

### **Matthew 3:13-17**

*Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."*

Three years ago, I gave a particular sermon on this Sunday. I know exactly what I said. The reason I know this is because I have a record of each sermon I have ever given, although some should have been granted a peaceful burial long ago. The reason that I keep track of them is because I don't want to repeat myself using the same illustrations or take the same approach in bringing God's message. So, I go back and look back at what I have said before. On the other hand, sometimes it makes sense to bring back a thought for us to consider again.

Three years ago, I asked you all a question. I asked, if someone were to come up to you and ask you what your worldview was, how would you respond? Everyone has one, by the way. Whether it's apparent to others or maybe somewhat transparent, we all still have one. Whether it is apparent even to us, we have a worldview. So, how do you describe or define yours?

Now, as you think about that, let me say that we need to start by making an important distinction at the outset. Our worldview is not the same thing as our view of the world. One of the major differences is that a view of the world is individually driven.

Our view of the world develops over time and it is formed by our circumstances and our experiences. When considering our view of the world we might answer by saying that the world is a wonderful place full of opportunity. On the other hand, our answer might be that the world is a hard place full of struggle and unfairness. It all depends on what we have seen.

We might see the world as a place full of war, prejudice, and indifference or maybe we see it as a place full of love, charity, and concern for others. Someone being brought up in a comfortable home with two parents, three square meals a day, a dog lying next to the fireplace, 3.4 televisions (that is the current national average, I think), two cars in the garage, and a quality neighborhood school would undoubtedly see the world as a place full of possibilities and

opportunity. On the other hand, someone from a broken, inner-city home, surrounded by crime and drugs and poverty and abuse would have a very different view of the world. So, a worldview is different from a view of the world in that a view of the world is individual to each person.

Another difference between a worldview and a view of the world is that we can, and often do, change our view of the world over time. That makes sense, right? As our circumstances and experiences change we often find ourselves also changing our view of the world around us. For example, someone who has lived a healthy life and then is stricken with a debilitating disease that drains their energy and their finances and their patience with life may come to view the world in an entirely different way than they had before their illness. Just as someone who, let's say, turns their back on an addiction and begins to live a productive and fulfilling life would. They too, through their new experiences, would have a different view of things. So, another difference between a worldview and a view of the world is that we can, and often do, change our view of the world as our circumstances and experiences change.

So, have I muddied that sufficiently? I guess we're still left with the question what is a worldview, what is our worldview. Well, according to Webster's, a worldview is: a comprehensive conception of the world especially from a specific standpoint. From a specific standpoint. What I hear in that is that a worldview is our starting point. It is a lens through which we encounter things. It is the shoes with which we walk through this world. It is a set of truths that we accept that guides us and defines who we are.

Unlike a view of the world, a worldview is not individualistic. As hard as it is for us in our world and within our society to grasp, we don't create a worldview out of our experience, we adopt it. We adopt a worldview and then we allow our experience to be understood through that. Once we have embraced a worldview, it, not us, no matter what our circumstances turn out to be, defines the way we see the world. It becomes our constant. Our north star. It guides our actions and it frames our viewpoints. We don't change our worldview based on our circumstances. Instead, we are the ones changed by our worldview. The context of our worldview gives meaning to everything we experience, not vice versa. While we might define our view of the world, our worldview, whether we want to admit it or not, defines us.

And so, what is your worldview? What is *our* worldview, as Christians? Now you might say, "That depends." Are we talking about Episcopalians, or Baptists, or Catholics, or the big, non-denominational church?" But I'm not talking about worship style, or some particular concept, or way, of baptism, or whether you wear a tie to church on Sundays, or jeans and tennis shoes. What I'm asking is, "What is our foundation? What holds our life up and what defines our path?"

You see, contrary to what many might take from popular culture and understanding; and contrary to modern and post-modern theological thought, we do have a very specific worldview. We do have a foundational belief. It's specific, it's concrete, and it's clearly stateable. As a

matter of fact, in just a few minutes we are going to state it right here publicly as we renew our Baptismal Covenant with God.

If you listen as we go through it, you will hear that our Christian worldview tells us that there is a thing called evil, it is real, it is in the world, and that we should stand against it.

In our Christian worldview, we recognize that there is one God and that that God created all things both in heaven and on earth.

Our Christian worldview states that Jesus is the Son of God, not just a talented teacher/philosopher and not just a good personal example of how to live. Our Christian worldview tells us that Jesus is THE Son of God who took on the form of a human being and died sacrificially because we needed him to do that for us. We needed Him to do that because we couldn't. He was buried and He was brought to life again, and through that He accomplished for each of us something that we were, and are, unable to do for ourselves.

Our Christian worldview recognizes that God is active in the world and in our lives and will guide us, if we let him. We also recognize that God will leave us to our own will, if that is our desire. In our worldview, we acknowledge that God has sent the Holy Spirit as a guide in order to help us know God and His desire for our lives.

Our Christian worldview also says that all truth necessary for renewed relationship with God can be found in His Word to us, and in the teaching of the Apostles. And our worldview also tells us that there is power in the breaking of the bread, the Eucharist that we are going to partake of shortly, and that we can, and are called to, be in conversation through prayer with that one God who created and guides all things.

Our Christian worldview tells us that there is a thing called sin. It is what separates us from God and each other, and that we are to turn away from that state and those actions and back towards God, and through God back to each other.

And finally, our Christian worldview tells us that we have responsibilities. We are, through our words and example, to display our worldview and how we are defined by it for all to see. Through our worldview, we are to embrace all people in love and justice and respect but not in cheap love and cheap justice and cheap respect that leaves people where they are because we only want to get involved just so far, instead of showing them a different way.

So, there it is. That is the Christian worldview. It is something that we need to hear now and again, especially as we begin a new year. It's concrete, it can be shared, and we are defined by it, not it by us and our experiences. We need to remember that it is our starting point, and that it frames our lives. Everything we encounter needs to be encountered through it. Everyone we

love needs to be loved according to it. Every truth that we tell, that we proclaim, needs to be measured against it. And the profound purpose and the amazing joy that Jesus modeled for us in our passage from Matthew this morning can only be found in it.

And so now I invite us to turn to page 405, as we stand and renew our baptismal covenant with God...