

The Baptism of Our Lord C 2022 (January 9) (Service)

Prelude (“Rujero” by Gaspar Sanz)

Welcome to the pre-recorded service for Sunday, January 9, 2022, the Baptism of Our Lord. I’m Pastor Curtis Aguirre. Bob Park is the musician.

Let’s begin with the Thanksgiving for Baptism

P: In the name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

P: 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.

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.

C: We give you thanks and praise, O God!

P: 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 baptised by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit.

By water and the word, you claim us as daughters and sons, making us heirs of your promise and servants of all.

C: We give you thanks and praise, O God!

P: 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.

C: We give you thanks and praise, O God!

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P: To you be given honour and praise, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

All: Amen.

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.

Let's sing the hymn, "Songs of Thankfulness and Praise" #310 in the Evangelical Lutheran Worship books. We'll sing verses 1, 2, and 4.

1. Songs of thankfulness and praise, Jesus, Lord, to thee we raise;
manifested by the star to the sages from afar,
branch of royal David's stem in thy birth at Bethlehem;
anthems be to thee addressed, God in flesh made manifest.

2. Manifest at Jordan's stream, prophet, priest, and king supreme;
and at Cana wedding guest in thy Godhead manifest;
manifest in pow'r divine, changing water into wine;
anthems be to thee addressed, God in flesh made manifest.

4. Grant us grace to see thee, Lord, present in thy holy word;
grace to imitate thee now and be pure as pure art thou;
that we might become like thee at thy great epiphany,
and may praise thee ever blest, God in flesh made manifest.

The Lord be with you... And also with you.

Let us pray.

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 Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

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Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

The Gospel according to Luke, the 3rd Chapter... Glory to you, O Lord

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John 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. His 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." Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and 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!

Sermon

Sometimes people ask, "Why did Jesus have to be baptized? Wasn't he without sin?" The usual response is what Jesus says to John in Matthew 3:15,

Let it be so for now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil righteousness. (Matthew 3:15)

In other words, Jesus had himself baptized by John as a way of fulfilling the requirements of righteousness.

But each of the Gospel writers takes a slightly different slant on this event, probably because the baptism of Jesus is significant in different ways for different reasons. It's like so many important things we choose

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to do: there is usually not just one reason for doing it, but a whole array of personal, emotional, psychological, and family-of-origin reasons, as well as a few reasons that we may not even be aware of at the time.

I see the Baptism of Jesus as his moment of call. It is the moment when he came to know that he had a mission, a purpose, a job to do. This aspect comes out more strongly in Mark and Luke's way of describing this moment. While in Matthew and John, the voice from heaven speaks to John the Baptizer, revealing who Jesus is to him, in Mark and Luke, the voice speaks to Jesus, telling him who he is:

**You are my Son, the beloved, in you I am well pleased.
(Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22)**

After God reveals to Jesus who he is, Jesus goes out into the wilderness to prepare himself for his mission with 40 days of fasting and prayer—a method of spiritual preparation that has been around for a very long time in many different spiritual traditions.

So, what we are seeing here is that once Jesus is baptized, he has a moment when it becomes clear to him what he must do. In other words, he has a moment of call. From then on, everything he does is geared to the fulfilment of that purpose. Going out into the wilderness is his first intentional act of working toward the goal of the calling of which he had just become aware.

Mark is interesting here because the way he describes this is,

**And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.
(Mark 1:12)**

Luke is a little softer. He writes that,

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness... (Luke 4:1)

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While they are both saying essentially the same thing, to me, Mark's wording captures better that inner sense of urgency that can come when you feel called to a purpose; when you have that sense of, "I know what I have to do," and you want to get on with it. You want to act, engage, get the job done.

I think we are all called in different ways at different times. Sometimes we are called to things that stretch out over years, and sometimes we are called to very specific tasks that are a one-time situation. Sometimes the call comes from God and sometimes it comes from people—and sometimes God's call to us comes *through* people.

There seems to be a fair bit of confusion about what it is that God calls us to. Many people believe that God's call automatically means working in and for the church as a pastor or a missionary. But that is not the case. To be clear about this, we have to distinguish between the general calling of all Christians, and the specific calling that you or I may have.

God has a calling that pertains to all Christians. We are all called to lead a certain kind of life. As Paul writes to his congregation in Ephesus:

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace... (Ephesians 4:1-3)

That call comes from God, through the words of Scripture, to us. And we, the people of the Church, continue to encourage each other in this calling and to this life in various ways. In our Affirmation of Baptism service that we use at Confirmation and for receiving new members, this general calling is worded as a series of questions:

Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in
Holy Baptism—
 to live among God's faithful people,
 to hear his Word and share in his supper,

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**to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word
and deed,
to serve all people, following the example of our Lord Jesus,
and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth...? (LBW
p.201)**

This is the general calling of all who want to follow Jesus:

- 1) To be connected to the community of our fellow Christians;**
 - 2) To be attentive to Scripture, seek out where it is taught, and to share in Holy Communion;**
 - 3) To proclaim God's love revealed in Christ not only in our words, but also in our actions;**
 - 4) To live the life modelled by Christ;**
- And 5) to work for a just and peaceful world.**

It would be nice if we could have the same kind of urgency about this general calling as we do about more specific callings, but it's human nature that what goes on all the time becomes routine, and sometimes we even get bored of it. That is why we need the regular reinvigoration of worship, study, and fellowship to keep bringing us back to the urgency of this calling.

But each of us also has specific callings: as I said, some are from God, some from people, and some from God through people.

The callings we have from people are those things we do for each other because we are family, friends, colleagues, or neighbours. They are the things we do to build and maintain relationships. But these relationships are also undergirded by our calling from God to honour our parents, to love our spouse and children, to deal honestly and honourably with our employees and our employers, and to love our neighbours as we love ourselves.

Sometimes, however, God comes knocking and has something more specific for us to do, and that isn't always—or even most of the time—being a pastor or missionary or something. Certainly, people are called to

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ordained ministry or missionary ministry. This is in the same tradition as the prophets and apostles in the Bible. But here are some examples from the Bible of people who are not officially prophets or apostles, but nevertheless are called to a task:

- **Noah was called to build something that would save his family and the animals.**
- **Abraham was called to leave his homeland and wander with his family in obedience to God.**
- **Joseph was called to serve the Pharaoh of Egypt, and thereby save both the people of Egypt and his own kin.**
- **Miriam was called to watch over her little brother Moses and make sure he found a good home.**
- **Ruth was called to remain faithful to her mother-in-law in their mutual time of grief.**
- **To the Gerasene man whom Jesus had healed from a legion of demons, Jesus said, "Return to your home and declare how much God has done for you." In other words, he was called to use his life story to share the Good News.**
- **Mary of Bethany was called to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn from him. Sometimes just learning is a calling, probably because at some later point God is going to use that learning for some other purpose.**
- **Mary of Magdala, who came from a well-to-do family, was called to support the ministry of Jesus with her money.**
- **Chloë was called to be an anchor for the troubled congregation in Corinth.**

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- **Philemon and Onesimus were called to show how differently the master-slave relationship could look if both were truly followers of Jesus.**

None of these people were officially prophets or apostles or missionaries, but each of them was called to something unique, which in its own way played an important part in the larger picture of what God is doing in the world to transform it. For most of them we can say that they embraced their calling with that sense of urgency, of "I know what I have to do, and I will do it!"

We also see that for each one of them, that sense of calling came in a different way. For Noah and Abraham, it came as the voice of the invisible God. For Joseph, Miriam, and Ruth, it arose out of the needs of the moment. For the Gerasene man and the two Marys it came because Jesus was right there. For Chloë, Philemon and Onesimus, it came as a word of instruction from Paul, their pastor.

This also tells us that God calls us to such seemingly ordinary tasks as looking after ailing loved ones, or sharing our resources with others, or just being a living example of the way of Jesus for others.

The Baptism of Jesus can be a reminder to us that God calls us to different tasks, and it can be an encouragement to remain alert to that calling.

Be alert. Keep watch. Listen for your master's voice, whether it comes through circumstances, through the vote of your fellow Christians, through a word from a trusted person, or maybe even a voice from heaven. Amen.

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Let's sing the hymn, "From the Waters of Creation", sung to the melody of #807 in the Evangelical Lutheran Worship books.

**1. From the waters of creation to the shores of Galilee,
In each river sweeping onward, there's a promise we can see.**

**All who search for life in fulness, all who long for dignity:
Come and drink now—don't be thirsty,
God's grace ever will flow free.**

**2. From the parting of the waters to the Jordan's ancient tide,
In the font, forever rising, there's a love that will abide.
All who yearn for gentle mercy, all who seek community:
Come and wash now—don't be lonely,
God's grace ever will flow free.**

**3. From the streams that Amos visioned to the pool where Jesus healed,
In the wells we build together there's a dream that is revealed:
We will work for hope and justice, we will live in unity.
Come and share now—don't be fearful,
God's grace ever will flow free.**

Words by Keri K. Wehlander (with permission)

Music from J. Wyneth's "Repository of Sacred Music, Part II" 1819

Prayers

Let us pray for all people according to their needs. I will end each petition with the words, "Lord, in your mercy." Please respond by saying, "hear our prayer."

(Brief silence to let people gather their thoughts.)

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Merciful God, we pray for your church on earth, that your Spirit may guide your people to embrace our baptismal calling to embody mercy and justice in this world. Lord, in your mercy...Hear our prayer.

God of Justice, we pray for the nations of the world, that the powerful in all nations may be awakened to the responsibility you lay on them to be both just and merciful to all people. Lord, in your mercy... Hear our prayer.

**Creator of Life, we pray for this planet you made and all life forms you have put on it – life dependent on the water that you give as a gift. Make us aware of this precious gift and help us to be wise stewards of it so that we may return to you what is yours whole and unsullied.
Lord, in your mercy... Hear our prayer.**

God of Grace, guide those throughout the world who are preparing for baptism; bless and encourage their sponsors; support their worshipping communities; that your gifts of grace may be manifest in all the baptized. Lord, in your mercy... Hear our prayer.

Let us pray for all who are ill or suffering in any way. Let us now name them before God, either silently in our heart, or aloud...

(Leave long silence for people to bring to mind those for whom they are praying.)

For all these, Lord, in your mercy... Hear our prayer.

**God of Eternal Life, we give you thanks for the lives of the faithful departed and for the assurance of the same resurrection by our baptism into Christ's death.
Lord, in your mercy... Hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray...

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

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**Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.
Amen.**

It is our custom here at Our Redeemer Lutheran to acknowledge birthdays and anniversaries on the first Sunday of the month. As there was no recorded service on January 2, let's offer this blessing today. If you have a birthday or anniversary this month, we offer you this blessing.

**Many, many blessings,
Many, many blessings,
God grant you abundant blessings! (repeat)
Father, Son, Holy Ghost,
Bless you now and ever,
Grant eternal blessings!**

Benediction

**The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you;
the Lord look upon you with favour and (+) give you peace.
Amen.**

Postlude (Opus 60, No. 20, Fernando Sor)