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Mark 1:4-11 (NIV)

⁴ And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Push The Green So Much Button?

I can't imagine that in the course of all the message that I've delivered in Wednesday Chapel at Community Missions that I have not related this story. So if you've heard it before, I ask you to just be patient for a minute.

When my daughter was young, like 4 or 5 years old, we had given her this little kid version of a handheld video game. It involved farm animals I think—probably horses. It was bright yellow-- her favorite color at the time-- had bright primary colored buttons, and a grayscale LCD screen. She loved it. It could keep her busy for a good hour before she got bored. So my wife and I also loved it because it let us do things like make dinner, or clean the bathroom, or maybe just sit and turn off our parenting brain for a few minutes and dream of less exhausting times.

What was interesting with this game was how it encouraged kids to keep playing. When you got to the end of the game, a voice from the little device would say—

"Push the Green Rest Button." The kid playing it would push it and off they went again.

One day while we were on a drive, we gave our daughter the little game to play while she was buckled in the car seat behind us. Everything was quiet for a time except for the tinny video game music. But then, these frustrated noises started coming from the back seat. When we asked what was wrong our daughter said that her game was stuck. "It's not working!" she was saying and there were tiny sounds of struggle with the buttons on the game—sounds that were growing in intensity.

"Does it need new batteries?" my wife asked.

"NO!" she complained while jamming her little fingers repeated at the yellow plastic brick. "I push the *Green So Much Button* and nothing happens!"

My wife and I look at each other, and thought "Huh?" My wife says, "You push what sweetie?"



"Green So Much Button! Green So Much!!"

"Green What?" I ask?

"So Much! SO MUCH!" she yells.

After some time my wife finally figures it out. Our daughter could not rest the game because the rest button was not working. The GREEN reset button, the one it asked the kids to push that it asked the kids to push just did nothing, even though the cruddy little speaker kept asking them to push it.

You see, not knowing what the word "reset" meant, and the cheapness of the little squawking speaker, our daughter thought it was saying "*Push the Green So Much Button*" not the "Green Rest Button".

It the end it turned out that even replacing the batteries would not fix the beloved little game. "The Green So Much Button" would never work again.

It's silly, but my wife and I still laugh about that incident even though our daughter is now in her 20's. If some appliance or gizmo is not working, we say "Maybe if we push the Green So Much Button?" Our daughter, of course, hates everything about the story, especially the number of times she has heard it.

In our text today, Jesus goes to see his cousin John to be baptized. You see *everyone and their brother* was going to get baptized by John. He had been preaching a message of repentance from sin, and people were responding! John had been telling them that, very soon, God was going to do something amazing that would deliver them from Roman oppression—just like God delivered them out of slavery from Pharaoh in Egypt back in Moses’ day. A new king, a Messiah was going to come so you had better get ready! You are under judgement for your sin against God. “Repent!” John would cry, and people were like, yeah, I guess I do kind of suck. I need to turn myself around. And so, they were baptized for the forgiveness of their sin. They hit the reset button on their spiritual lives. They started anew.



That is what baptism is: a reset.

As I mentioned at the start, today we are celebrating the Baptism of the Lord... remembering the time that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, his cousin, in the Jordan River. Jesus’ baptism was at the start of his ministry. It’s described as the moment when God acknowledges Jesus as God’s son, the Messiah, and the spirit of God descends to Jesus like a dove from heavens that have been torn asunder, revealing to Jesus the glory of God.



This is why baptism is central to the Christian faith. Every version of Christianity has some form of baptism. No matter if it is Roman Catholic, Protestant, Greek Orthodox, Coptic Christian, or whatever... it doesn’t matter. Baptism is special—central. If you go

to join a church, you will almost certainly be asked if you were ever baptized. For most churches it doesn’t matter if you were sprinkled as a baby in the Episcopal Church, or completely immersed in water as an adult in a Baptist Church. It doesn’t matter if the water was poured on your head. Doesn’t matter if it was in a river or a huge bathtub. The main thing is that they want to know that

you were baptized. To be sure, for some churches, the method and timing (as an adult or a child) do matter in different ways. Nevertheless, baptism is the right of passage that welcomes you into the church—the Christian family.

The reason is because of this scene in the bible where Jesus is baptized by John. Granted, Jesus baptism was not to remove sin, as it was for everyone else who John was baptizing. Christians generally believe that Jesus was without sin and so had no need to reset his spiritual life or have sins forgiven. His reason for being baptized was the acknowledgement of his special status before God... and where God reassured Jesus by declaring him as God’s son, the Beloved. But for all the rest of us, baptism definitely is the “Green So Much Button”.



Now, I know that all believers in Jesus are not baptized, and I know that some people worry about this, wondering are they ok with God. I think that the answer to that is Yes, you are! If you believe that Jesus is Messiah, the one sent by God into the world to teach us the Good News of salvation, to give his life on the cross for us, and be raised to life on the third day so that, through his sacrifice and triumph over death—and if you believe that all this happened for *you* so that you might confess your own sinfulness, ask for forgiveness, and believe you have received that forgiveness... if you believe that, then you are indeed ok with God. You are a Christian. Should you still seek to be baptized? If you want to, I believe it would be a good thing to do. Getting baptized is kind of like what my daughter would do playing that game. Pushing the “Green So Much Button” brought her back into a fresh relationship with the game--- and everyone around would know it because the introduction music for the game would start playing. Being baptized is a way of letting people know that you hit the “Green So Much Button” and restarted your life, entered into Newness of Life as a follower of Christ.

The beauty of the Christian faith is that the “Green So Much Button” is always available to us. Not just in baptism, but in our ever day life. We do not always get it right. Sometimes we don’t live up to the promise of our baptism. But God is always faithful and kind and forgiving. We can come to repentance, seek forgiveness and be washed clean and start again. That is the promise of God. And we get to have that promise because Jesus went down to the Jordan, was baptized by John, and ushered in a new reality as he began his journey towards the cross, the grave, and the resurrection—to the Newness of Life that God freely offers to us... Newness of life that can be ours if only we choose to accept it and push our “Green So Much Button” and begin our walk with Christ. Amen.