

The Majestic and Meek One

Matthew 3:13-17 (ESV)

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him,^[a] and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son,^[a] with whom I am well pleased."

Background:

The baptism of Jesus is recorded in all four Gospels. In Matthew's Gospel, this moment marks the first appearance of Jesus as an adult, the beginning of His public ministry, and His first recorded words in the Gospel.

This passage reveals not only what Jesus does, but who Jesus is and what kind of ministry He has come to fulfil. The heart of the passage is Matthew 3:17, where the voice of the Father speaks from heaven.

These affectionate words are also theologically loaded. The Father intentionally quotes from two Old Testament passages: Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1. They both reveal Jesus' identity as both God's Majestic King and God's Meek and Suffering Servant.

DISCUSS

1. The Majestic King (Matthew 3:17a; cf. Psalm 2)

Read Psalm 2 together

Psalm 2 is a royal psalm that speaks of the coming Messianic King. The nations rage and plot against the Lord and His Anointed (v1–3), yet God is not threatened. Instead, He laughs (v4), speaks in wrath, and declares that He has set His King on Zion (v6).

This King rules over all nations (v8), judges rebellion (v9), and calls rulers to respond rightly: to serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling (v11).

What would it look like, in your current situation, to “serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling”?

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2. The Meek and Humble Servant (Matthew 3:17b; cf. Isaiah 42 & 53)

The theme of the Servant is first introduced in Isaiah 42, and reaches its deepest expression in Isaiah 52–53.

Read Isaiah 42:1-4

Once again, we hear familiar language: this is the One in whom God delights, upon whom God places His Spirit. The Servant is marked not by a loudness or force, but by a gentleness. He does not shout, crush, or extinguish; instead, he ministers with gentleness, restoring what is weak and fragile.

We see His gentleness in the ultimate expression in Isaiah 53.

Read Isaiah 53:3-12 aloud as a cell

Here we see the Suffering Servant. He is despised, rejected, silent in suffering, pierced for our transgressions, and crushed for our iniquities. He obeys the Father fully and bears our sins for our healing.

In what ways does the gentleness of the Servant make Jesus more approachable to you? In what ways does it challenge you?

3. Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand (Matthew 3:2; 4:17)

Both John the Baptist and Jesus proclaim the same message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matthew intentionally places our passage between these two identical calls, showing us that who Jesus is leads directly to how we must respond.

Because the Servant King has come, repentance is not merely feeling remorse, but a reorientation. It is a turning away from sin and a turning toward Jesus. At times, we may need to remind and preach to ourselves of His majesty to resist sin; at other times, we may need to cling to His gentleness and the love the Servant has given us through His suffering.

Which picture of Jesus do you need to preach to yourself more right now: the fearsome King or the gentle Servant? Why?

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Pray For:

1. Ask for hearts that fear and rejoice rightly

Pray that we would hold reverence and joy together in our worship and obedience

2. Pray for those we know who feel weary, fragile, or close to giving up.

Pray that our loved ones, or even ourselves, would experience the restoring care of the Servant

3. Pray for grace to repent and turn to Jesus

Pray for God to help us hate sin more and love Jesus more, that we would return to Jesus knowing that he is the King who commands our allegiance and the Servant who restores us by grace.