**Matthew 3:1-17**

Introduction

I. The Season of Epiphany

A. This season remembers the moments where Jesus is first revealed to the world (traditionally includes the wise men, Jesus’ baptism, and Jesus’ first miracle)

B. There is an evangelistic theme to Epiphany as we have opportunities to reveal Jesus to the world

II. How would you introduce Jesus to a friend who knew nothing about him? What would be two or three things you would most want to share about him?

The Passage

I. John’s baptism

A. John the man

A rugged man in a rugged place

B. John’s message

1. A reality that is coming

a. God’s kingdom is coming (v. 2)

= the rule of God is breaking in

b. God’s anointed king is coming (v. 11-12)

-he has power and authority

-he will baptize with Spirit and fire

-there will be a great separation of wheat and chaff

2. A response is required

a. repent (v. 2)

= change your mind

= change your life (v. 8-10)

b. baptism (v. 11, v. 6)

= a symbol of true repentance

= Just as water washes dirt off your body, acknowledge you need God’s forgiveness to wash your moral dirt (sin)

II. Jesus’ decision to be baptized by John

A. This is a very surprising and unexpected decision

1. You would expect Jesus to come onto that scene and reveal himself as the great king

2. Instead he does something (get baptized) that makes him look like everybody else and (at least by appearance) is a confession of sin and a desire to be made right with God

B. John tries to prevent him from doing this (v. 14)

John acknowledges that the roles should be reversed in this baptism

C. Jesus’ response (v. 15)

1. His desire is to perfectly fulfill God’s plan for his life and that plan involves defeating sin not by destroying sinners but by identifying with sinners

2. So his baptism is a way of identifying himself with his sinful people. It’s an act of humility, empathy, and identification

III. He will identify with his people throughout his life and ministry

A. Jesus’ relives Israel’s story in Matthew 2-4

1. Story of Israel: Egypt, red sea, wilderness for 40 years/time of testing

2. Story of Jesus: Egypt (v. 14-15), water, wilderness for 40 days/time of testing

B. Jesus identifies with his sinful people most at the cross

1. He actually takes on himself our sin

2. See Isaiah 53:4-6

IV. God’s affirmation of his Son (v. 16-17)

A. In a moment where people would be tempted to think Jesus is not the messiah, God affirms that he is the Messiah

1. The Spirit anoints Jesus for his public ministry

2. God the Father affirms his love for Jesus

B. It’s almost as if God is affirming this humble act on Jesus’ part

Conclusion

I. Where do you need to experience Jesus’ ministry of empathy and identification?

A. See Hebrews 4:15-16: he can empathize with our weaknesses

B. We can approach him with confidence even in the midst of our weaknesses

II. Where is Jesus calling you to follow him in this ministry of empathy/identification?

A. Where might he be calling you to be with people in the midst of their weaknesses and brokenness?

B. This can feel overwhelming at times, but Jesus calls us into those situations, and we often experience his grace and power in those situations

C. Galatians 6:2, Philippians 2:4-5, Hebrews 13:3, Romans 12:15, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

**Discussion Questions**

1. How would you introduce Jesus to a friend who knew nothing about him? What would be two or three things you would most want to share?

2. As you consider this account of Jesus being baptized by John, was there any idea that was new to you, or was there a familiar idea that hit you in a new way?

3. Where do you need to experience Jesus’ ministry of empathy and identification at this time in your life? Is there an area of weakness or a trial where you need to approach the throne of grace with confidence and assurance?

4. Where is Jesus calling you “down into the cave” with people who are hurting or broken at this time in your life? Is there anything he is placing on your heart in that regard? What is the biggest barrier preventing you from entering into those situations, and how might you work through that barrier?