

Focus on Luke 3:15–17, 21–22

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,”
Linda McKimish Bridges

Luke’s special focus, however, is on prayer. Luke carefully notes that Jesus prays after he is baptized (3:21). Luke intentionally adds this important feature to the baptism ritual, which is missed by the other Gospel writers. For Luke the act of prayer will be the most important feature of the baptism and will clearly indicate the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus and ultimately the believer. In other places of Luke’s Gospel, prayer is the focus of Jesus’ ministry (5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28ff.; 11:1; 22:41; 23:46).

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Carol Lakey Hess

John the Baptizer understood that Jesus would surpass him, and so he did. By accepting John’s baptism, Jesus refuted John’s dualism between the wheat and the chaff (v. 17). In fact, this led to accusations of his being a glutton and a drunkard, a friend to tax collectors and sinners (7:34). Perhaps this is a major sign of holiness: that we see ourselves as part of an interconnected web and that we are accused of being deeply enmeshed in that web.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,”
Robert M. Bearley

Luke uses very few words to share with us the baptism of our Lord. But those few words lead us to very deep wellsprings of joy in the faithful ministry. To identify with all people, to depend upon God in prayer for the strength to live and to love, and to hear the affirmation of your God as the source of your calling and purpose in life are the most enduring joys of life. These are the blessings of our life together in Christ as the church.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,”
Ernest Hess

We can also fruitfully explore the power of such affirmations in our lives: “You are my son, my daughter.” “You are Beloved.” “I am well pleased with you.” When we experience this kind of honest affirmation from a parent or other significant person in our lives, we are strengthened in identity, will, and ability to act from that secure identity. Without it, most persons will struggle with low self-esteem. The good news is that in Christ we are all the Beloved.