



First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia

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Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor

Sunday Worship Service

January 12, 2025

*All who are able, please stand.

Announcements & Prayer Concerns

Tonight is our monthly Friends of the Homeless Meal at 6pm. A sign-up sheet is in the church office for volunteers to help. While our meal fund is met, please consider donating toward our other Friends of the Homeless efforts (Jack's House of Hope/Friends of the Homeless Operations).

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (January 15) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (January 15) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will meet on Sunday (January 19) at 9:15am.

Our Tables of Eight Dinner Group will be meeting again starting this Saturday (January 18) at 6pm. The cost is \$10 per person and RSVP is required- either in the church office, or with Carolyn Berry or Mike Smith.

This Saturday (January 18) the Friends of the Homeless is hosting a Chili-Cookoff fundraiser at the School House in Zoar (221 Foltz St, Zoar, OH 44697) from 12-4pm. If you want to support the shelter and try some good chili, all are invited!

Opening Prayer

LORD, our Father, by the work of Jesus Christ you bring the whole of creation into salvation. You teach your Church how to aid in that work through the sacrament of baptism. Teach us the meaning of this wonderful work, to remember our baptism and be grateful, and what changes after having met your loving grace. **Amen.**

Prelude *Shall We Gather at the River?* arr. Wood

***Call to Worship (Psalm 29)**

Ascribe to the LORD, you gods, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due God's name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders; the LORD is upon the mighty waters.

The voice of the LORD is a powerful voice; the voice of the LORD is a voice of splendor.

The voice of the LORD breaks the cedar trees; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon; the LORD makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.

The voice of the LORD bursts forth in lightning flashes.

The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the LORD makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare. And in the temple of the LORD all are crying, "Glory!"

The LORD sits enthroned above the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as sovereign forevermore.

O LORD, give strength to your people; give them, O LORD, the blessings of peace.

Hymn #492 *Baptized in Water

Baptized in water, Sealed by the Spirit,
Cleansed by the blood of Christ, our King;
Heirs of salvation, Trusting the promise,
Faithfully now God's praises we sing.

Baptized in water, Sealed by the Spirit,
Dead in the tomb with Christ, our King;
One with His rising, Freed and forgiven,
Thankfully now God's praises we sing.

Baptized in water, Sealed by the Spirit,
Marked with the sign of Christ, our King;
Born of the Spirit, We are God's children,
Joyfully now God's praises we sing.

***Prayer of Confession**

The voice of the LORD is mighty and powerful, but often we choose to ignore it. But when we return, we understand the might it has to direct and change our lives:

**LORD, our Father, we have eyes that are blind to your power, and ears that are deaf to your voice. That lack of direction is evident in our lives and in the world but is restored when you declare us your beloved. Help us understand and appreciate the meaning of that title, so we might live in the best way possible.
Amen.**

***Silent Confessions and Prayers**

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

No matter who we are or where we come from, the LORD invites us by baptism into his Kingdom.

Let us obey and trust in the voice of the LORD before any others.

***Hymn #579 Gloria Patri**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

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

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.

**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.
Amen.**

Reading of the Scriptures

All Scripture lessons come from the Revised Common Lectionary. Prescribed lessons are underlined, with pastoral inserts to preserve the integrity of the passage.

Hear the Word of the Lord:

Isaiah 43:1-28

43¹But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the

flame shall not consume you. ³For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. ⁴Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. ⁵Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; ⁶I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth— ⁷everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." ⁸Bring forth the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears! ⁹Let all the nations gather together, and let the peoples assemble. Who among them declared this, and foretold to us the former things? Let them bring their witnesses to justify them, and let them hear and say, "It is true." ¹⁰You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. ¹¹I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior. ¹²I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses, says the Lord. ¹³I am God, and also henceforth I am He; there is no one who can deliver from my hand; I work and who can hinder it? ¹⁴Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: For your sake I will send to Babylon and break down all the bars, and the shouting of the Chaldeans will be turned to lamentation. ¹⁵I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. ¹⁶Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, ¹⁷who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: ¹⁸Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. ¹⁹I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. ²⁰The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, ²¹the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise. ²²Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of me, O Israel! ²³You have not brought me your sheep for burnt offerings, or honored me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings, or wearied you with frankincense. ²⁴You have not bought me sweet cane with money, or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins; you have wearied me with your iniquities. ²⁵I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. ²⁶Accuse me, let us go to trial; set forth your case, so that you may be proved right. ²⁷Your first ancestor sinned, and your interpreters transgressed against me. ²⁸Therefore I profaned the princes of the sanctuary, I delivered Jacob to utter destruction, and Israel to reviling.

Acts 8:5-25

⁸⁵Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. ⁶The crowds with one accord listened eagerly to what was said by Philip, hearing and seeing the signs that he did, ⁷for unclean spirits, crying with loud shrieks, came out of many who were possessed; and many others who were paralyzed or lame were cured. ⁸So there was great joy in that city. ⁹Now a certain man named Simon had previously

practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he was someone great. ¹⁰All of them, from the least to the greatest, listened to him eagerly, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." ¹¹And they listened eagerly to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. ¹²But when they believed Philip, who was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³Even Simon himself believed. After being baptized, he stayed constantly with Philip and was amazed when he saw the signs and great miracles that took place. ¹⁴Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit ¹⁶(for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). ¹⁷Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹saying, "Give me also this power so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." ²⁰But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain God's gift with money! ²¹You have no part or share in this, for your heart is not right before God. ²²Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and the chains of wickedness." ²⁴Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may happen to me." ²⁵Now after Peter and John had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news to many villages of the Samaritans.

Luke 3:21-22

³Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²²and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Sermon *Baptism of the Lord Sunday*

The Baptism of the Lord is an event which inaugurates the ministry of Jesus Christ in the world. It is an event which announces, through the participation of our founder and perfecter, the invitation of all the world into the Kingdom of the LORD. No longer are the LORD's people limited to ethnic lineage or specific historical circumstance but is now thrown open and made accessible to all. It also makes us reflect on the rite of baptism itself in the Church; how we view it, how we have used it, and the benefit it gives us in day-to-day life. Many of us were baptized when we were infants or small children and probably have no recollection of the event except that it happened. Even in St. Luke's account, in Luke 3:21-22, it has such a small mention.

Compared to the other gospel's which go into detail about the event, St. Luke does not seem to give it much mention. But we must remember who St. Luke was writing this gospel for! St. Luke's audience, his Christian community, were comprised of Gentiles who had no background or understanding of the Jewish roots of the event. The significance of John the Baptist as the last of the Hebrew prophets would have been lost on them. Instead, emphasis is placed on what the event directly communicates about Jesus' position and relationship to the LORD. With the giving of the Holy Spirit in such a physical form, and the voice from heaven declaring him "Beloved", this is a signal of Jesus' position within the divine. It is a demonstration of what awaits those who have the courage and want to follow in Jesus' footsteps. That a temple, priest, sacrifices, and complicated rites are no longer needed to get the LORD's attention and favor. Only a longing heart which seeks the divine.

That is a message communicated by the prophet in Isaiah 43:1-28.

A message of hope for shattered Israel, the broken people of the LORD, that they will not be lost or distant forever. A day will come which the LORD will gather all his people back to their land. And not just an ethnic people, but all who have seen the wonders of the LORD and seek to respond to them. The Epiphany Star the magi saw on their journey is also a sign to this event, that the LORD will guide all who desire him to where he dwells. And there is nothing that can be offered to make this commitment and discovery more convenient, because it is meant to grab our attention and make us wrestle with our commitments. It makes us realize who we are currently listening to and following, what they are saying and encouraging us to do, and if that allows us to live with purpose and expectation. Do we allow the promises, the power, of the LORD to overpower and overshadow all in our lives?

That is a confrontation met in Acts 8:5-25.

At this point in the Acts narrative, the Holy Spirit has only been met and received by specific individuals. The Samaritans were a people that the apostles' thought were outside the ability to see, know, and respond to the LORD and receive the message of Jesus Christ. At least until the apostle Philip went down and gave the Samaritans the word and they responded and were baptized accordingly. The apostles went down to witness this and went away amazed as to the power and ability of the LORD to include and make new a people they had stereotypically written off. Within the narrative, Simon the Magician is someone who serves as a key detail within the story. Someone who had worked outside of the realm of the LORD, but only after being confronted by the Holy Spirit desired a change for his life. Baptism itself did not provide this and did not change him. It was the position that baptism placed him within creation which allowed the truth and reality of the LORD to confront him, and the gospel of Jesus Christ to heal him. It is the same with us; baptism itself as a rite does not have the power to change but does get us into a position by which we can see the grace of the LORD demonstrated. It is not as much a practice as it is a condition. A condition of surrender,

humility, and constant searching for how the promises of the LORD come to life in all circumstances.

Baptism is given to the Church as a gift, but not to control and dictate on our own terms. It is a means to allow people to witness and remember who we are and how the LORD enables us to live into that. It reveals our conditions, talents, weaknesses, desires, and yearnings. A monument in our lives we can look back upon and see that the divine has moved into us and is not satisfied with dictating and directing from afar. For us, and the wider body of believers, the act and remembrance of baptism helps us to see how the LORD chooses to move and position us in a manner which will be for our betterment. Will we allow free access for those who desire the LORD, or will we limit its ability and rob ourselves of the majesty of divine revelation? Are we comfortable with allowing baptism to come out once in a while like a production, or allow it to be a defining remembrance in all we do? This is the power of the LORD: to take something that might seem small and use it to make big things happen. To allow what we might not understand fully this side of heaven to define us, and say: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."

Remembrance of Baptism

Let us remember in prayer:

Dominic Aquino, Tom & Amy Aquino, Mary Ellen Beans, Terry Carpenter, Fritz Chambers, Angie Chamberlain, Michelle Chamberlain, Mary Jane Dougherty, Don Eberheart Jr., Allison Folly, Kay France, Jamie Frank, Judy Hass, Alice & Errol Jacobs, Barry Jacobs, Victoria Kasten, Amber Loftis, Breanne Mathias, Peg McIntire, Will Long, Tom Netting, Ruth Patrick, Bob Pierre, John Pittman, Carol Phillips, Janet Porter, Mark Preusser, Stefani Seth, Josh Shaeffer, Marlene Singhaus, Cindy Smith, Derrick & Mandy Smith, Janis Stover, Bill Titley, Simone Villarruel, Jay Watt, The Friends of the Homeless of Tuscarawas County & The Homeless of Tuscarawas County.

LORD, our Father, in our lives and communities we are surrounded with so many voices and promises. Many people offer many things to improve our lives, but we realize too late these are empty promises and confused people. We wonder if there is any way to come back and be yours once again, and your mighty voice proves there is nowhere you cannot reach. Your baptism is more than a formal right, it is a promise given to us in our hour of deepest need. It is there to lead us back to the source of all righteousness and promise and demonstrate grace as it must be received. You have demonstrated it in Jesus Christ, and we remember it now and how it has affected our lives.

And so we remember our baptism, as individual members grafted into your body, and as a people grafted into each other for the transformation and healing of creation. We celebrate that divine power demonstrated by which the power of sin is broken, and the Kingdom enters into our world. So I ask you all, once again, to reject sin and the power

of evil and profess your faith and allegiance in Jesus Christ, who is the head of the Church:

Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world?

I renounce them.

Who is your Lord and Savior?

Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.

Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his word and showing his love?

I will, with the LORD's help.

We are thankful LORD, that you have made a way for us where before there was none. It is a testimony to you as Creator, that you have rearranged the whole of the cosmos so we can be with you. Help us to remember our baptism, and be thankful, that grace is ever flowing and never ceases.

Through this holy reminder, the holy sacrament of Baptism, may we experience your grace anew. Holy Spirit, bless this gift given from above so we might receive with joy and excitement. Reaffirm our faith so we might speak your wonders to those still trapped in the darkness. And confirm our place as your disciples, so in all we say and do with our lives your presence will be undeniable.

In the name of the LORD, our Father; Jesus Christ, our master and brother; and the Holy Spirit, our councilor and solace, we ask this.

Amen.

Anointing with Water

LORD, our Father, we have tasted your grace and know it is very good. We are reminded of the great works you have performed, sometimes without our knowing it. You have readied us, confirmed your trust in us, and called us your Beloved. In all we say and do, in everything we think and feel, may it be to your glory and communicate your order to all who watch us. And to fulfill the promise of the prayer gifted to us, by your Word made flesh:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and

forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Offering our Gifts

The LORD's power is not purchased with money, nor can it be! But we give to express our gratitude and see what the LORD might do from our worship.

Offertory *The King of Love My Shepherd Is* **Irish Melody**

***Hymn #592 Doxology**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***Prayer of Dedication**

LORD, our Father, your gracious invitation to be part of your Kingdom makes all the difference in what we accomplish. No longer do we work for ourselves, or others, but for you and offer all we have. Accept what we give so we might see your mighty power and voice ring out for all to hear. **Amen.**

***Hymn #499 Wonder of Wonders, Here Revealed**

Wonder of wonders, here revealed;
God's covenant with us is sealed.
And long before we know or pray,
God's love enfolds us every day.

Here in this sacrament we see
God's grace unbound, for all, for me!
May we respond with joyful praise
In loving service all our days.

This child of God, though young or old,
We welcome now into Christ's fold,
To know with us God's loving care;
Here all our joys and sorrows share.

Now we our vow of faith renew,
Stretch wide our sights to global view,
And claim with Christians far and near
A larger family held dear.

***Benediction**

Hear now, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind; you will love your neighbor as yourself.

With the gospel of Jesus Christ guiding you, go into the world to live this sole purpose.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

***Postlude *Postlude in C Minor* arr. Grode**

Be blessed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ wherever you may go!

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