

The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
“Reaching Out, Reflecting Christ, Renewing Lives”



Baptism of Our Lord
January 10, 2021



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Baptism of Our Lord

Our re-creation in baptism is an image of the Genesis creation, where the Spirit of God moved over the waters. Both Mark's gospel and the story in Acts make clear that it is the Spirit's movement that distinguishes Jesus' baptism from John's. The Spirit has come upon us as upon Jesus and the Ephesians, calling us God's beloved children and setting us on Jesus' mission to re-create the world in the image of God's vision of justice and peace.

Prelude *Baptized and Set Free* (HANSEN)

Confession & Forgiveness

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as we take time to recognize our shortcomings, while also remembering God's relentless grace.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
whose voice is upon the waters,
whose mercy is poured out upon all people,
whose goodness cascades over all creation.

Amen!

Let us confess our sin, trusting in the abundant grace of God.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Holy God,

you search us and know us.

You are acquainted with all our ways.

**We confess that our hearts are burdened by sin—
our own sins and the broken systems that bind us.**

**We turn inward, failing to follow
your outward way of love.**

We distrust those who are not like us.

**We exploit the earth and its resources
and fail to consider generations to come.**

**Forgive us, gracious God,
for all we have done and left undone.**

**Even before the words are on our tongues,
you know them;
receive them in your divine mercy. Amen.**

How vast is God's grace!
Through the power and promise of † Christ Jesus,
our sins are washed away
and we are claimed as God's own beloved.
Indeed, we are forgiven.
In the wake of God's forgiveness,
we are called to be the beloved community
living out Christ's justice
and the Holy Spirit's reconciling peace. **Amen!**

Gathering Hymn *Baptized and Set Free*

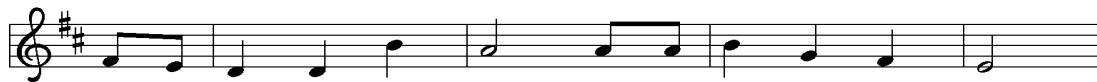
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1 We are peo - ple cre - at - ed, cho - sen by God.
2 We are fed and we're nour - ished, filled and re - freshed.
3 We are nour - ished by wa - ter, all liv - ing things,
4 Now with praise and thanks - giv - ing, we join the song.



Then we're washed, ev - er gent - ly, in mer - cy and love.
Then our hun - ger re - turns and a - gain we are blessed.
and by life that the Spir - it a - bun - dant - ly brings.
All are wel - come! We gath - er to sing loud and strong.



Sin has pow - er no more. Je - sus o - pened the door
For what - ev - er the need, God is great - er in - deed:
As we jour - ney toward home, may your pres - ence be known:
Not en - slaved, but set free! From now on, all will be



to a foun - tain bring - ing heal - ing, and whole - ness and more.
end - less o - cean, al - ways deep - er than all of our need.
pre - cious riv - er, ev - er - flow - ing, now car - ry us home.
one in Je - sus, one in wa - ter, bap - tized and set free!

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, creator of light and giver of goodness, your voice moves over the waters. Immerse us in your grace and transform us, that we may follow after your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen!**

First Lesson

Genesis 1:1-5

Out of chaos, God brings order. Out of the formless void, God brings light. This familiar story was good news for the Israelites, who experienced much chaos in their history. It remains good news for us. God created and continues to create new life.

¹In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

Psalm

Psalm 29

¹Ascribe to the LORD, you gods,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

**²Ascribe to the LORD the glory due God’s name;
worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.**

³The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders;
the LORD is upon the mighty waters.

**⁴The voice of the LORD is a powerful voice;
the voice of the LORD is a voice of splendor.**

⁵The voice of the LORD breaks the cedar trees;
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

**⁶the LORD makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.**

⁷The voice of the LORD
bursts forth in lightning flashes.

**⁸The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.**

⁹The 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!”

**¹⁰The LORD sits enthroned above the flood;
the LORD sits enthroned as king forevermore.**

¹¹O LORD, give strength to your people;
give them, O LORD, the blessings of peace.

Second Lesson

Acts 19:1-7

In Ephesus, Paul encounters people who had received John's baptism of repentance but had never heard of the Holy Spirit or of baptism in the name of Jesus. After Paul baptizes them, the Holy Spirit comes upon them and empowers them with gifts of the Spirit.

¹While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. ²He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." ⁴Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied—
⁷altogether there were about twelve of them.

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

Gospel

Mark 1:4-11

Mark's gospel reports the story of Jesus' baptism with some irony: the one on whom the Spirit descends is himself the one who will baptize others with the Holy Spirit.

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord!

Praise to you, O Christ!



1 When long be - fore time and the worlds were be - gun,
 2 The si - lence was bro - ken when God sang the Song,
 3 The sounds of the crea - tures were one with their Lord's,
 4 Though down through the a - ges the Song dis - ap - peared,



when there was no earth and no sky and no sun,
 and light pierced the dark - ness and rhy - thm be - gan,
 their har - mo - nies sweet and be - fit - ting the Word;
 its har - mo - nies bro - ken and al - most un - heard,



and all was deep si - lence and night reigned su - preme,
 and with its first birth - cries cre - a - tion was born,
 the Sing - er was pleased as the earth sang the Song,
 the Sing - er comes to us to sing it a - gain,



and e - ven our Mak - er had on - ly a dream—
 and crea - ture - ly voic - es sang praise to the morn.
 the choir of the crea - tures re - ech - oed it long.
 our God - is - with - us in the world now as then.

5 The Light has returned as it came once before,
 the Song of the Lord is our own song once more,
 so let us all sing with one heart and one voice
 the Song of the Singer in whom we rejoice.

6 To you, God the Singer, our voices we raise,
 to you, Song Incarnate, we give all our praise,
 to you, Holy Spirit, our life and our breath,
 be glory forever, through life and through death.

Prayers of Intercession

On this Sunday of the baptism of our Lord, let us offer our prayers for all in need, responding to each petition with words from today's psalm, "Give us your blessings of peace."

A brief silence.

God of us all, watch over your whole church; for those who minister to others; for all who will be baptized this year; and for their godparents and sponsors: that the Holy Spirit will empower all the faithful for lives of service. O God, give strength to your people.

Give us your blessings of peace.

Still creating-God, continue to nourish the waters of the earth; for the seas, the lakes, the rivers; for the wells that provide drinking water; and for the water that is piped into our homes, providing clean and soothing water for all living things. O God, give strength to your people. **Give us your blessings of peace.**

God of mercy, tend to all the nations of the world and their leaders; for international efforts to prevent war and reduce violence; for the armed forces; and for peacemakers: that you may inspire all people, including all Americans, to work for the harmonious well-being of others. O God, give strength to your people. **Give us your blessings of peace.**

God of wisdom, strengthen all students for the months ahead; for teachers and school administrators; for parents assisting their children in home schooling; and for young people who are finding a way toward graduation. Give resilience to everyone in the search for education. O God, give strength to your people. **Give us your blessings of peace.**

For all who are in trouble, want, or sickness; for the countless who are suffering with COVID-19; for medical workers; for people who are hungry or homeless, imprisoned or lonely. Grant health and wholeness to a world so filled with pain. O God, give strength to your people. **Give us your blessings of peace.**

In gratitude for our beloved dead, we offer our praise for all the baptized who have accompanied us and supported us and taught us throughout our days; that at our end we join with them in everlasting joy. O God, give strength to your people. **Give us your blessings of peace.**

Almighty and most merciful God, you are the mighty Voice from heaven, you are our beloved Savior, you are the descending Dove. We give you thanks for all your goodness and tender mercies, and we ask you to accept our prayers for the sake of your mercy, today and forever. **Amen!**

Music Interlude *I Bind unto Myself Today* (KRAPF)

Please use this time to meditate or pray for those dear to your heart.

Thanksgiving for Baptism

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
the fountain of living water,
the rock who gave us birth,
our light and our salvation. **Amen!**

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism,
we are clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness.
Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

We give you thanks, O God, O Living One,
for you have created all, and you water the earth abundantly.
All life is sustained by you, our Source of new life.
We praise you for Christ, the firstborn from the dead,
who frees us from sin and raises us up to that new life.

Here, at this font, we witness the river of the water of life,
bright as crystal, flowing through the city of God.
Here, death is washed away forever.
Here, we are grafted into the tree of life,
with leaves for the healing of the world.

Holy Spirit, continue to flow through our entire Covenant family,
into our communities we call home, and throughout all creation.
Cleanse us from our fears and drown our divisions.
Grant that all may drink of your mercy and peace,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen!**

**Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name,
 your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven.
 Give us today our daily bread.
 Forgive us our sins
 as we forgive those
 who sin against us.
 Save us from the time of trial
 and deliver us from evil.
 For the kingdom, the power,
 and the glory are yours,
 now and forever. Amen.**

Blessing

God the creator strengthen you;
 Jesus the beloved fill you;
 and the Holy Spirit the comforter † keep you in peace. **Amen!**

Sending Hymn *Crashing Waters at Creation*

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- 1 Crash - ing wa - ters at cre - a - tion, or - dered by the Spir - it's breath,
- 2 Part - ing wa - ter stood and trem - bled as the cap - tives passed on through,
- 3 Cleans - ing wa - ter once at Jor - dan closed a - round the one fore - told,
- 4 Liv - ing wa - ter, nev - er end - ing, quench the thirst and flood the soul.



first to wit - ness day's be - gin - ning from the bright - ness of night's death.
 wash - ing off the chains of bond - age— chan - nel to a life made new.
 o - pened to re - veal the glo - ry ev - er new and ev - er old.
 Well - spring, source of life e - ter - nal, drench our dry - ness, make us whole.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Be the light of Christ!

Thanks be to God!

Postlude *When Jesus Came to Jordan* (MANSFIELD)

Praying Together

... for those who are homebound, ill, hospitalized or recuperating: Gayle Agg, Bob Buettner, Alexis Carr, Joan Clarke, John Crawford, Nicole Crawford, Barbara Fossa, Carolyn Frajter, Ken Frajter, Nealie Gage, Barb Gaglione, Michelle Garnett, Rosa Garnett, Judy Jones, Dylan King, Jason Lanese, Andrea Lanzalaca, Sara Mendes, Phyllis Nemeth, Bernice Novak, Don Rusher Jr., Arlene Stoltz, Tim Susanek, Tom Susanek, Phyllis Treichel, Phyllis Welker, Linda Wright, Wilma Dancy, Bill Helmick, Nancy Helmick, Robert Lambrecht, Kim (Novak) Leonhardt, Laura Mele, Judy Morgan, Kris Sandor, Bill Wilkens, Eugene Winfrey, the Copeland/Lane Family Pastor Franz and family for mourning at the death of his sister.

LAST WEEK

General Fund receipts for week ending 1/3/2020: \$2026

To the glory of God, and in loving memory of Helene Egley, a memorial was given by Diane & Kurt Korfage.

To the glory of God, and in loving memory of Don Schirmer, memorials were given by Arlene Lasher and Claudia & Steve Senderak.

Lectionary Blog: Saying, Seeing, Separating and Calling

I love the resonance between this week's Hebrew Bible reading and the Gospel lesson. Both passages discuss beginnings. The Genesis text proclaims: "In the beginning of God's creating the heavens and earth ..." (1:1, my translation), and the Gospel of Mark answers: "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the son of God ..." (1:1). The Greek word *arche* is used in both the Septuagint (Greek First Testament) and Mark to signify that an important new thing is just starting.

Looking specifically at Genesis, God's actions in creation take center stage. God didn't create out of nothing, as the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* argues. There was some sort of deep ocean already, and God's Spirit hovered over it. Instead of being content with a vast

watery waste, God took action—specifically four actions. God *spoke, saw, separated* and *called*.

When creating the light, God spoke it into being (“Let there be light,” Genesis 1:3), God saw that it was good, God separated light from darkness (4), and finally God called the light “day” and the darkness “night” (5). With a few notable modulations, these four actions play a major role in how God went about creating the rest of the universe. God brought the world into being by saying, seeing, separating and calling.

These actions also play a major role in the introduction of Jesus and his ministry in the Gospel of Mark. Before Jesus was introduced, the Gospel writer quoted Isaiah the prophet:

*See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight”* (Mark 1:2-3).

The Gospel accordingly opens with the words of God through Isaiah. To make it ever clearer that God is speaking a new creation into being, the prophesy from Isaiah centers on a messenger and a voice crying out. This is the “**saying**.”

God’s word through the prophet Isaiah seems to have had the desired effect. Just as the Septuagint uses the Greek verb *egeneto* to confirm that “there was [light],” the quote from Isaiah in Mark is immediately followed by *egeneto Ioannis o Baptizo* “there was John the Baptist.” The command to let there be light and the prophesy that a messenger would be sent to cry out in the wilderness are both followed with the same matter-of-fact conclusion that what was spoken came into being.

Jesus came to John the Baptist out in the wilderness to be baptized. What happened next combines the other verbs of creation into just a couple Gospel verses. As Jesus was coming out of the water, he **saw** a vision. And what was that vision? That the heavens were **separated** (literally “cleaved” or “rent in two” from the Greek *schizo*). Then a voice from heaven called Jesus God’s “beloved son.” God’s Spirit spoke through John the Baptizer. Jesus saw a vision. God separated the heavens and **called** Jesus his beloved son. Say, see, separate and call—just like the first creation.

This is no coincidence. The Gospel writer purposefully echoed the language of creation to talk about what God was doing through Jesus. Why? I think to point out radical continuity and radical departure.

God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. We would absolutely expect that God's actions at the beginning of the universe would be echoed again and again throughout Scripture and human history because God's actions are good and perfect. If God does a thing wonderfully well, why not do it wonderfully well again? Throughout Scripture, God is always in the business of creating, forgiving, saving and loving. Thus, Mark's introduction serves as a reminder of God's ongoing creative work in ushering in a new era of salvific history by referencing the same creative actions that started the universe.

But the creative actions in Mark also confirm that something radically new was happening. Just as the created universe is profoundly different from the pre-creative waters, so is the time of the advent of God's kingdom here on earth through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus profoundly different from the time before it. Jesus is our Immanuel "God is with us" in a radically different way than the child of Isaiah 7, of whom the prophesy originally spoke.

Mark uses the old creation language to link the coming of Jesus to the creation of the universe. God's ways of old continued into Jesus' day and continue into ours as well. But God did a new thing in sending Jesus to save us. One of the paradoxes of God is that in doing something very old, God does something very new for us!

This, and other resources for the journey of faith, available at LivingLutheran.org.



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