



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
www.trinitylutheran.ca

CHURCH AT HOME

Announcements:

Welcome to Trinity's worship resource for January 9, 2022, celebrating the Baptism of Our Lord (the First Sunday after Epiphany).

Pastor Mike is currently on a medical leave of absence. If you have a pastoral emergency, please contact Pastor Jack Dressler - **519-250-7210**.

REMINDER – NO IN-PERSON WORSHIP ON THE FOLLOWING SUNDAYS:

- **Sunday January 16**
- **Sunday January 23**
- **Sunday January 30**

We will continue to update everyone as to when we will have in-person worship again (we are hoping for Sunday February 6).

Thank you again for your support for Trinity. Please continue to mail in cheques, or drop them off in the church's mailbox or make your donation either through PAR or through the Donate button on the church's website, at "www.trinitylutheran.ca".

Introduction

Today's festival rejoices in God's blessings. We recall and celebrate our adoption as God's children, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the promised company of almighty God when we "pass through the waters . . . the rivers . . . fire." On this day the heavens open again for this assembly, and we receive the gift of God's Beloved, Jesus, in bread and wine.

Worship

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all! **And also with you!**

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you anointed Jesus at his baptism with the Holy Spirit and revealed him as your beloved Son. Keep all who are born of water and the Spirit faithful in your service, that we may rejoice to be called children of God, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 43:1-7

Near the end of Israel's exile in Babylon, God promises to bring the people home. They need no longer be afraid, because the one who formed, created, and called them by name now redeems them from all their enemies. God declares them precious and honored, and God loves them.

¹But 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.”

Psalm: Psalm 29

The voice of the LORD is upon the waters.

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;

⁶**the 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.

⁸**The 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!”

¹⁰**The 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 8:14-17

Peter and John are sent to support the new Christians in Samaria, a group that was recently baptized after hearing the good news of Christ through the preaching of Philip. Here the Samaritans receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in the laying on of hands.

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.

Gospel Reading: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

The reading opens with questions about the identity of the Messiah. John the Baptist insists that he is not the Messiah; instead he points ahead to one who is coming. And whether the voice of God was heard by all or only by Jesus, God settles the matter: Jesus is God's beloved Son.

¹⁵As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

²¹Now 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."

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

The Sermon: Baptized into John (Pastor Jack Dressler)

Ian Pitt-Watson told the truth to his congregation: "Because I'm leaving on Tuesday for Korea, I am not as well prepared as I ought to be. And I am reminded of the pastor who thought, when he had difficulty preparing a particular sermon, 'Perhaps the Holy Spirit will tell me what to say on Sunday morning.' This thought returned to him several times during the week, and when at last he stood silently before his congregation, he turned to the Holy Spirit for guidance, and a celestial voice said to him, 'Tell the people you are unprepared.'"

My sermon title for today is called, "Baptized into John". Now you might think that's a bit strange or even blasphemous because aren't we baptized into Christ? What could it mean to ask if we are baptized into John?

Well of course, we are baptized into Christ, in the name of the Triune God. Paul's writings and other New Testament texts, and the traditions of all the churches preaching baptism agree on that. We are baptized into Christ, not into John.

But John the Baptist, in our text from today, baptizes Jesus. All four gospels tell that story, though the details vary. John's wilderness ministry included preaching and baptizing. He called people to repent. He promised them forgiveness of sins. He administered baptism as a sign of their healing and new life.

What can it mean that, at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, he went to John for baptism? Surely, our ancestors in the faith reasoned, the Messiah, the son of God, did not need to repent or be cleansed. Even by the time of the writing of Matthew's Gospel, the story is reshaped to include John's protest. John recognized that Jesus did not need baptism, but Jesus insisted. John, the gospel writer, emphasizes the Holy Spirit descending like a dove at Jesus' baptism as does Mark in our reading for today.

But none of these individual gospel reconstructions answer the question: Why was Jesus baptized? If not for repentance, cleansing from sin, and beginning a new life of holiness, than for what reason?

It helps us answer that question by reviewing John's ministry. The gospels tell us that he lived in the wilderness, that he wore animal skins, and that he ate locusts and wild honey. All of these "wild man" characteristics showed that he was a prophet. That's the way the prophets of old lived and preached, not all of them, not later ones like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, but the earliest of prophets of Israel: Elijah and Elisha, Amos and Hosea. The prophets were not greatly appreciated by kings or priests, for they often brought messages from God against the powers of the throne and the temple. The prophets preached justice and holiness of life, not comfortable submission to state and religion. No wonder the prophets were hunted and killed.

Now fast-forward to the time of Jesus. Here is John the baptizer, another of those pesky prophets out in the wilderness, daring to criticize the royal family, daring to offer forgiveness and a new life through baptism and repentance, and not through the official priestly liturgies of the temple. And people were coming out from cities and towns in large numbers to be baptized, to promise to lead a more holy life. Where would it end? Little wonder that Herod puts John in prison and has him executed.

The fact that all four gospel writers place Jesus with John, and tell of his baptism and the gift of God's blessing through the Spirit, means that Jesus' followers, then and now, are first and foremost called into the vocation of prophet. To be baptized into Jesus Christ is also a baptism into John, for it calls us to be a prophet like John.

I hope that everyone at every baptism these days understands that: the candidate, if an adult or of the “age of reason”; the parents and sponsors, if it is an infant; the local church in which the baptism is conducted; and above all the officiant, pastor or priest, who is not only to conduct the rite of baptism but also to interpret its meaning. Every baptism that is a baptism into Christ is a baptism into the vocation of prophet. Perhaps if everyone understood that, more would be hesitant, or want to know what you were getting into? Did they explain to you at baptism or at confirmation what you were to do as a prophet?

Well, first of all, a prophet is to be open to divine messages, to practice the disciplines of preparation for receiving a word from God. A prophet is a mystic, an ecstatic. “Whoa”, you may be thinking, “That’s not for me. I’m a down-to-earth kind of person. Give me a set of plans and I can build the structure. Give me the facts, not too much imagination, please. Give me prose and not poetry. Give me decoration, not art.” You may be right about that. There are many different kinds of people, some practical, some dreamers. We’ve known for a long time that different people learn in different ways, that they are motivated by different impulses, that definitely one size does not fit all. But wait a minute. To say that we are baptized into the vocation of prophet, and that means being open to a word from God, does not mean that you must have a personality change if you’re not the mystical type. It does mean that, however you are addressed, however you receive a message or word from outside yourself, that channel needs also to be open to the word of God. Simply because you are a practical, fact-based personality does not allow you to screen out a message from God. The same goes for the natural mystic, the dreamer, the imaginer. That person may also try to screen out a message from God, by tracing inspiration to the inner self. Being open to God’s word means ready to hear, to trust, and to believe. It does not mean a change in learning style.

Secondly, the vocation of the prophet includes speaking that divine word in places and times not receptive to messages from or about God. John the Baptist had a word from God that condemned the sins of the royal family. It called for the people to repent, to leave the secure and fashionable worship of the temple, and to come out into the wilderness to be washed in the waters of baptism. That was a word that got him in trouble.

What is your word from God to speak in the world today? How are you and I called to act in ways that may challenge convention and custom? Some are speaking out about the greed of modern life, the passion for more material objects and pleasures. They al-

so may be living more simply. Some are opposing the self-centeredness, the self-absorption that always puts one's own wants and needs first, and not taking into consideration the needs of others around them. They are finding ways to care and serve, volunteering in schools and hospitals, building houses for the poor, raising money for worthy causes; they are staying home so Omicron variant doesn't spread to others in the community; they are getting vaccinated or booster shots. Some are addressing violence in modern life, trying to reduce the availability of assault weapons, trying to learn and practice peaceful conflict resolution, calling on the mass media to restrict violent scenes. Some have received a word from God about hunger and disease and violence in other parts of the globe. They are travelling to distant places, to work beside those besieged with those killing diseases, working side-by-side with the poorest of the poor, raising money for the bare essentials required to take one short step away from poverty and disease and towards abundance. Some have received a word about changing their traditional ideas about how to be a good mother or father, husband or wife, citizen or worker. In the innermost sanctuaries of their own homes and lives, they are trying new ways to be loving, to be compassionate, to be more open and supportive. All these are taking seriously their vocations to be prophets, to accept the word given them and the implications of that word. How are you doing that? How are your baptismal vows, baptism in Jesus Christ and thus also into John, taking shape in your vocation as prophet?

I hope that as you reflect on the prophetic ministry of Jesus Christ, and the way he stands in the great historic procession of the prophets, most immediately through his baptism by John, that you will also find refreshment for your prophetic ministry. I hope that you can feel again the cleansing waters of baptism, not as a private washing, but as a public commissioning. I hope that you will pray daily to be open to a fresh word of God, however it may come to you. And I hope that you will always pray for and rely upon the courage that God gives prophets down through the centuries to tell the truth, to live the truth they have been given to speak, and to bear the consequences that truth-telling brings. If you do, you will be blessed by God, just as he blessed his Son, saying "Well done my daughters and sons with whom I am well pleased." **Amen.**

Peace

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

The Prayers of Intercession

The Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon us in abundance; so we are bold to pray for the church, the world, and all that God has made.

By the Holy Spirit, you gather your church and send it out in mission to share the good news of Jesus. Inspire your faithful people to be fervent in prayer and service, that all people know they are precious in God's sight. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You reveal your love and power through water and the Spirit. Guard rivers, seas, and all bodies of water from destruction and pollution. Secure access to clean water for all, and protect the land from drought and flood. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Establish among the nations the blessings of peace. Raise up leaders who will protect vulnerable people in their care. Strengthen advocates who risk reputation or retaliation for the sake of mercy and justice. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You protect us through the fires and troubled waters of this life. Assure us that we will not be cut off from you by illness or despair, anxiety or pain, confusion or weakness. Comfort all who are in need. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We are joined in baptism to Christ and to one another. Bless those who are newly baptized and those who are preparing for baptism. Help us to be faithful in fellowship, worship, evangelism, service, and justice-seeking. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God of presence, bless those of this community who cannot be with us this morning, and those who walk with them, especially:

In Residence: Margaret; Maria; Stan; Katie; Katherine; Cordelle;

Needing our prayers: Peter; Brenda; Doug; Dorothy; Bill; Bev; Ed; Marilyn; Jordan; Audrey; John; John; Greg; Sam; Katie; Walter; Hart; Frank; Pastor Mike & Patti

Recovering: Katherine; Carol; Betty; Greg; Kati; Bill; Sharon; Mary;

And all those we name in our hearts...

God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You created each of your saints for your glory. We give thanks for those you have called by name into your eternal embrace. Comfort us in grief and release us from fear. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Since we have such great hope in your promises, O God, we lift these and all of our prayers to you in confidence and faith; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

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

God, who leads you in pathways of righteousness, who rejoices over you, and who calls you by name, bless your going out and your coming in, today and forever. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go with Christ into a weary world. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God.**