

Genesis 1:1-5

Mark 1:4-11

Acts 19:1-7

“The voice of the Lord is over the waters;  
the glory of God thunders over mighty waters.”  
AMEN!

(Sing!)

“Wade in the water  
Wade in the water, children.  
Wade in the water  
God’s gonna trouble the water.”

I don’t remember ever being afraid of water.

Though I’m sure it is not true,  
it seems as though I’ve always  
been able to swim.

Yet, even though there was this confidence,  
there is always danger around water.

Once when I was maybe 9 or 10, and  
out on the boat with my dad in  
the Atlantic around Miami and  
I fell into such danger.

There I was tethered to the boat in a tube style raft.

I was alone in the raft and  
had on a life preserver

which I was sure I didn't need.

It was the kind of raft that had sides and  
I floated about 50 feet out while my dad  
fished from the anchored boat.

The water was a deep blue color  
the kind that means your pretty far  
from shore and the waves were rolling.

Somehow the line became disconnected from the raft.

No one noticed immediately, but by  
the time my dad and step-mom did notice  
I had floated out a good 50 yards  
from the boat.

The raft was taken by the current and  
the boat remained in place due to the anchor.

My dad called to me to stay put and  
then Donna (my stepmom) dove in to swim to me.

She reached the raft and told me  
dad would be by in the boat to pick us up  
in a few minutes.

It all seemed quite routine to a 9 year old.

That is until, I was a little older and my dad spoke of that day and the real dangers.

He said that it was anything but a routine event because when they'd realized the raft was free floating and moving away from the boat amidst growing waves,

there was the real life/death danger of loosing sight of me.

Dad couldn't cut the anchor line because he didn't want to take his eyes off me and lose my position.

So the first remedy was for Donna to dive into the water and swim to the raft.

Dad directed her from the boat so she could swim right to me.

Once she reached me, he quickly cut the rope to the anchor, spun the boat to us now about 100 yards out.

What seemed like a non-dangerous event to a 9 year old, very nearly could

have turned tragic.

Even though I wasn't afraid of water and  
even though it seemed like the day  
was like so many others from  
my point of view,

there was a force at work that  
was dangerous even though I didn't see it. (Pause)

I had this memory while meditating about this sermon.

How is it that we often forget  
how dangerous water is, or if a child like I was,  
have no understanding of its danger?

When we read about the baptism of Jesus,  
we might picture a calm and peaceful event.

We may envision Jesus rising out of the water  
with a calm confidence, a clear purpose  
while striding into his ministry without  
a single doubt.

But now, in the middle of life, I envision  
him breathless and expectant;  
aware of the danger.

Was he afraid of taking his eye off the people in need?

Was there a feeling of heartbreak  
as his own heart was  
torn like the heavens?

What was it like to have the sudden  
awareness of God's favor, and delight, while  
still feeling the overwhelming sense of  
the open possibilities in front of him?

These are questions we ask of the text and  
answers come as we grow and mature.

He knew the dangers of the baptismal waters and  
the flocking crowd gathered around  
John the baptizer were desperate  
to be forgiven.

The people knew the dangers but still waded  
into the water with the hope that God would stir it.

So, one of the things that  
the Baptism of Jesus reminds me of  
is the importance of practicing the basics.

By practicing the basics we prepare ourselves  
to handle the panic stricken events that  
come to us in life.

We are kept steady when others fly off the handle.

We confess our sins with steady prayer and  
the oxygen of God's presence enters and  
sustains us and those things we've done,  
or left undone, are exhaled and  
carried away. (Pause)

The Baptism of Jesus also reminds me of cruising.

In the town where I grew up and  
learned to drive there was a strange  
thing teenagers did on Friday and  
Saturday nights.

They'd go "cruising."

Remember that?

Cruising is the process of driving up and down  
Main St to show off your car and maybe even  
meet people your age in the self made  
traffic jams and do all this  
by looking cool. :-)

I always saw the danger of getting into  
car accidents while business suffered because  
the street was tied up and "real"  
customers avoided going

to them because of the traffic.

It became such a problem in Salinas  
that the city government had to do something.

The remedy was to put up “No U-Turn” signs at  
each intersection.

I guess they thought that if you can't  
make a U-turn then you can't cruise  
because you would get a ticket if you did.

I don't remember if it worked but  
we are reminded today that God encourages us  
to make “U-Turns.”

They are good visuals of repentance.

Return back to God.

That sounds like a good New Years' resolution to me!

Finally, the Baptism of Jesus tells us  
one other thing by making us wonder  
why Jesus even went out to be baptized  
in the first place?

John the baptizer was offering a  
baptism of repentance and forgiveness.

We believe Jesus to be without sin and  
therefore in no need of forgiveness.

Yet, there Jesus was, wading into the water...

The dangerous waters.

The event propelled Jesus into  
the wilderness to be tempted.

But, there was a significant change  
that occurred at Jesus' Baptism,  
but today even more we find...

It was like Jesus did this publicly  
not for his benefit but  
for the people's benefit, and for ours.

He did it to help witnesses grow. (Pause)

As Sir John Henry Newman once wrote,  
"If we don't grow, we don't change, and  
[if we don't change]

we end up being the same at 70  
as we were at 17 [or even 9].

We all know people who are unwilling to change.



We might even be one of them,  
so we should know that people  
who are unwilling to change are  
hard to be around.

They want to pick fights; they want to  
focus on negatives... so

I'm glad Jesus did  
John the baptizer's baptism of repentance  
because it was an act of solidarity.

An act to change minds and open hearts.

An act that was dangerous but that's  
the way it is with freedom, isn't it?

May the Spirit of Freedom  
turn the world back to God.

AMEN!