



## Sermon, Sunday December 22, 2024

# "The Who Baptizes with the Holy Spirit and Fire"

**SCRIPTURE: Luke 3:7-18** <sup>7</sup> John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? <sup>8</sup> Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. <sup>9</sup> Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." <sup>10</sup> And the crowds asked him, "What, then, should we do?" <sup>11</sup> In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise." <sup>12</sup> Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" <sup>13</sup> He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." <sup>14</sup> Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages." <sup>15</sup> As the people were filled with expectation and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, <sup>16</sup> John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup> 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." <sup>18</sup> So with many other exhortations he proclaimed the good news to the people.

### Introduction: John the Baptist's proclamation

Today is the 4th Sunday of Advent. John the Baptist in today's text played the most unique role in Jesus' life. The New Testament that tells the most detailed story about the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus is the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of Luke explains the birth of Jesus by connecting it with the birth of John the Baptist. Later, Jesus is baptized by John.

Today's text contains a sermon by John the Baptist. In verse 8 of chapter 3 of today's text, he said in a firm yet shocking tone; **'Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.'**

The Jews were proud of the fact that they were Abraham's descendants. This is because the Jews believed that God's promise to Abraham had been passed down throughout Jewish history. However, John the Baptist shouted to the Jews that the lineage of Abraham was not important. After hearing John's sermon, the crowd was astonished and asked John the Baptist, **'What should we do?'**

### Body: He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire

In response to this question, John the Baptist said three specific things in verses 11-14 of the text. **First**, John the Baptist told the crowd that those who had extra clothes should share them with those who had none, and those who had enough to eat should share them with those who had none. **Second**, John the Baptist said that tax collectors should only receive the amount of tax stipulated by law. In other words, he told the tax collectors not to take bribes. **Third**, John the Baptist told the soldiers not to extort other people's money, not to accuse the innocent, and to be



satisfied with their own pay. The key point that John the Baptist is trying to convey here is a faithful life according to conscience and law.

According to today's text, people thought that John the Baptist was the Messiah who would save them. John the Baptist lived an extremely disciplined life in the wilderness. His life and teachings were full of charisma that was difficult for anyone to match. He was a man full of holy imagination who could foresee a new world. The Jews probably thought that John the Baptist would be the Messiah who would establish a world full of justice and peace that the prophets had hoped for.

However, contrary to the Jews' expectations of him, John the Baptist said that he was not the Christ, but only played a role in revealing who Christ was. Today's text, Luke 3:16, says: **'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'**

In this verse, John the Baptist says, **'He who is more powerful than I'** is Jesus Christ. John baptizes with water, but Jesus Christ will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. Here, water baptism refers to John's role, and the Holy Spirit and fire baptism refer to Jesus' role.

So what does John's role of water baptism mean? As mentioned above, it is living a faithful life according to conscience and law. This is a world full of justice, peace and humanism. However, it is very difficult to achieve this kind of world in our reality. Also, even if this were to happen, people living in this world would not be completely satisfied. This is the limit of water baptism given by John the Baptist. So, John the Baptist testified that Jesus, who would come after him, would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. In other words, water baptism only changes our outer appearance, but Holy Spirit baptism fundamentally changes our very nature. Apostle Paul described this change in **2 Corinthians 5:17**, **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"** So, how can we experience the Holy Spirit and the baptism of fire?

Chapter 2 of Acts tells the story of the first church community, the Jerusalem church. The first thing that happened to them was the filling of the Holy Spirit. The disciples met in the upper room of John Mark's house.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of fire mentioned by John the Baptist in today's text have the same meaning. If John the Baptist's water baptism renews our actions in life, Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit renews our souls. The Holy Spirit is fully present at their gatherings. Acts 2:4 describes this as, **"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."**

Afterwards, Jesus' disciples, filled with the Holy Spirit, went out into the streets of Jerusalem and began to boldly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were ashamed of being disciples of Jesus who was crucified, and were afraid of people's criticism, so they went into hiding. However, their thoughts and attitudes have completely changed. They went to the ends of the world and lived as witnesses of Jesus. How were these things possible?

Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit makes us completely free. In fact, Jesus demonstrated this ability to people during his public ministry. Jesus said that we are not slaves but children of God. Jesus said that the owner of the Sabbath is man. He also told us to free ourselves from worries about what to eat, drink, and wear, and to focus entirely on heaven. Also, Jesus said that God is like a shepherd who searches for the lost sheep until the end. Jesus not only said this but lived out what he said with his life. The life that Jesus lived was on a completely different level from the life that people thought of at the time.

So, on what basis did John the Baptist said that Jesus, who would come after him, would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire, and that he was not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals.



## Conclusion: Resurrection Faith

**The Apostles' Creed**, which expresses the Christian faith, says that Jesus **'rose again from the dead.'** No one in this world dies and comes back to life to live eternal life. Only Jesus Christ was resurrected according to God's will.

Resurrection is an event that transforms us into eternal life that God will achieve in the end. Therefore, the Gospel of John (11:26-27) testifies that those who believe in Him will live even if they die, and those who live and believe in Him will never die.

However, it is not easy for us to realize resurrection in our lives. For us to realize this, we must completely change our existing ideas about life. If we think that living a healthy, splendid, and wonderful life is the only way to live a happy life, it is impossible to realize the resurrection of Jesus.

Christians believe that life is not ours but God's. Therefore, to enjoy life abundantly, we must be bound to God. If we are to be united with God, we must deeply know who God is. However, the way we can know God most deeply is through Jesus Christ. Therefore, when we know and believe in Jesus Christ and are bound to God, we can experience true life.

However, for some people, words such as resurrection and life may feel very distant. This is because the world we live in is difficult and overly competitive. I tell these people to get away from the idea that a happy life can only unfold if all the problems in our lives are completely solved. To put it simply, if our salary is low, we can live as low as we can, and if our health is weak, we can live as weak as we can. If I were to compare myself, there would be no fundamental difference if I ministered in a church with 20-30 people rather than hundreds or thousands. If we let go of some of the greed in our lives, we will begin to see what is important.

Christians do not envy anyone or boast about their lives. Christians are people who focus only on the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Living like this is neither easy nor forced. This is why we need the Holy Spirit and fire baptism in our lives. Because only through this do we become fundamentally new people. As we spend the fourth week of Advent, I hope that your and my life will be filled with the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Through it, I hope you experience resurrection, the event of change to eternal life achieved by God. **Amen!**

