

January 10, 2021 – The Baptism of the Lord

Setting 4

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM (ELW p. 97)

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism✝

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

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.

Water may be poured into the font as the presiding minister gives thanks.

We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight. Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family. Through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom. At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit. By water and your Word you claim us as daughters and sons, making us heirs of your promise and servants of all. We praise you for the gift of water that sustains life, and above all we praise you for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ. Shower us with your Spirit, and renew our lives with your forgiveness, grace, and love. To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Amen.

Entrance Hymn: ELW #300 - “*The First Noel*”

Greeting: The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Kyrie:

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 by your Spirit, 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 Reading: Genesis 1:1-5

A reading from Genesis.

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 29

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

²**Ascribe 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.

⁴**The 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 Reading: Acts 19:1-7

A reading from Acts.

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

The holy gospel according to Mark. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

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."

The gospel of our Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Homily: From Bishop Jason Zinko, Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod

Grace, mercy, and peace to you in the name of Christ, our Saviour. Amen.

Over the past months, I've noticed something. Like you, I've noticed a significant number of negative things about the pandemic. Things like job loss, stress, death and grief, and social isolation. These are real issues and I think that they will affect us and our communities for a long time.

But there are also positives. People have been more generous. The pace of life has slowed down for many people – meaning

more time with immediate family. Workplaces have needed to be more flexible and realistic about what people can accomplish. Many of us have been more willing to support local economies. There have also been some real positives specifically about church involvement. I know that your church councils may disagree, but this time away from our same old patterns is helping to us to see a broader vision of how the church can be the church today.

In many instances, online worship attendance across our churches has remained consistent or gone up from traditional in-person Sunday gatherings. But probably the most exciting thing is seeing an increase in how people are engaging in the work of the church and looking for opportunities to be fed and to grow in faith. I've had conversations with pastors telling me that people who have not consistently connected to the worship life of the congregation are now regulars online, especially with devotional times and learning about spiritual practices. It seems that many people are beginning to look beyond what has been a focal point for us for many years – Sunday morning worship – and instead are digging into the meaning behind it all.

I'm actually very excited about what this all means for the church, and I can't wait to see more clearly how God is working in our lives during this time.

The reason I bring up this observation is because I think that it ties directly to our reading today. I've heard, and read (and let's be honest, I've preached) a lot of sermons this time of year that talk about John the Baptizer. In all of them, there is some mention of John being a bit weird. Most have mentioned something about his role as a prophet, or at least fulfilling the role of herald laid out in the prophetic writings of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). Some have delved into the question about why Jesus needed to come to be baptized in the first place.

Instead of talking about any of that, I want to get right to what it means – why this story matters for us as followers of Christ. And it is not to learn about John the Baptizer.

This story – the whole reason for this day in the Christian calendar – is to focus on baptism. Not only Jesus' baptism, but ours. Since we are tied to Christ in and through baptism, we can't really separate this story from how we are part of it in our own baptism. And I don't mean the just the actual rite of baptism in church. I'm talking about why we baptize and what it means for us. I'm talking about who we *become* in baptism.

Fundamental to our understanding of baptism is that it is all about identity. It's about belonging to the family of God. We hear the voice from heaven talking to Jesus, saying, **“You are my Son, the beloved; with you I am well pleased.”** Jesus, in his

baptism, is told that he lives in the loving embrace of God. In our own baptisms, we are also told that we live in that same gift of grace. We are also the ones who are called children of God. Celebrating how God spoke to Jesus in his baptism reminds us of how God spoke to us in our baptism.

And that is significant. In our world today, there are fewer and fewer places where we can feel as though we really, truly belong anymore. Hardly anybody works for the same company for their entire career. Hardly anyone lives in the same house for their entire adult lives. Fewer people are members of organizations or groups for more than a few years before moving onto another community. Family members move to other cities or towns, and some families just disintegrate altogether. Most of the last year affected how we engage with friends and family. For those of us who are used to travelling and meeting people face to face, we know that even the best technology is a poor substitute and has left us feeling disconnected.

Whatever circumstance we are in, changes in culture and social interaction means that we don't feel like things shape us in the same way. Because of that, it's harder to figure out who we are. But in baptism, we know exactly who we are. We know exactly who we belong to. We know that through an act involving some water and a few words, we have been brought into God's

inheritance and into the community of believers that we call the church. We are given an identity that shines through everything that we say and do.

That identity and that grace also means that God looks past our sins and our shortcomings, and still gives us forgiveness and grace. And that means that each day we are freed again to live our lives knowing that we are perfect and loved by God our creator.

This is all purely a gift from God.

Now what we do with this, and how we live this out are also important. This is something that it would be worthwhile looking at John the Baptizer as an example.

John understood that living out the identity that God gave us in baptism asks something of us. God doesn't claim us and name us so that we can just sit around like a lump watching the world go by without taking part in God's work. Baptism is actually the beginning in helping to bring about God's kingdom in our world today.

Baptism is the start of us preparing the way of the Lord. And the way of the Lord is a way of justice. It's a way of equity and forgiveness. It's a way of sacrifice and self-giving – of caring for others and community above ourselves or our individual comfort.

The way of the Lord means turning to face God again so we can see how to be a part of God's intention for all of creation.

John gave a few pretty clear examples from his day. He told tax collectors not to cheat the system. He told soldiers not to extort and threaten. He told the comfortable to share with those who needed comfort. He told people not to assume that they were following God just because of the family or country they were born into or the place they went to worship.

I wonder what some examples would be for us today. What would it look like for us to listen again to God and live in a way that brings God's hope for creation into reality here and now?

I'm certain that you or your congregation are already doing some of that work. You may be collecting and distributing food to those who don't have enough. You may be advocating and fundraising for those in distant places who have been displaced or live through war. You may be helping an elderly neighbour with their grocery shopping so that they don't need to risk their health. Or you may send social media posts or call members from your congregation just to check in. As congregations and as individuals, I hope that we do prepare the way of the Lord regularly.

But preparation isn't just a one-time event; it's a way of life. As followers of Jesus and as baptized Christians, that way of life is a

result of the grace God gives us first. It's something we do daily in response to God's gifts. We can't just sit through church as though attendance is all that God wants from us – as though just getting to the building or connecting online is the goal. God wants us to engage deeply with the people and the world through our faith.

So that will mean inviting people who are alone into our communities as a way of bringing hope into someone's life. It will mean letting our faith inform the way we do business and how we treat colleagues and competition. It will mean respecting the people that our friends don't think deserve it. It will mean practicing generosity out of the abundance that God has already given us. It will also mean regularly taking time to practice and grow in faith so that we are able to hear God's voice more clearly each day.

That's what Jesus did after his baptism. It was immediately after this scene that Jesus went out into the world bringing: good news, healing, forgiveness, compassion, and justice. It was after this that Jesus ate with people and taught people, stood up for people and walked with them. It was after this that Jesus regularly made time for prayer.

I hope that we will be able to see and follow that example as best as we are able. I hope that God will give us the faith to see and

hear what Jesus tells us. And I hope that, more than anything, God gives us the strength to follow Jesus' lead in preparing the way of Lord right where we are. That is who we are. It is who God made us to be. And it is how we can help God to bring forgiveness, justice, and peace to the world.

Hymn: ELW #453 - *"Baptized and Set Free"*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Glorious God, as Jesus prayed at his baptism, your mothering Spirit brooded over him, providing sustenance and strength. So brood over us today as we offer our prayers for the church and world saying,

Mothering Spirit, **stir us with your power.**

1. We pray for your church: may your word spark our lives with truth and joy as we serve one another to the glory of your name.

Mothering Spirit, **stir us with your power.**

2. We pray for all leaders and people around the globe: may your justice provoke us to shape a peaceful world where all work for the common good.

Mothering Spirit, **stir us with your power.**

3. We pray for the well-being of your creation: may your goodness startle us to the horror of our exploitation and abuse of the land, water and air. Help us find solutions for healing your creation.

Mothering Spirit, **stir us with your power.**

4. We pray for all who suffer grief or sickness of any kind: especially those we name silently in our hearts and those we name in the bulletin and may your tender presence abide with us and hasten all healing.

Mothering Spirit, **stir us with your power.**

5. We pray for all who lack the essentials of life: may your righteousness raise us up to walk together? with respect and dignity for all.

Mothering Spirit, **stir us with your power.**

O God, you have made us, formed us, and called us by name, and you have redeemed us in Christ. Receive our prayers this day, for your life-giving Spirit is powerful to save. **Amen.**

Music as the Altar is prepared.

The Great Thanksgiving:

P. The Lord be with you.

C. **And also with you.**

P. Lift up your hearts.

C. **We lift them to the Lord.**

P. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

P. It is indeed right ... we praise your name and join in their unending worship:

C. **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,**

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Pastor prays the Eucharistic Prayer, ending with the Lord's Prayer.

Lamb of God (page 154)

Communion is received while you remain in your pews.

Communion Hymns – ELW #487 *“What Feast of Love”*

- ELW #773 *“Precious Lord, Take My Hand”*

Prayer after Communion: Christ Jesus, at this table we have feasted on your very life and are strengthened for our journey. Send us forth from this banquet nourished in body and in spirit to proclaim your good news and serve others in your name. **Amen.**

Blessing: May our Gracious God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us in the Risen Life of Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Sending Song: WOV #652 – *“Arise, Your Light Has Come”*

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude:

News and Announcements:

Please Pray for Those Who are Ill, in Hospital, or Requested

Special Prayers: Florence Felske, Harold Hampel, Laurretta Handke, Richard Hubert, Murray Lubitz, Dorian Verch, Leono Woito, Sharon Watt.

SERVICE BROADCAST ON COGECO

Cogeco Community Channel is now broadcasting Zion's services at 9:00 a.m. and 12 noon on Sunday mornings, a week later.

CHURCH OFFICE

Please note that the church office is open during regular office hours – Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9am until 12 noon.

ANNUAL REPORTS

Annual Reports are due into the office by Wednesday, January 20, 2021. Please keep checking our website for future details about our annual meeting.

Today's Video Has Been Brought To You By Zion Lutheran Church's Production Crew:

Presider: Pastor Leena Jensen

Musician: Blaine Sack

Worship Assistant/Reader: Brenda Dole

Projectionist: Rick Gerundin

Credit Researcher: Diane Hammel

This Week at Zion – January 11-17

Tuesday 7p.m. Narcotics Anonymous