

**January 12th, 2025**  
**Devotional**  
**“Jesus’s Baptism” - Luke 3: 1-22**

**Monday: “Baptism” - Luke 3: 1-3**

We are a country that prides itself on the idea of doing everything yourself and pulling yourself up by your own boot straps. We rarely acknowledge the people who have come before us. The ones who have shouted, “prepare the way.” The ones who quiet whispers of encouragement have given us the strength to go after our dreams, and the ones who silently had tilled the soil so we can forge ahead, reaping the benefits of their labor.

Recently, while reflecting upon 1 Corinthians I was struck by the statement made by the apostle Paul that “I planted the seed, Appolos watered it, but God made it grow.” Sometimes this verse is summarized as some plant, some water, other harvest, but God gives the increase. I like to plant and harvest, but watering sometimes is hard. Watering is in that waiting time, the time when you don’t really get to see the benefit of all of your hard work and at times you just continue to do what you are doing, running the risk of forgetting its purpose in the first place.

If I had to describe John the Baptist in terms of Paul’s statement, he would not have even been included. John was the one who prepared the ground so the seeds of truth could even be planted. Often a thankless task. John was the one who proclaimed, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord.” He tilled the land so Jesus could come and plant and reap the harvest.

**Who does baptism mean to you?**

**Prayer:** God, we thank you for the waters of baptism that you call us to. We thank you, O Lord, that you sent John to prepare the people for the message of Jesus. We thank you, for the harvest that still continues to this day. Raise up your people, we pray, and send us out to continue to tell of your truth and your grace. Amen.

**Tuesday: “Prepare the Way” - Luke 3: 4-9**

John appeared in the wilderness with a message that sounded like that of the prophets of old. It had been quite some time since the people had encountered a prophet, yet here he was preaching a baptism of repentance and forgiveness of sins. The prophets from the scriptures that the people would have known continually told them the same thing: they had screwed up, but God had prepared a way for them to repent and be forgiven. John told the people that he was not the way to repentance and forgiveness, he was simply the messenger for one who was more powerful who would come after him. One whom he was not unworthy to touch the feet of. One who would not need to baptize with water as John did, for this one who was coming would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Most of us have a John in our life. Not a prophet, but someone who prepared the way for us to go to the waters of baptism, accepting that we are part of the body of Christ, redeemed, forgiveness, and sent on a mission. We might not all know our John’s by name but they were there.

**Who are the John’s in your life? Who are the people who prepared the way for your walk of faith?**

**Prayer:** God, we thank you that we stand with such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us. We thank you that when we entered into the waters of baptism, it is because others had been praying for us, teaching us, leading us to you. Thank you, O Lord, for all of your Saints. Amen.

### **Wednesday: “Do?” - Luke 3: 10-20**

Repentance leads to actions, big and small. I once had a woman at my former parish stand up and asked everyone to give one dollar to a special offering for everyone who taught them something in life - everyone who impacted them. When she put out this call for a tangible figure, it caused the congregation, including myself, to pause and really consider who has taught us something about living out our faith. Something about what it means to put our faith into action.

Being part of the body of Christ means that we also serve as Johns for other people. We are the ones who lift each other up in prayer and teach the children about the faith. We are the ones who lead by example and till the ground so others can come to know Christ. A thankless task at times, it is also vital. It calls us for self-examination. I truly believe that John had to wrestle with himself before he was able to go out and call others to repentance. He had to honestly ask himself if he lived a life that would draw others to repentance - if he himself had repented and turned around to a new life. You are someone's John the Baptist, whether you realize it or not. Someone is looking up to you to learn about the faith. Maybe someone in this congregation. Maybe a family member. Maybe someone in the community. Maybe someone whom you don't even know, but who recognizes something different about you. Are you living a life that is worthy of repentance, worthy of being someone's John?

**How have you examined your own heart and are you striving to grow in your own relationship with Christ?**

**Prayer:** Almighty God, not only have you put people into our lives who lead us to the waters of baptism - you graciously allow us to do so for other people. Thank you, O Lord. Use us in a mighty way, we pray. Amen.

### **Thursday: “All the People” - Luke 3: 21**

One of my favorite songs about baptism is not a hymn, but a folk song featured in the movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou*. Song writer Alison Krauss captures the compelling nature of baptism as she sings, “O sinner, let's go down. Let's go down, come on down. O sinner, let's go down, down to the river to pray.” There is something about the nature and grace of God that compels us to be washed anew in life giving waters. Something that leads us to make a covenant with Christian community to support each other in our baptismal vows.

Each of the Gospels has a slightly different account of Jesus' baptism, a different reason for its necessity. Luke tells us in today's scripture passage that *when all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too*. How often we overlook the statement that Jesus was baptized with other people. Here Jesus acted in solidarity with those who struggled daily with sin. Can you envision it? Christ standing in line with the broken people of the world waiting for his turn to be lead under the waters of repentance and brought back up into the world of new life. How uncomfortable does it make you to think about Christ amongst these people? But that is exactly where Christ was and where he can still be found today. Amongst the broken people in the world. Waiting to bring them new hope, salvation, new beginnings.

**How is baptism communal?**

**Prayer:** God of Grace and God of Glory, you do not leave us alone on this journey of faith. You send people to support us and send us to support other people. Bind us together, we pray. Amen.

### **Friday: “The Beloved” - Luke 3: 22**

Luke's account of Jesus' baptism also reminds us that baptism is coupled with prayer. When we baptize someone we covenant to uphold them in prayer and walk with them along their

faith journey. Luke tells us that Jesus was praying after he had been baptized. Jesus was not only with those in need of God's healing grace and love, standing with them, but then praying for us. Praying for his ministry. Praying to God. Christ reminds us that prayer is vital for our life as Christians. So vital that he would not face the next act of his public ministry, the temptations, without it. He was not choosing this baptism or ministry by his own authority, but by the leading and strength of God. And as he prayed the heavens were open and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descended upon him. We too must pray for the leading and strength of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We too must pray as we enter into whatever aspect of ministry God is calling us to. For with each of our baptisms comes a call on our lives to go into the world and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Triune God. Brothers and sisters are we coming daily to God in prayer asking for strength to live out our baptismal vows and whatever God has called us to? Are we praying for each other? Are we confessing our sins before God and praying for forgiveness? Are we knee-bent before the throne of grace?

As Jesus was praying and the Spirit descended, a voice came from heaven proclaiming, "*You are my Son; the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.*" With this voice came the confirmation of Jesus' ordination as the Messiah. This call will sustain Jesus through the rest of his ministry and will be his public identity even to his death.

Jesus does not utter a word in Luke's account of his baptism, yet the story has powerful implications for the Church today.

**Who are you praying for this day?**

**Prayer:** God, we bring before you this day the names of people on our hearts and minds. People who need to come to your life-giving waters. People who we desire to see live into their baptismal vows. We pray for ourselves as well - that we can live as if our baptisms are a new beginning, marked by repentance. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.