

Conversations on
Luke 3:15–17, 21–22

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Watch the scene in *The Lion King* (1994; G) where Simba is told to remember who he is. Discuss: How did Simba’s understanding of his identity shape his sense of call? When in your life has your identity and calling been affirmed?

WHAT is important to know?

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). (*Linda McKinnish Bridges*)

- ✠ How does the confusion noted in verse 15 affect your understanding of this Scripture passage?
- ✠ What is the meaning of the metaphor that John tells in verse 17?
- ✠ Why is it significant that Jesus prays after his baptism?

WHERE is God in these words?

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. (*Carol Lakey Hess*)

- ✠ How does the metaphor of the wheat and chaff help us understand Jesus’ role in the world?
- ✠ How does Jesus’ baptism signal Jesus’ understanding of the full implication of the incarnation?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

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. (*Robert M. Bearley*)

- ✠ In what ways do you depend on God in prayer?
- ✠ How does it feel to know that God is the source of your calling and purpose?
- ✠ How is your life blessed by participation in the life of Christ’s church?

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

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. (*Ernest Hess*)

- ✠ How does the phrase “You are my son/my daughter” affect your discipleship?
- ✠ What is your faithful response to the phrase “I am well pleased with you”?
- ✠ How can you and your congregation show others the good news “that in Christ we are all the Beloved”?

Holy One, thank you for your love that surpasses our understanding and leads us to a life of faithful discipleship. May we spread the good news of Jesus Christ in all that we say and do. Amen.