Wrap-up from Last Week

Repentance and True Faith: John the Baptist's message of repentance, as detailed in Luke's gospel, emphasizes that true faith begins with an honest acknowledgment of our sinful nature and the desperate need for God's grace, rather than relying on self-improvement or good works to attain righteousness before God.

2. Metanoia and Transformation: The Greek term "metanoia," or a "change of mind," signifies that biblical repentance involves a transformative shift in our understanding of ourselves and God, moving from a fear-based approach to a relationship founded on love, humility, and an acknowledgment of God's mercy.

3. The Role of Good Works: From a Lutheran perspective, while John the Baptist warns about the importance of bearing good fruit as evidence of faith, good works are not a means to earn salvation but are instead the natural outcome of a life transformed by God's grace, reflecting a heart that grasped the depth of forgiveness extended through Christ. Remember the whole discussion on "penance."

1. As we read Luke 3:15-20, we notice that John the Baptist's words, while sounding like hellfire and brimstone, nonetheless are meant to lead people to a sense of expectation about their need for a Christ. Luke notes this growing anticipation in the hearts of those who heard the "good news" (Luke 3:18). Even with the vivid imagery and fiery language, it is clear that John is ultimately directing the people toward the mercy and grace that will be realized in Christ.

   Consider John's description of the baptism that Christ will bring. He states, *"I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."* Here, we see a powerful connection to Peter's proclamation at Pentecost in Acts 2:38-39, where he says, *"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."* And speaking of Pentecost, what else does John say Jesus will baptize with? Pentecost – tongues of fire.

   While the imagery of a winnowing fork and burning chaff may evoke a sense of dread about impending judgment, what is profoundly comforting about the fact that John emphasizes, *"He will gather the wheat into His barn"*? We are that wheat! For those of us who hold the promise and certainty of holy baptism and its connection to Christ, we are already gathered in! Through baptism, we participate in the death and resurrection of Christ (cf. Romans 6:1-11). We do not *"receive the spirit of slavery that leads us back to fear; instead, we are given the Spirit of adoption as children of God, allowing us to cry out, "Abba! Father"* (Romans 8:15). Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is ours in Christ (Romans 8:39).

❷ Read Luke 3:21-22. In Luke's account of Jesus's baptism, it's interesting to note that John the Baptist isn't mentioned. This might be a way of showing that there's a clear shift happening—moving from the old times to something brand new. By placing John's imprisonment right before the baptism, Luke emphasizes that with John's ministry coming to an end, we're entering a new phase in God's plan. So, John's time as a prophet closes out one chapter, while Jesus' baptism opens the door to a fresh start in the story of salvation.

Luke's gospel is unique in this way. But all four Gospels record Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus and God the Father's affirmation from heaven. Matthew records Jesus words "It is necessary to fulfill all righteousness." Mark states that John baptized Jesus and later Mark gives us the nitty gritty details of Johns execution. The Gospel of John, while not recording Jesus' baptism specifically, records the Holy Spirit descending upon Him and God the Father speaking, and John pointing to Jesus and declaring, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the World."

Actually, the focus of Luke's short account is not on John, Jesus, or the baptism. The focus is on the testimony of the Spirit and the Father that Jesus is the Messiah for whom the infancy narrative and John's preaching and baptism prepared. After Jesus' baptism, Luke gives a genealogy of Jesus, possibly showing the "family" into which Jesus was baptized. Also in the temptation, which follows the genealogy, Jesus is tempted to doubt whether he is a part of God's family, as the beloved Son.

❸ So, let's be sure to ask the most obvious question: If John's baptism was for repentance, why did Jesus need to be baptized?
One cannot fully understand the Gospel without first understanding Jesus' baptism. In his baptism, Jesus took humanity's place under God's wrath. John predicted that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. The first step in the fulfillment of that prediction is attained at Jesus' baptism, as the Spirit descended upon him. As the substitute for humankind, Jesus felt the full fire of God's wrath on the cross. Jesus' ministry is framed by two baptisms: his baptism in water and Spirit begins his journey to his bloody "baptism" of fire on the cross (12:49-50). The presence of the Trinity at Jesus' baptism affirms that Jesus is the Son of God and that he is the one chosen to accomplish the messianic task of substitutionary atonement on the cross.

We are not just baptized into Jesus name, but the Trinity. This connects to the Father and Spirit being present at Jesus baptism and mean that what the Father ys to Jesus, applies to us by virtue of our connection to Christ.

Jesus' Family Tree and our Family Tree

❹ Read the Genealogy. This passage might not seem particularly thrilling at first glance. It can even come across as a bit boring. However, I encourage you not to skim past it like a headline in the news. Instead, take a moment to truly engage with what Luke is presenting here.

Many of the names listed in this genealogy are likely unfamiliar to you. Some belonged to well-known figures, while others were notorious for their flaws and failures. On the surface, these names may not seem significant. Yet, I believe Luke's intent extends beyond individual recognition. While a few names indeed stand out, the greater picture is what truly matters.

This genealogy serves a vital purpose: it demonstrates how God has faithfully kept His promises to figures like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Through this seemingly mundane family tree—stretching all the way back to Adam—Luke reveals that history is not random; it has a direction and a goal. With remarkable dedication, Luke meticulously traces these names to show us that Jesus is the culmination and ultimate purpose of history.

Moreover, this genealogy illustrates God's continuous work throughout time as He has been forming a family centered around Christ. Now, what would you say are the practical connection for us between Jesus' baptism and His genealogy?

Through our baptism, it really is just as the Bible says, that just as we are all descendants of the first Adam—through whom sin entered the world, making us all sinners—so then also, we are all descended from the second Adam, Jesus Christ, through whom comes mercy and grace (Romans 5:12-19). However, in Romans 5, Paul isn't talking so much about a biological connection. Indeed, thank God we don't have to try to figure out our connection to Jesus by tracing it through some genealogy (I am not even sure I know who my great-great grandparents were). But in the very next chapter, Paul reminds us we have an even better connection to Jesus. He reminds us that we have been connected to Jesus by water. Paul says in Romans 6:3-5, *"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.*

There are lots of differences between Matthew's and Luke's genealogy. We don't exactly why the include mostly different names, although many theories abound. Perhaps the best suggestion is that Matthew gives the legal line of descent from David, while Luke names the actual ancestors of Joseph's branch of the family.

5 In a genealogy, we often focus on the first and last names, as these tend to hold the most significance. Here, the last name is God, highlighting the profound connection between Jesus and the divine, especially as revealed in His baptism. However, it's important to note that the last human name in this genealogy is Adam, which identifies Jesus as a son of Adam—a true human being like the rest of us.

Yet, there is one crucial difference. What happened when Adam faced temptation? What happened to Israel when they were tested in the wilderness? What pattern do we see unfold across all history and humanity whenever sinners face temptation? How do we fair when faced with temptation? How is Jesus different?

They fell into temptation. Adam sinned. Israel sinned. We have all sinned.

What happened when Jesus was tempted? He did not sin.