

Epiphany Sunday: Jesus Was Baptized For Us

FOR THE TEACHER:

This lesson focuses on Jesus' baptism. Jesus' baptism is an important story because all three persons of the Trinity are revealed in it (thus there is an "epiphany" or "manifestation" of Jesus' true identity as God the Son in relationship with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit). It is also important because it explains our own baptisms to us. Jesus was baptized for us, so that our sinful nature could be washed clean in him. The only reason that our baptism is meaningful is because Jesus has already been baptized for us, taking our sinful nature and making it clean in his baptism, death, resurrection, and ascension.

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) are part of the Trinitarian Catechism.

FIRST ACTIVITY: Dirty Pennies made new. Find some old copper pennies, enough for each child to have one. You will also need a glass bowl, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vinegar and 1 tsp salt. First pass out a penny to each child. Point out how dirty the pennies are and ask if anyone has any ideas on how to clean them. Can the pennies clean themselves? (No). How can the pennies get clean? (Someone has to clean them.) Have the kids help you add the vinegar to the glass bowl. Then add the salt and stir until dissolved. Next, have each kid put their penny in the bowl. Now let the pennies sit in the vinegar/salt water while you move on to the scripture. (No further stirring is needed.)

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Ask for a helper to pass out a bible to each child. Have them all turn to Mark 1:1-11. For older kids, have them take turns reading.

1The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2It is written in Isaiah the prophet:

*"I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way"—*

3"a voice of one calling in the desert,

*'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"*

These words come from the Old Testament. * *What does the Old Testament tell us about?* (The story of Israel).

* *Which four books of the Bible tell the story of Jesus' life?* Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

4And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

6John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

**What is sin? To not trust our Father in heaven and not do what he tells us to do.*

**When did sin enter the world? When Adam and Eve didn't trust our Father and ate the forbidden fruit.*

**What kind of life did Jesus live? A perfect one, without ever sinning*

Now let's look back at our pennies. Have each child grab a penny out of the bowl, rinse it in clear fresh water and then dry it off with a paper towel. Notice how shiny and new it is. Think of yourself as the penny and the dirt as sin. How did the penny get clean? (Someone had to put it in the water.) How do we get clean from sin? (Jesus made us clean through his baptism.)

9At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

**How many gods are there? One*

**How many persons does God have? Three*

**Who are the three persons of God? Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*

**Which person of God became the man Jesus? The Son*

**Who baptized Jesus? John the Baptist*

**Who spoke from heaven at Jesus' baptism and said "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased"? The Father*

**Who descended on Jesus at his baptism in the form of a dove? The Holy Spirit*

**When do we celebrate Jesus' baptism? Every Sunday and especially on Epiphany Sunday.¹*

If John was baptizing people who sinned, and Jesus never sinned, why was Jesus baptized? He was baptized for us, so that our sinful nature would be washed clean and made new.

¹ In the Western tradition (Roman Catholic and Protestant) the visit of the Wise Men is celebrated on the day of Epiphany (Jan. 6) and the baptism of Jesus on the first Sunday after Epiphany. In the Eastern Orthodox tradition the visit of the Wise Men is celebrated in conjunction with Christmas and Jesus' baptism is celebrated on Epiphany (Jan. 6). Since Good News Fellowship, where these lessons were written, does not hold a separate service on the day of Epiphany, and instead celebrates Epiphany on the first Sunday after Epiphany, they have chosen to follow the Eastern Orthodox custom and focus on Jesus' baptism when celebrating Epiphany.

PRIMARY LESSON: Jesus was baptized for us so that our sinful nature would be made new and we would be able to say we are sorry for our sins and be baptized like Jesus.

SECOND ACTIVITY: A New Creation. Before class, prepare a bag of craft type items for each child. For uniformity, make sure each bag contains the same items. This could include a foot of yarn, beads, craft sticks, small square pieces of cloth, feathers, molding wire, a piece of construction paper, etc. You will also want to make glue, scissors and markers available for the kids to share. Pass out one bag to each child. Ask them to make anything they want but they have to use only the items in their bag. They don't have to use every item but they should try to use most of them. Set a certain amount of time for the kids to work on their projects. Then, for those who want to, let each child tell everyone else what they made. Talk about how the item started out in several different parts but they were put together to make something beautiful. In the same way, Jesus takes our broken parts and makes us new.

PRAYER: For older kids, have one of them pray this prayer (or come up with their own). For younger kids, have them repeat after you as you read the prayer.

Father in heaven, thank you for adopting us all as your children forever. Thank you, Jesus, for being baptized for us so that our sinful nature could be changed. Holy Spirit, help us to believe that Jesus has made us good like him so that we will want to be baptized too. In Jesus' name, Amen.