

BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

JANUARY 10, 2021

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, FALLS CHURCH, VA

SERVICE OF WORD AND PRAYER



PRELUDE *O Blessed Spring* Setting: Emma Lou Diemer

WELCOME

ENTRANCE HYMN #595 *O Blessed Spring*

- 1 **O blessèd spring, where Word and sign
Embrace us into Christ the Vine:
Here Christ enjoins each one to be
A branch of this life-giving Tree.**
- 2 **Through summer heat of youthful years,
Uncertain faith, rebellious tears,
Sustained by Christ's infusing rain,
The boughs will shout for joy again.**
- 3 **When autumn cools and youth is cold,
When limbs their heavy harvest hold,
Then through us, warm, the Christ will move
With gifts of beauty, wisdom, love.**
- 4 **As winter comes, as winters must,
We breathe our last, return to dust;
Still held in Christ, our souls take wing
And trust the promise of the spring.**
- 5 **Christ, holy Vine, Christ, living Tree,
Be praised for this blest mystery:
That Word and water thus revive
And join us to Your Tree of Life.**

CONFESSIO AND ABSOLUTION

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

Amen.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Brief silence for reflection and self-examination.

Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake God forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ He gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

KYRIE

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God and Father:

We worship You, we give You thanks, we praise You for Your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God:

You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

You are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer.

For You alone are the Holy One, You alone are the Lord,

You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,

in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray. Father in heaven,

at the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River You proclaimed Him Your beloved Son and anointed Him with the Holy Spirit. Make all who are baptized in His name faithful in their calling as Your children and inheritors with Him of everlasting life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



FIRST LESSON Genesis 1:1–5

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 29

Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the LORD, over many waters.

The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.

The voice of the LORD
flashes forth flames of fire.

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

The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth
and strips the forests bare,
and in his temple all cry, “Glory!”

The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.
May the LORD give strength to his people!
May the LORD bless his people with peace!

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

SECOND LESSON Romans 6:1-11

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ

Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

ALLELUIA VERSE

Alleluia.

Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life.

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL Mark 1:4-11

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 1st chapter.

Glory to You, O Lord.

John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opening and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ

SERMON

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen. Dear friends in Christ:

The account of Jesus' baptism from St. Mark's Gospel, which we just read, is very brief – giving us only a few basic facts. That is why we also read some of the verses leading up to the baptism.

And in those verses, we hear about the reason people were being baptized. Baptism was undertaken as a means of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Hearing this always leads us to ask: “so why would Jesus be baptized, since he has no sin for which to repent?”

John himself asks that very question of Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel. And Jesus gives him an answer. He tells John that he is to be baptized “*in order to fulfill all righteousness.*”

But that answer still leaves us with questions. What does it mean that all righteousness would be fulfilled?

Jesus’ answer suggests that there are multiple reasons for his baptism. Today’s sermon will explore four of these that are commonly given. These reasons, in turn, will also convey messages to us about our own baptism.

A first answer to the question is that it shows Jesus aligning himself with all humanity. That message is implicit in the incarnation itself of course. God comes down to earth to be with his people. Still, those early verses of the Gospels tend to emphasize the uniqueness and superiority of Jesus according to his divinity. Mark tells us he is the Christ and the Son of God. Matthew and Luke tell of his miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit. John tells us he is the very Word of God. Jesus is described as savior and king – with angels, shepherds and wise men adoring him.

At Jesus’ baptism, we see his uniqueness as well. God speaks and declares: “*you are my beloved Son.*” But the baptism introduces the opposite message too. Here we see that Jesus is one of us. This message is given as we see him standing along with all sinful Israel to participate in an act of repentant humility.

The writer of the Book of Hebrews will later say of Jesus that he is not “*a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin*” (4:5). We see this message of sympathy and mutual temptation already in Jesus’ baptism. He’s there in line with all the others. He doesn’t get to skip ahead. He has no special pass. He’s one of the people – waiting and trying to be patient like everyone else.

As the Gospels unfold, we will find that Jesus is not just one of us, but also close to us as our brother. When asked about his mother and his brothers, he says: “*Who are my mother and my brothers?*” And then, in answer to his own question, he will point to those following him and say: “*Here are my mother and my brothers, for whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother*” (Mk. 3:35).

When we follow Jesus and receive a baptism into his name, the waters of baptism take away our sin. At that point we then stand with Jesus as part of his family. We are brothers and sisters with him – God’s children – loved as he is.

This family is a family of faith. That is why we always confess the Creed at our baptism and continue to confess it in our worship.

This family is also a family of care and support for one another. That is why we commit to loving one another – sharing our time, talents and means.

This family, as we recalled last week, transcends national borders. Today, as we see Jesus standing in line with “all Judea and Jerusalem,” we should add that it also transcends those differences of race and class, status and sex that seem to obsess so many.

When we are baptized, our primary identity is that of God's child. We are "Christians" -- those who bear the name of our savior and brother, Jesus Christ.

A second answer given as a reason for Jesus' baptism is that it shows him as the anointed king of Israel. The Old Testament scriptures had prophesied that Israel would have a great king someday. That king would be known as the Messiah – the "anointed one." When God spoke at Jesus' baptism, saying "*you are my beloved Son,*" he was quoting words from a scripture (Psalm 2) that spoke of this king. God's words at Jesus' baptism thus serve as a declaration of his anointing.

St. Peter professed this understanding in an explanation he gives to Cornelius, as recorded in Acts 10 (v.38). There Peter says: "*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.*"

Historically, Christian baptisms have often included an anointing with oil as a part of the liturgy. This anointing can, however, take away from the emphasis on the water.

Whether oil is used or not, baptism declares that a person is part of Christ's kingdom. And when we are a member of Christ's kingdom, we enjoy all the benefits of living under his glorious and gentle rule, including his protection and his care. Christ our king provides for us according to his heavenly wisdom, truth and grace, and we are blessed. All of us.

A third reason given for Jesus' baptism is that it signals the beginning of his ministry. Mark's telling of the baptism emphasizes that God spoke directly to Jesus at that time, saying: "*You are my beloved Son.*" Didn't Jesus know this? Of course. But God's words here indicate a new chapter in Jesus' life.

In his years of ministry, Jesus will show what it means to care for the world. He will call people to join his family. He will heal, preach and cast out evil. He will meet the challenges set before him – like the one immediately after his baptism when he is cast into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Baptism, we see here, is a declaring of war against the forces of evil.

The ministry of Jesus is above all a journey to the cross. Luke 12 (v.50) records Jesus describing that upcoming death of his as a baptism. He says: "*I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!*"

When Jesus endured that baptism, he paid the price for human sin. That payment now allows those who follow him to enter with him into the blessed life to come.

St. Paul said all of this very beautifully to the Romans in chapter six of his epistle (vs. 3-5). There he says: "*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.*"

As members of God's family, living in the kingdom of Christ, this incredible promise of God is given to us each day. We live forever in God's baptismal grace. There can be no greater joy.

Our baptism then begins a life of ministry and service for us as well. We go forward as Jesus did, caring for the needs of the world and battling the forces of evil. Thankfully, our baptism also strengthens us for the fight.

Finally, a fourth reason given for Jesus' baptism is that it shows how the Holy Spirit comes through Jesus. At Jesus' baptism the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove. What a glorious sight! The scene harkens back to the beginning of the world, when God created the heavens and the earth, and the Spirit of God hovered over the waters.

With Jesus, just like creation itself, new life is animated through the giving of the Holy Spirit. This happens when those who were dead in their sins are given the new life of forgiveness.

We note, too, that through the Holy Spirit, baptism itself was given a new life. The Spirit transformed the old baptism of repentance into one that also gives the forgiven life in Christ, through the washing away of sin.

The Spirit was upon Jesus in a new way at his baptism. And the Spirit is given also to all who are baptized in his name.

One of the prayers we offer at a baptism captures all this so well. “God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we give You thanks for freeing Your sons and daughters from the power of sin and for raising them up to a new life through this holy sacrament. Pour out Your Holy Spirit [upon this child]: 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.”

John the Baptist knew about the giving of the Spirit. He had told people from the beginning, *“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”*

John also knew that the baptism of Jesus would give fire. The Holy Spirit lights a fire within us at our baptism, that we might be energized to carry out the Lord’s work and refined in doing it the right way.

Let me conclude with one of my favorite baptismal stories. It’s said that when King Aengus of Ireland, in the middle of the fifth century, was baptized by Saint Patrick, Patrick at some point during the rite leaned on his sharp staff and inadvertently stabbed the king’s foot. Patrick didn’t notice this until after the baptism was completed and he saw the blood pooled by the king’s foot. Patrick immediately begged for the king’s forgiveness and asked him, “Why did you suffer this pain in silence?” The king replied, “I thought it was part of the ritual.”

One might think that the shedding of our own blood would be necessary for forgiveness. But Christ’s blood is sufficient. We are cleansed by his blood through the washing of holy baptism, because in that baptism we are connected to his death and resurrection.

Any suffering on our part is the service we freely offer to others in need. And since we have received such a great gift in our Baptism, how can we not but go forth and serve our neighbors, even to the point where it might hurt?

Today, as we remember the baptism of Jesus, let us also remember our own baptism and give thanks. Our baptism happened once and that was sufficient. But our baptism is still a part of who we are every day.

Perhaps we can remember this by taking note of our language. If you were to say to someone, “I was married” – using the past tense—they would assume that you were married no longer. If, on the other hand, you say, “I am married,” then that communicates something current.

So also, with our baptism. It’s not just that we “were baptized.” “I am baptized,” we say. Baptism is not just a past event which we recall fondly, but a present reality in which God “daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers,” to quote our catechism.

May God therefore keep us in His baptismal grace. And may we, in turn, reflect his grace in all we do. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

1. **When Jesus came to Jordan
to be baptized by John,
he did not come for pardon.
but as the Sinless One.
He came to share repentance
with all who mourn their sins,
to speak the vital sentence
with which good news begins.**

2. **He came to share temptation,
our utmost woe and loss,
for us and our salvation
to die upon the cross.
So when the Dove descended
on him, the Son of Man,
the hidden years had ended,
the age of grace began.**

3. **Come, Holy Spirit,
aid us to keep the vows we make;
this very day invade us,
and ev'ry bondage break.
Come, give our lives direction,
the gift we covet most:
to share the resurrection
that leads to Pentecost.**

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

OFFERING When Jesus Came to Jordan Setting: David Cherwien

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Let us pray for the whole Church of Jesus Christ, and all people who are in need:

In thanksgiving for the revelation of Jesus Christ to us in His wondrous Epiphany in the Jordan, for wondrous blessings that come to us in Holy Baptism, and that we might be forgiven for any sins that we have done that led to brother rising against brother at the Capital this week, let us pray to the Lord:
Lord, have mercy.

For all the baptized children of God, that we may daily die to sin and rise to newness of life, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the Holy Church here and scattered throughout the world, that God would send laborers into His harvest, strengthen faith and love in all Christians, and that we would be the salt and leaven that helps the healing of this nation, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the family; for all Christian homes; for husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, that God would equip them as teachers of the faith; and for all children, that God would help them grow in faith and Baptismal living, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For our nation and her leaders; for healing of the wounds that so divide us, for all who were killed or hurt during the assault on our capital, for all who make our laws, and for a peaceful transfer of power, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the sick, depressed, tired, and those in any need, [*especially _____,*] that they would know God's comfort, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who are near death, [*especially _____,*] that they may hear Your Son's Words of grace in their last hour and be confident in their Baptismal hope, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all who come to the Lord's Supper for rest and restoration, that the Holy Spirit would preserve us from impenitence and unbelief, cleanse us from our sins, and clothe us with the righteousness purchased with Christ's blood, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, You manifested Yourself, with the Holy Spirit, in the fullness of grace at the baptism of Your dear Son and, with Your voice, directed us to keep our eyes on Him; keep us, we pray, in true faith and nourish us by the example of Sarah, the Patriarchess, and St Basil of Nazianzus. With all Your saints, lead us to everlasting life; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

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 trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

BENEDICTION

The Lord bless us and keep us.
The Lord make His face shine on us
and be gracious to us.
The Lord look upon us with favor and ✠ give us peace.

SENDING HYMN #603 *We Know That Christ Is Raised*

- 1 We know that Christ is raised and dies no more.
Embraced by death, He broke its fearful hold;
And our despair He turned to blazing joy.
Alleluia!**
- 2 We share by water in His saving death.
Reborn, we share with Him an Easter life
As living members of a living Christ.
Alleluia!**
- 3 The Father's splendor clothes the Son with life.
The Spirit's power shakes the Church of God.
Baptized, we live with God the Three in One.
Alleluia!**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE *We Know That Christ is Raised* Setting: Charles W. Ore

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