



# Hear the Word

from Pastor Drew J. Yoos



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

## Baptism of Our Lord

January 13, 2019

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

It's Christmas Eve in Texas

-I'm about 4 months into my internship, large congregation

-4 Christmas eve services, 4:00, 6:00, 9:00, 11:00

-on staff is me, the intern, one associate pastor around my age and my supervisor, pastor of 20+ years named Phil

-and then ON Christmas Eve- Phil calls in sick

So one of the biggest days of the year in this huge congregation is left up to- the two of us

-It felt like dad turning over the keys to his Ferrari and saying- don't wreck it

-and I'm sure to some people it felt weird to not have Phil there

-it felt weird to us, but it was also really fun

-when parents are away the kids will play sort of thing

-Ever had that feeling? Boss is away on a trip, teacher doesn't show up for class

-But I'm sure there was question on people's minds that day - Who exactly is in charge?

And for us today, there's a bit of an elephant in the room/ or not in the room depending on how you look at it

-Who exactly is in charge?

-And the one thing I'm sure of, that I've told many people- it's not me

-But this is the first Sunday this church has been without a Pastor since before I was born

-and things will go on mostly as usual, but there are some feelings around

-And as far as I can tell, there are 2 predominant feelings to this in between time that many of us are experiencing

-anticipation and confusion

- There's **anticipation** about what comes next both in the interim period and beyond
- This church will form a call committee for a lead pastor for the first time in a long time
- There will be new ideas, new energy, a new vision and even some new failures- but all that is exciting stuff
- And then there's the **confusion**
- What's the process like now?
- Who will handle certain responsibilities?
- Who's in charge of what?
- Yep, this is unfamiliar territory, and when it comes to church there's a good chance that you are feeling some combination of anticipation and confusion right now. I know I am.

Now take a look at this story, from the very beginning of Jesus' ministry

- before we even get to the baptism of Jesus, we come across this crowd of people in a kind of in-between period
- They had been following John for a while, but now John is telling them that someone new is coming
- there's some major changes on the horizon in everyone's life, but no one's sure what exactly that will look like

And the text says there are 2 major feelings in this crowd: anticipation and confusion

- right there in the first verse- the people are filled with expectation and all were questioning
- is John the messiah? Is Jesus the messiah? What is this baptism thing? And what does any of it have to do with us?
- And so, right before the people meet Jesus for the first time, they're not exactly sure what come next or what to expect or who is even in charge

We experience these kinds of transitions in life all the time

- when you realize that something new and different is ahead of you but you still have so many questions about what it will mean
- a move, a new job, the birth of a child, when Goldberg's Deli closes
- This is really even the same story of our government right now
- With the longest government shut down ever going on and no end in sight
- there's some anticipation about what's next and how long this thing can go
- there is definitely some confusion
- and who is in charge?!

So this is a very human place to be, isn't it?

- these are 2 very human emotions to be balancing when looking ahead

And so when you look at the future of this church or in your own life, there's probably plenty of anticipation and even more questions.

- maybe you're excited for what a new year and possibilities might bring
- maybe there's one or two major questions looming in your life right now
- maybe you're totally sure what this church needs from a new pastor
- maybe you don't really know where to start

And as John tries to prepare the people for this new thing called Jesus he clearly is talking with a lot of hope

- the same kind of hope that we might feel with a new pastor or getting the govt running again
- something new is coming
- there's hope that things will soon be different than they are now
- This messiah is coming and I'm not even worthy to tie his shoes
- I baptize with water, but he'll baptize with fire
- That's exciting stuff
- ...and confusing stuff

And just when the people are at the brink, filled with anticipation... John reminds them exactly what all this newness will mean... letting go of the old

- he tells the crowd that before something new can happen, the old has to die
- he uses an agricultural metaphor of wheat and chaff to talk about it
- he says- His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire
- to those of us who don't harvest wheat for a living, this might seem like a strange metaphor but to the agricultural society that Jesus is living in, they get the picture
- wheat is good; that's where the bread comes from
- chaff is bad; it's just the stems and grass that can't be used
- wheat has to stay. Chaff has to go
- When Jesus comes, some things will have to go
- some of our own chaff will have to be separated from the wheat
- some parts of ourselves will have to go-
  - the importance we place in ourselves and our ideas
  - the judgments we hold towards others
  - the ways in which we cling to material things
  - even the patterns that we have grown comfortable with
- all chaff

And so even as we sit here today... full of anticipation and confusion about what's ahead, we have to ask ourselves- what parts of us do we need to let go of today?

-what chaff should be burned in the fire before the bread can be made?

-what ideas and hopes and patterns and obstacles will the Holy Spirit clear away so that something truly new can be born?

Luther even spoke about baptism as every day dying and rising

-every day letting go of the old self so that new life in Christ could start

And for Jesus, death was only the beginning

-As Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens opened and God named Jesus as a beloved child

-Beyond the anticipation and confusion of the current moment in this congregation and in your life, there is a God who has already named you as a beloved child

-and in doing so, answers that one big question of- who's in charge?

-in those times when we are filled with confusion or questions, we simply need to return to the waters of baptism that remind us exactly who is in charge of us

Can you feel it?

Change is coming, Something new is approaching for you, for us all

-there is anticipation of what's ahead, new ideas, new identities, new ways of being

-and there definitely is confusion and questions

-and yes, there is even some death and letting go

But we have been claimed in the waters of baptism

-we have been forgiven and set free

-and so we don't need to worry about what's coming ahead because we know without a doubt who's in charge here.