Mark 1 Baptism of Jesus January 7, 2023

Anyone here been to Niagara falls? Well let me give you a description. The falls has two sides, an American side and a Canadian side. The Canadian side has much more development for tourists and hotels at the edge. In most hotel rooms, you can open the curtain and way out in the distance you can see the Falls, even at night. You may not be able to hear it but it’s a spectacle to behold… awe-inspiring.

On the Canadian side of the Falls is a walking park. The park is different than the hotel room, because you can hear it, the thunder of the roar of the water going over the Falls and churning at the bottom.

And so it hits with such force that the wind blows up little drops of water, even across the street to the park, and you feel little drops of water every now and then.

So, in the hotel room I was impressed by it, but in the park I got a little feel of it, --- I was close enough to hear it, and every now and then I got a drop of water on me. But it was easy to walk away from with so many other tourist attractions available.

But now there's another way you can see the Falls. On the American side. It isn’t built up like on the Canadian side. It has wooded walkways right to the edge and over the water. And they have little boats called, "The Maid of the Mist" down in the basin of the Falls.  
  
Now, if you plan to ride the boat in the basin of the Falls, they’re going to sell you a raincoat and an umbrella, because now you getting ready to get drenched. Down there at the foot of the Falls, you're going to be overwhelmed with the power of the sound, wind and soaking of the water.

And when we got off the boats--- everyone could tell where we’d been… our hair was plastered to our heads and we did look like we’d been through a storm. There was no hiding our soaking.

You’re probably wondering how this is connected to our scripture…

You See, some Christians relate to Jesus from the hotel room of their lives. They're impressed by him at a distance. They don't ever hear anything that God has to say to them. The supernatural power of God is rare if ever experienced by them , but they'll go to church because they're impressed with Jesus even at a distance – even if they never hear a word..

Some Christians relate to Jesus from the park. They're a lot closer than the hotel room, and hear a distant word or hymn chorus and every now and again, they'll feel a drop here and a drop there.   
  
But there are those few who are not satisfied with the hotel room. There are those few who are not satisfied with the park, because like my kids they want to get drenched. They want a raincoat and an umbrella, because they are willing --- even demanding to take the risk of getting close. To experience first hand - to hear and feel the power - to get soaked to the skin by it.

So, the question today is, how much God do you want? Because he will only give you as much of God that you can handle.

Our spiritual power is directly related to the level of our spiritual intimacy with the Father. We cannot experience the authority of God operating in, to, and through our lives if we have a long distance relationship. Wanting to stay neat as a pin – not involved - afraid of that deep water…

Some people are a little braver and will put their toes in the water. Oh it feels good on a hot day But they stay for just a moment. That way they can back out and not get messy and it’s easy to go right back to whatever path they were on. One of their choosing…

If we are worshipping from afar… happy that we were sprinkled 50 years ago. Or only willing to wade into our ankles We forget our catechism our instruction, which states that we should plunge into Baptism and daily come forth showing the fruits of our faith. Our discipleship… the work that makes us Christians.

Instead of looking from our hotel balcony or just sitting at the waters edge- Let’s claim our baptism… the promise of God at work in us… salvation by grace through faith. Most of us have already been sprinkled but by faith let’s plunge into our baptism daily.

Let it show…people should be able to look at you and tell that you have indeed been washed - - you shouldn’t want to blend in with the world. We have seen this past year that our world does not need more of the same!

Jesus of Nazareth—Joseph and Mary’s boy - waded out into the river to be baptized by his cousin John and when he stood up with the water streaming down his face, heaven tore open and the Holy Spirit came over Him and in Him. And he was ready to face the devil in the wilderness and then to take God’s word into the world. God was on the loose, God is still on the loose! God is among us, and His word is being fulfilled!

As we enter 2024, Dive In! Get WET ! let your Baptism shine – let it be recognizable to all that the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives - in our church - in our nation -- helping people see that God is on the loose among us as we carry on His ministry to the world. Come Lord Jesus ! AMEN.Top of Form

(Have fun, Judy Lamb, Anaconda)