

Coop's Scoops #150: Sermon and Liturgy for the Baptism of the Lord

January 10, 2021

Good Afternoon, brothers and sisters! It is a lovely day today, blue sky, sunshine, not so cold...

Hope you are able to be "out" in it for at least a while. As I have been writing the sermon for the Baptism of the Lord, I have been reminded

of the deep, deep connection we have to God our Father through our baptism in the name of

the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. We are also "His beloved". That deep relationship makes us one, whether we worship together or apart. We are

all one in the heart of God. If we want to draw closer to God's heart, we can start by becoming closer to each other. And if we feel alone, separated from one

another, we can come closer to each other by leaning into the love of the heart of God. You are all in my prayers! Judie+



Sentence for the Baptism of the Lord:

"A voice came from Heaven saying, "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"

Readings:

Genesis 1: 1-5 Psalm 29 Acts 19: 1-7

The Collect:

Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed Him to be your Son, anointing Him with the Holy Spirit keep your children, born of water and the Spirit, faithful to their calling; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Holy Gospel: Mark 1:4-11

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."

Sermon for the Baptism of our Lord:

Peter Gabriel, long time lead vocalist in the English band Genesis (and amazing social activist) wrote a song called "Father Son". It contains these words:

"Remember the breakwaters down by the waves

I first found my courage

Knowing daddy could save

I could hold back the tide

With my dad by my side." (CCLI 2302523)

I believe, and I hope, that Jesus our Lord was having thoughts like these when He went out into the desert to be baptized by John so long ago. He was leaving everything behind. I wonder if He told His mother that morning that He wouldn't be home again for dinner; if He told His father Joseph that the carpentry shop would be minus one worker. I wonder if He went with a heavy heart, or a

heart full of hope. There are at least four different theological perspectives as to why Jesus would undergo a baptism of repentance for sin. Books and books have been written. I am aware that I myself don't really know the ultimate truth of the "why?", but what I DO KNOW is that Jesus did that, He sought baptism...He didn't have to, but He could if He wanted to, and He did. And what followed that decision changed everything for Jesus' entire life.

In Luke's account, (even more clearly than in Mark's), Jesus has come up out of the water and is off to the side praying following His baptism. As He prays, the heavens open, and Jesus hears the voice of God saying "YOU are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased" (or "In whom I delight" as another translation puts it). These words were not heard by the crowd, or even by John, they were meant for and heard by Jesus only. And they were for Him an everlasting affirmation which I believe He tucked into His heart and hauled out on every occasion of suffering and pain in His ministry. For sure, there was at least one time that He told somebody else what He had heard, or Mark and Luke could not have told us about it! I hope and believe these words of affirmation may have been in His mind even while He was hung on that cross and gave His life for the sins of the world. Even when He cried out His own abandonment, He remained conscious of His Father, for it was to that Father that He quickly committed His Spirit. And it was that Father whose power raised Jesus from the dead; proved Him to be incorruptible and un-consumable and un-killable and beloved and delightful. Jesus experienced what Peter Gabriel wrote about: He could hold back the tide (of pain, of death, of evil) with His Dad by His side, and stride out of the grave with courage and love to fulfill the rest of His mission. To stand,

Himself, by His frightened locked-up disciples; to appear to many others; to give courage to them so that they could hold back the tide with Him by their side.

“You are my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased!” How many boys and men hear such an affirmation from their own Fathers? How many girls and women hear them? If and when we do, we are so very very blessed. In my own birth family, the times and the culture of the day meant that I didn’t hear “ I love you” very often, but I knew I was loved because either mom or dad was always by my side when I needed them. We “hear” affirmation in different ways, don’t we?

And for some, the pain that comes from a missing Father’s (or Mother’s) Affirmation leaves deep longing in the heart. For some, the presence of abuse or neglect leaves deep scars that require much healing. The power of a parent’s affirmation changes everything. It brings hope and confidence alive and it anchors our souls in love. On that day so long ago, in the shallow waters of the Jordan, our Lord Jesus saw and heard the blessing and the affirmation that would sustain Him in the wilderness of temptation and in the sufferings and joys He experienced throughout His life upon this earth.

My heart is so happy that Jesus got to see the dove and hear the Words, so joyful to know that He rose up from the waters knowing He was more alive than He’d ever known before, more loved, more blessed, more “connected” to His Father. There are so many days when our hearts cry out over what Jesus endured in so many ways, but this day, this Sunday, let’s just be happy for Him.

Then may the Holy Spirit reach down and touch every one of us with His love, reminding us that we indeed marked as Christ’s own forever in our own baptism through the life-giving power of the Spirit. So, on this day, this Sunday, let’s be happy for ourselves, for each other, as well. After all, there are many

waves swirling and dashing around or even into us in this pandemic. We can find our courage knowing our Father can save, and find our breakwaters to hold back the tide with our Father by our side! Thanks be to God, amen.

Meditation:

For your thoughts, I recommend these words taken from our own Anglican Book of Common Praise (# 164), and written by one of my favourite living poets and hymnodists, Thomas Troeger: (copyright permission CCLI # 2302523)

***What King would wade through murky streams and bow beneath the wave
Ignoring how the world esteems the powerful and brave?***

Christ gleams with water brown with clay from land the prophets trod

Above Him while the clouds give way, descends the dove of God!

Water, river, Spirit, grace sweep over me, sweep over me!

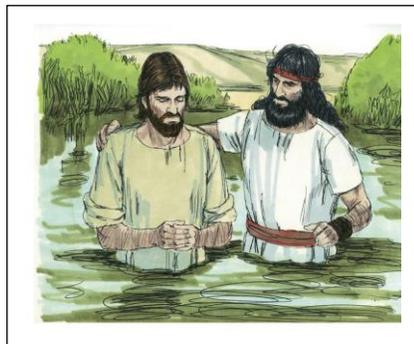
Recarve the depth your fingers made in sculpting me, in sculpting me!

Come bow with Christ beneath the wave, He stands here at your side

And raises you, as from the grave God raised Him, crucified.

Water, river, Spirit, grace seep over me, sweep over me!

Recarve the depths your fingers made in sculpting me, in sculpting me!



Prayer for Today:

God of all righteousness, we need the life and grace that you alone can give. Open the heavens to us and pour out your Holy Spirit so that we may live as your beloved children; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Blessing:

Arise, Shine for your Light has come! May the glory of the Lord fall upon you, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always! Amen.

- Judie+