

**January 8, 2017**  
**Matthew 3.1-6, 13-17**  
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St. Matthew paints an incredible scene for us this morning.

We have this wild man named John, who's got this untamed mane of hair and eyes that are on fire with religious fervor, dressed in clothes made out of camel's hair, with fistfuls of grasshoppers and wild honey, with gobs of it stuck in his untrimmed beard.

And surrounding John are crowds of people, many of whom have come out to be baptized, but also a fair number who've heard about this guy and have just come for the show.

Into this strides Jesus, who wades down into the Jordan River, gets dunked, and just as his head breaks back above the water, the heavens are opened up, and the Holy Spirit descends on him like a dove.

And *then* this loud voice booms out from heaven, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased!"

It must have been an amazing experience for everyone who was there...and yet, it almost didn't happen.

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by *you*, and do *you* come to *me*?’”

John tried to block Jesus from being baptized!

This baptism was Jesus’ announcement-party; he was finally going to step out and claim his identity and role in God’s story of salvation...and it was almost derailed before it even happened!

When Jesus came to be baptized, John said, “Hold up there Jesus. This isn’t the way it’s supposed to happen. *You’re* the one who’s supposed to be baptizing *me*, not the other way around!”

God’s intended work through this baptism, namely, revealing Jesus to the world as the Beloved Son of God, was almost undone by one well-meaning believer!

*This* is the most incredible part of the story!

I know that the whole opening scene of Jesus’ baptism is pretty spectacular, any big budget Hollywood blockbuster director could have a *field* day with filming

it, but the fact that God's work was almost thwarted by one faithful, well-intentioned believer?!... That's incredible!

It's *incredible* how simple it is for this *one* person to throw a road block in front of God's action.

...And that makes me wonder.

It makes me wonder how often *we*, well-meaning believers that *we* are, put road blocks in front of God today.

It makes we wonder how often *we* throw cold water on God's intended work.

It makes me wonder how often *we* get hung up on the way *we* think God is supposed to be and act in the world, on the kinds of issues *we* think God should care about.

...Like John did.

"John would have prevented him, saying, '*I* need to be baptized by *you*, and do *you* come to *me*?'"

"Hold up there Jesus. This isn't the way it's supposed to happen. *You're* the one who's supposed to be baptizing *me*, not the other way around!"

“But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so *now*; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.’”

“Listen, John. I know this isn’t what you were expecting. I know you didn’t expect to have to do this. I know that you think you’re doing the right thing, the righteous thing, the Godly thing, by telling me that you won’t baptize me...

But you know what? It’ll be okay. This isn’t what you expected, but this *is* how God is choosing to act in the world. So just dunk me in the water already!”

John didn’t expect that he was going to have to baptize Jesus. He didn’t expect that *this* was the path God was calling him on, that *this* was the way God had chosen to be and act in the world.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, the paths God calls us to can be extremely unexpected. Like walking on snow-covered ice, we slip and stumble into situations and relationships that we *never* could have imagined, and that we don’t know how to deal with.

And we’d like nothing better than to avoid them, to put up road blocks, to tell Jesus, “Now wait a minute...this isn’t the kind of thing I should be doing. This doesn’t fit with my vision for living a Godly life. How about we try something else?”

But, in the midst of our anxiety, Jesus says to us, “It’ll be okay. I know this isn’t what you expected. I know you didn’t expect to be travelling on *this* path, dealing with *these* people and *these* issues that you’d rather turn away from; but it’ll be alright.”

We are in the infancy of this new year. 2017 will *certainly* bring us unexpected, even *unwelcomed*, ministry opportunities. And our first instinct will be to say, “Thanks for thinking about me God, but that’s not the way it’s supposed to be.”

But Jesus will be there, saying, “It’ll be okay. You didn’t expect God to work in this way, but it’s alright. I am with you. I love you. Now, just dunk me in the water already!”