

Baptism of Our Lord.C – 01/12/2025

Relationship is about connection. Baptism is about a relationship or connection with God in Jesus Christ and the beloved community. Even though Jesus' baptism was not like ours, it is still about connection.

The Hebrew people had been waiting many years for the prophesied Messiah. So here was John out in the wilderness baptizing people with the baptism of repentance. He really stuck out and people came to find him in the wilderness. John was bristling the church leaders. The Hebrew people were not hearing this kind of message from them, and they were waiting in hope and expectation.

John clarified for them that he was not the Messiah that they had been waiting for. The Message puts it this way: "I'm baptizing you here in the river. The main character in this drama, to whom I'm a mere stagehand, will ignite the kingdom life, a fire, the Holy Spirit within you, changing you from the inside out. She's going to clean house—make a clean sweep of your lives. She'll place everything true in its proper place before God; everything false she'll put out with the trash to be burned."

Wow, so baptism is about cleansing, about cleaning our houses. It is not the kind of cleaning that we can hire someone else to do. Only the Holy Spirit can do this kind of cleaning. This is what it means to be in relationship with Jesus and to stay in right relationship with him.

The theological term for this is sanctification or being made holy. We are brought into a healthy relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Martin Luther has reminded us that this is a daily process. Making the sign of the cross reminds us of this.

What can we learn from Jesus' baptism that will help us in our connection or relationship with him? Jesus waited and possibly encouraged all who were present to be baptized by John. This was really a baptism of preparation or cleansing for following Jesus.

As Jesus was praying, which was a common theme in Luke, the sky opened up and the Holy Spirit or dove descended down on Jesus. Then a voice was heard, God's, saying, "You are my beloved Son, chosen and marked by my love, with you I am well pleased." Luke is telling us that God confirmed for Jesus that he was God's son chosen and loved, and that God was pleased with him.

Now we could gather that this voice was heard by all the people present, but we don't know that for a fact as Luke does not tell us of their immediate response.

Instead, Luke goes into a genealogy that connects Jesus back to Adam and then is followed by Jesus' temptation story in the wilderness.

Jesus waited and encouraged all to be baptized and then he was baptized as one of the people. This baptism of John was about being prepared, about being cleansed and for us keeping our relationship with Jesus healthy. Thus, Jesus was modeling for us the need for this baptism and the Holy Spirit cleansing us. Jesus waiting and encouragement also modeled humbleness and a heart for the people.

This baptism of repentance and the Holy Spirit is what keeps our connection to Jesus healthy. Our connection with Jesus really begins the day we are born. Baptism recognizes this connection. It recognizes God's grace for us.

Our parents and often sponsors bring us to be baptized. Years ago, and sometimes still today, baptisms are done apart from the worship service. It is more appropriate for one's baptism to be done in the context of worship as it is really about welcoming the child or adult into the beloved community.

Also, it is the responsibility of the congregation to provide and encourage one's growth in a person's relationship with Jesus, just as Jesus modeled at his baptism. Today we are going to affirm our baptism. We will publicly say to God and each other that we are followers of Jesus Christ.

We will be stating that we are continuing in this relationship or connection with Jesus, that we are allowing the Holy Spirit to come and clean our house. Through water and the Word, we strengthen our connection to Jesus. We are reminded that in this gift of baptism that we receive freely forgiveness, salvation and new life.

Let us now affirm our baptism and the promises that go with it.

AFFIRMATION OF OUR BAPTISM

Pastor: God, who is rich in mercy and love, gives us a new birth into a living hope through the sacrament of baptism. By water and the Word God delivers us from sin and death and raises us to new life in Jesus Christ. We are united with all the baptized in the one body of Christ, anointed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and joined in God's mission for the life of the world.

Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Father: We give you thanks, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and you created heaven and earth. By the gift of water you nourish and sustain us and all living things.

By the waters of the flood you condemned the wicked and saved those whom you had chosen, Noah and his family. You led Israel by the pillar of cloud and fire through the sea, out of slavery into the freedom of the promised land. In the waters of the Jordan your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Spirit. By the baptism of his own death and resurrection your beloved Son has set us free from the bondage to sin and death, and has opened the way to the joy and freedom of everlasting life. He made water a sign of the kingdom and of cleansing and rebirth. In obedience to his command, we make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Continue to pour out your Holy Spirit on your baptized people, so that we remember the new life received at our baptism. We thank you for washing away our sins and making us inheritors of your kingdom.

To you be given praise and honor and worship through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen**

Profession of Faith

Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God?

Response: **I renounce them.**

Do you renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God?

Response: **I renounce them.**

Do you renounce the ways of sin that draw you from God?

Response: **I renounce them.**

Do you believe in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.**

You have made public profession of your faith. Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

to live among God's faithful people,
to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper,
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,
to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,
and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?

The assembly makes affirmation:

I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.

The minister addresses the assembly.

People of God, do you promise to support and pray for one another in your life in Christ?

We do, and we ask God to help and guide us.

The presiding minister prays for God's blessing.

Let us pray.

We give you thanks, O God, that through water and the Holy Spirit you give us new birth, cleanse us from sin, and raise us to eternal life. Stir up in your people the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence both now and forever.

Amen.

Let us now make the sign of the cross remembering our Baptism.