

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

One of the oldest tools the Devil has in his toolbox is the one labeled **doubt**. We first saw him **use** this tool in the Garden of Eden when he asked Eve, “*Has God **really** said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?’*” By successfully planting the seed of **doubt** in Eve’s mind, the Devil was well on his way to winning her over **completely**. It’s a tool he has successfully **continued** to use down through the ages - a tool which he **still** uses even today. We live in a society that **thrives** on **doubt**. Modern culture would have us believe that there is no such thing as **absolute** truth, but rather that truth is completely **subjective**. What may be truth to **one** person doesn’t **need** to be truth to anyone **else**. The end **result** is a whole lot of **doubt**, and nobody seems to know where to turn, to find real **certainty** anymore. But our **text** for today will **help** us with that problem. Today we’ll learn how **Jesus Removes All Doubt**.

We see from our sermon text today that **modern** society isn’t the **only** society that has a problem dealing with **doubt** and **uncertainty**. The world that **Jesus** came into was a world **filled** with uncertainty. The Jewish people had been waiting for thousands of years for the **Messiah** to arrive. They were wondering **when** the time of His arrival would **come**, and **who** exactly this Messiah would **be**. Then John the **Baptist** came preaching in the wilderness. He became tremendously **popular**, and had large crowds of people **flocking** out to **hear** him, and to be **baptized** by him. John spoke with great **authority** about things like **repentance**, and the kingdom of **heaven**. The **result** of his preaching and baptizing was that many people wondered whether or not **he** might be the long-awaited **Savior** that they were seeking. You can imagine their **excitement** mixed with **doubt**. Luke put it **this** way: “*The people were waiting **expectantly** and were all **wondering** in their hearts if John might be the Christ.*” They **hoped** that John was the person they were **waiting** for, but they had their **doubts** - they just couldn’t be **sure**.

People **today** are **also** looking for some kind of **certainty** in our world. But it’s hard to know what’s **real** out there, and what has just been **made up** or is **wishful thinking**. It seems like just about **everyone** has their own interpretation of what the **truth** is. There are the Muslims, the Mormons, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Christians - and now in this post-modern age, the **Nones** - N-O-N-E-S - people who don’t identify with

any organized religion at all. Even within the umbrella of Christianity, there are so many different denominations: Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, Non-denominational. Who's **right**, and how do we **know** they're right? Perhaps you've found yourself having some of the same **questions** and **doubts**. How do we **know** that we're on the **right path**? After all, there are all kinds of very **sincere** and **well-intentioned** people who believe something completely **different** from what **we** believe.

Unfortunately, when we have all these **doubts**, the end **result** is often **inactivity**. If we aren't really **sure** about what we **believe**, then it's not very likely that we're going to **promote** those beliefs, or **share** them with others. Jesus wants just the **opposite** from us. He calls for a life of **self-denial** and **cross-bearing**. But why? Why should we deny **ourselves**, and bear a **cross**, if we're not even **sure** that Jesus is who He **says** He is? Even **worse** than not actively **sharing** our faith, would be **losing** that faith completely. Most of us probably fall somewhere **between** two extremes. On the **one** hand maybe we've **never** had any **doubt** in our minds at all, and on the **other** hand maybe we doubt **so much** that we're in danger of **losing** our faith and **rejecting** Jesus altogether. **All** of us have our **doubts** from time to time, and doubting our God and His Word is **sin**. How can we be **sure** about what we believe?

Let's see what **John** had to say to that crowd of uncertain people gathered around **him**. He said: *"I baptize you with water. But someone **mightier** than I is coming. I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the **Holy Spirit** and **fire**. His winnowing shovel is in his hand, and he will thoroughly clean out his threshing floor. He will gather the **wheat** into his barn, but he will burn up the **chaff** with unquenchable fire."* In essence, John was telling the people that he is **not** the Christ, and that when the Christ **comes**, they will **know** it, because of the great **power** which the Christ will display. John didn't **have** that kind of power - like the power to send the **Holy Spirit** into their hearts. But the Christ **would** have that power, along with the power to **judge** all people. Following His **judgment**, Jesus would gather His **believers** into **heaven**, and He would throw the **unbelievers** into hell. This is the kind of **power** that only **God** possesses. When the people **saw** these things happening, they would know **for sure** that the person **doing** them was the **Christ**. And that's **exactly** what they found in **Jesus**.

Now we're going to switch over to the scene of Jesus' **baptism**. It's really an **extraordinary** event, where we have the Son of **God** stepping into the Jordan River to receive the same **baptism** that **sinful** human beings received. Jesus Himself didn't **need** to wash any **sins** away, because He didn't **have** any sins. But He **submitted** to being baptized as our **substitute**. That day, in the Jordan River, Jesus identified Himself with the entire **human race** - with each and every **sinner** which He had come to **save**. And what happened **after** His baptism took place was nothing short of a **miracle**. Luke tells us, "*While he was praying, **heaven** was opened, and the **Holy Spirit** descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a **voice** came from heaven: 'You are my **Son**, whom I love. I am **well pleased** with you.'*"

Everyone who witnessed the baptism of Jesus could clearly **see** that this was no **ordinary** baptism. All three persons of the **Trinity** were there to affirm the fact that this was the baptism of **God's own Son**. There was no room for **doubt** any more. The one they saw standing before them in the Jordan River was the **Christ** - the long-awaited **Savior** of the world. John the **Baptist's** doubts had certainly been removed. The **disciple** John tells us later in his **Gospel**, "*John also testified, 'I saw the **Spirit** descend like a dove from heaven and **remain** on him. I myself did not **recognize** him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'The one on whom you see the **Spirit** descend and **remain**, he is the one who will baptize with the **Holy Spirit**.' I saw this **myself** and have testified that **this is the Son of God**.'" John was **convinced**. Jesus is the **Son of God**, and **Jesus Removes All Doubt**.*

We find **our** certainty in exactly the same place. All we need to do is look at **Jesus**, and we can clearly see that **He** is the **Christ**. And where do we **find** Jesus? We find Him in God's **Word** and **Sacraments** - the Means of **Grace**. It's through these means that God **strengthens** our faith, and **removes** our doubts. God's Word and Sacraments are far more **reliable** than our ever-changing **feelings** and **emotions**. In the Means of Grace we are able to **taste** and **see** that Jesus is God's **Son**. Every **day** we have the opportunity to **read** the Scriptures, and to be **reminded** of all the things Jesus has **done** for us. Every **week** we have the opportunity to receive the **Lord's Supper**, and to receive Jesus' **body** and **blood** in, with, and under the bread and wine. And although it's not likely that most of us **remember** it, already at the time of our **baptism** we could **feel** the water wash over our head, and we could **hear** the Word spoken to us as God brought us into **His family**.

Through His Word and Sacraments **Jesus Removes All Doubt** from our minds. We can be absolutely **sure** that Jesus is our **Savior**. We can be absolutely **sure** that our sins have all been **forgiven**. We can be absolutely **sure** that we **have** eternal life in heaven. And because we have that **certainty**, it will **show** itself in our **words** and **actions** as we strive to **share** that certainty with others. And remember, when those doubts try to come **creeping back** into our mind, we have a **Savior** who will never **leave** us or **forsake** us. **Jesus Removes All Doubt**. Thank God for **giving** us **Jesus** to be our Savior, and for providing us with the **faith** to put all our trust in **Him**. Amen.