DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEXT SUMMARY

Today's text, Matt 3:13-17, gives us Matthew's account of the inauguration of Jesus' public ministry, His baptism by John.

INTRODUCTION (observation):

Because this is a very familiar text, we are tempted to neglect the importance of careful observation. This week we will employ one or both of the following methods to do a close and careful reading of this familiar story. As you employ one or both these methods, what do you notice that you had not seen before?

1. Copy the text to make yourself attend to every phrase, every word.

2. Read the text aloud to slow down and reinforce the meaning by doubling your sensory input (both seeing and hearing). You can also read the text in another English version; if you choose a paraphrase, you may notice nuances you missed in your familiar version.

DISCUSSION (INTERPRETATION):

1. How would the story of Jesus be different without this account of His baptism? What essential information about Jesus and His mission do we find in this story?

2. It's not hard to understand why John would be reluctant to baptize Jesus. John sees Jesus, the Messiah he had promised, asking to participate in his baptism of repentance. So we find ourselves asking with John: why did the sinless Jesus submit Himself to a baptism of repentance? (See Jesus' own answer to John's question; see also 2 Cor 5:21.)

3. Biblical scholars point to this story as evidence that all three Persons of the Trinity must be thought of not as three expressions of one Person but as three separate Persons. What roles do we see all three Persons playing simultaneously in this crucial moment in Jesus' life and ministry?

SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

In the baptism of Jesus, we see a confluence of two key themes in His person and work: we get the first glimpse of **His mission** (identifying with sinners who need to repent of their sin), and we see **His commission** (exhibited in His anointing by the Spirit and the Father's vocal endorsement).

The effect of this text lies in the way it informs the assumptions that run in the background of our minds, like an operating system in a computer. It is important that we understand these two key truths about Jesus because wrong assumptions contaminate both our thinking and our doing.

1. **Jesus' mission called for Him to identify with the sinners who came to John for a baptism of repentance, as if He also needed to repent.** He carried that mission to its conclusion in His suffering on behalf of all us sinners, and He announced its accomplishment with three words on the cross: "It is finished."
    - His baptism was was not the beginning of Jesus' suffering disgrace on our behalf. How had the Son of the Almighty suffered already, long before His baptism? (See Phil 2:6-7.)
    - Since we cannot respond in kind (we cannot offer anything of like value in exchange), how can we respond to the way Jesus carried out His mission of identifying with sinners?

2. **Jesus' commission indicates that He was fully qualified to accomplish His mission.** Many are satisfied to apply a reductionistic filter to the life of Jesus, as if He were nothing more than an original moralist or amazing healer or charismatic leader, none of whom would be qualified to carry out His mission as Savior of the world. Based on how we see the other two Persons of the Godhead responding to this moment, it would be the height of folly and arrogance to reduce Jesus to any merely human capacity, no matter how extraordinary.

    If the appropriate response to His sacrifice is gratitude, what is the appropriate response to His status as the Chosen One who was uniquely commissioned by the Father and the Spirit to carry out His mission?