

Loved from the start (Luke 3:15-17, 21-22)

Before his ministry, Jesus receives deep affirmation.

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In a recent conversation with a friend, my mind began to wander toward a proverb. The phrase that surfaced and made its way to the tip of my tongue was “in all thy getting.” But instead of focusing on [understanding](#) I began to talk about how so much of our energy is spent on getting ahead, getting respect, getting more money, getting recognized, getting connected, getting clout, getting, getting, getting—lots of getting. It feels like so many of our interactions flow from a place of acquisition and consumption.

Maybe this is just what life has become. But what if its roots stretch down into our most hidden, guarded, and settled beliefs about ourselves? What if the core issue is not that we don't have enough or do enough, but that we are afraid that who we are at the center of our being isn't enough?

Now, many in our society need and deserve more to live, not to mention thrive. But even among those who strive to live faithfully, regardless of where we find ourselves, these kinds of beliefs color our relationships with each other—and with God. They can leave us feeling discouraged, distracted, or uninterested unless we are able to rank our value and prove our prowess based on how much we do, have, and show.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus has not yet healed a sick person, raised a dead one, fed or taught the masses, conquered and subdued the elements, or gathered and dispatched disciples when he hears the affirmation pouring out of heaven that he is God's beloved. He possesses no credits to show for such a miraculous moment, nor does he have a noteworthy curriculum vitae to justify such recognition and announcement that God is pleased. He is a man being baptized and praying along with others. Simple moments. Regular observances. Ordinary acts of faithfulness that open him up to hear heaven's embrace.

The text doesn't suggest that Jesus' baptism *earns* the acknowledgement of God, but maybe his ability to honor God in the regular of life makes him more able to be touched by God's validation in ways that meet him and move those around him.

Jesus starts his ministry from a place of deep love and acceptance. Maybe we would have a healthier relationship with our striving if more of us knew deep down that we too have already been rooted in God's acceptance and validation. As we strengthen this place within, I hope that the stories we tell through our witness in the world will remind us and others that our very life is a gift that is already marked and sealed in God's love.