

“Making the Connection”—Mark 1:9-11

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Making the Connection”, is Mark 1:9-11 → *In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when He came up out of the water, immediately He saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

To what extent will you go in order to feel “connected” to those people whom you meet? Think of the times when you’ve been introduced to someone and, throughout the process of getting to know them better, you tried to find people, places or things which made you feel more “connected” to them in an effort to feel more comfortable in your relationship with them. It happens on all levels of life. Adopted children seeking to find their biological family members; a person feeling a sense of relationship with someone else by discovering he is related to his third cousin’s wife through his aunt on his mother’s side once removed; people seeking to be friends through social network avenues with old high school classmates, with whom they didn’t want to be friends while in high school.

Why this natural tendency to connect with others in relationship? Because we were created for relationship. Remember Adam, the first human being created by God? Yahweh stated that *it is not good that the man should be alone*. (Genesis 2:18) But . . . Adam wasn't alone. There were all kinds of animals around him. Unfortunately when he named them they didn't understand what he was saying. So God created a woman, someone like him and yet different enough that they could compliment each other and continue their "relationship building" through procreation. It's all about relationship and the desire to "make the connection" with others!

You were not only created for relationship with others but also for relationship with the LORD. Unfortunately, Adam & Eve decided to "redefine" relationships by disobeying Yahweh, bringing sin into the mix of relationships on every level. Such "redefinition" is so serious that it drives the wedges of hatred, resentments, contempt, slander and all the other dynamics which separate relationships through sin with other people **and with the LORD**. However, the LORD **always wants** a relationship with you no matter what you do, say or think! He is **always** trying to make the connection with you in His love and grace.

It is this desire of Yahweh for an eternal relationship with you which brought Jesus to the Jordan river to be baptized by John. It was time for the LORD to make the connection which would bring about the forgiveness of your

sins and a restored relationship with Him **once and for all!**

Since Jesus was the sinless Son of God it seems rather strange that He would need to be baptized, as John's baptism was so closely connected with repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The baptism which Jesus commanded is a means through which the Holy Spirit connects us to Jesus' death and resurrection, as Romans 6:3-5 says: *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.*

Christ's baptism was partly His way of making the connection with us sinful people, truly a death and life connection! It was necessary for Him to make this connection with us sinners in order *to fulfill all righteousness* (cf. Matthew 3:15)—to make our connection with the LORD right again! Jesus' baptism was connected to His mission of fulfilling the righteous requirements of God's Law **on your behalf!**

The revelation of Jesus as the *beloved Son* of God the Father and the anointing with the Holy Spirit at His baptism was the beginning of His mission, which guided Him to the point of taking your sins upon Himself on the cross of Calvary. In Luke 12:50 Jesus even referred to this mission of re-connecting

sinner to God the Father as *a baptism to undergo* (NIV), saying that He was greatly distressed until it would be completed. God so wants to make the connection of love, grace and forgiveness with sinners that He took on human flesh in the Person of Jesus, allowed Himself to take the judgment of hell which your sins deserve upon Himself by dying on the cross and rose again to give you victory of the power of sin, death and the devil! That's how madly God is in love with you and how badly He wants to be connected with you eternally!!

Unfortunately many people who have been connected to His grace and forgiveness in baptism are disconnecting themselves from God the Father. How? By refusing to connect with Him at the place where He promises to make the connection with us—in worship with the gathered believers in Christ. Some have “de-churched” themselves—removed themselves from the physical presence of Christ in Word and Sacraments distributed by the gathered believers. This is eternally dangerous if it is accompanied by unbelief!

Others have “de-churched” themselves by a misunderstanding of the means of grace—the way in which our heavenly Father desires to connect with us in His *Beloved Son*. “Faith” becomes understood so “personally” that they see no need to gather with other believers in worship for a number of reasons, most of which can actually be the delusions of the devil to keep them from staying connected to God's forgiveness of sins. Faith becomes defined

by their own ideas or feelings rather than by Christ and His written Word, thus making faith their own private business. Failing to recognize their identity in Christ **with other believers**, they fail to see their presence with the gathered believers in worship as necessary to distribute as well as receive the forgiveness of sins through the means of grace. However, the LORD **always wants** a relationship with them no matter what they do, say or think! He is **always** trying to make the connection with them in His love and grace in Christ through the Gospel and Sacraments!

God the Father revealed His desire to make a loving, forgiving connection with sinners throughout Jesus' earthly ministry. In verse 11 of our text he wanted everyone to know that Jesus was His *beloved Son with Whom He was well pleased*. He repeated this same revelation at other times throughout His earthly ministry as a reminder that He was acting by grace in our lives! He was *well please* with Jesus because He willing made the connection with sinners by suffering at their hands, by taking upon Himself the eternal judgment for their sins, **even though sinners didn't want or ask for that connection**. It was a pure expression of grace which flows from His pure love as expressed in Romans 5:8 → *God shows His love for us in that **while we were still sinners**, Christ died for us.*

By nature we desire to make connections with people in many ways. It is the sinful nature which avoids making the connections with God, which leads

to improper connections with others. If you are not making the connection to God through His Word and Sacraments, repent, and come back to where He comes to make the connection of forgiveness in Christ with you amongst the gathered assembly of believers. If you have “de-churched” yourself, repent and receive the forgiveness of sins where Christ says it is distributed by His body of believers in worship together. If you are making the connection with God through His means of grace, continue to repent and continue receiving His forgiveness of sin!

Christ has made the connection with us sinful people, truly a death and life connection! It is a death and life connection because it involves dying to self and sin in repentance and through faith being raised in Christ to **walk in newness of life**. Thus, this death and life connection that Jesus made with us sinners by His baptism has changed our lives as well as the ways in which we make the connection in relationship with others! It will affect how we connect in conversation, compassion, forgiveness and in a love which flows from the Person & Work of our Father’s *Beloved Son*! Amen.

Describing our relationship connection, Jesus used the example of Him being the vine and we being the branches. He says in John 15:4 →

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.