. It is a fearful thing to raise a child or to support a family. So many things can go so terribly wrong. Children misbehave and it reflects poorly on you. Husbands forget you on your anniversary and never do the dishes. Wives take

you for granted and never say thank you for your husbandry. Repent. It is not for those reasons that you do as you do. It is because God has called you.

Righteousness is not fulfilled because of you or your personality or your qualities or your talents or your money, or even your great faith, if it is great, rather all righteousness is fulfilled because God has called you to the task. It is God's will and purpose for you, and so He is pleased by you in it.

Strong or weak, great or small, the mother who feeds her children, no matter if it is a seven-course meal or a frozen pizza, fulfills all righteousness. You do well to be afraid of messing up or getting it wrong or saying the wrong thing, but you do better by going ahead and doing what it is that you've been called to do, for thus does God use you to fulfill all righteousness. Whatever your vocation in life, God has called you to it and so is pleased by you in it. These are the good works that we have been called to do according to His purpose. No woman makes herself a mother; it is God who gives life. No man makes himself a husband; it is God who gives the woman. He has called you to His purpose, to fulfill all righteousness.

It may seem mundane and unattractive. No one likes to do the dishes or to change dirty diapers, to scrape sidewalks or run for milk at six in the morning. Yet to this we have been called. Let it be so now, for thus do you fulfill all righteousness. Husbands love your wives even as Christ loved His Church, giving His life for her. Wives, submit to her husbands as to the Lord. Children, honor your father and your mother by obeying them. You don't know why you have to pick up your toys again or feed the dog or mow the grass, or why you have to stop running in the house, but you do it because you have been called to this purpose, to fulfill all righteousness by obeying and honoring your parents.

So then do not think that what you do is beneath you. And do not think that God does not notice what you do and bless you for it. How many would have stood in the Jordan and thought, another baptism? Fine, since it's Jesus. In the same way do not begrudge the Lord for giving to you too many mouths to feed and not enough money; too many errands to run and too many people to care for. It is He who has called you to this purpose.

God's word sanctifies all things. If you fear that you are inadequate, have faith that God has called you to this purpose. Do the umpteenth million thankless load of laundry on faith. Not some generic faith that is more a daydream than faith; that God will vindicate you and make others admire you and fawn over you for your faithful service, but the faith that what you do is pleasing to almighty God. You are His child and He cares for you and watches over you like a hen gathering her chicks under her wing. You have need to be baptized by Him with the Holy Spirit and with fire. And so He does. He cleanses you with the waters made holy by His Son in the Jordan, and purges from you what is harmful and deadly. He has renewed a right spirit in you and opened your mouth that you may declare His praise.

And it is He who fulfills all righteousness through you. He cares for children by giving them parents and grandparents. He cares for men by giving wives and He looks after women by supplying husbands. He watches after the oppressed by setting up governments. He cares for you by your neighbor, and your neighbor by you.

So what importance is there in making your billionth peanut butter and jelly sandwich? What dignity is there in wiping your comatose father's mouth after he's drooled out his

oatmeal? Let it be so now, for thus do you fulfill all righteousness. And by this your Father in heaven is well pleased in you.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠