

SERVICE INFORMATION: JANUARY 9, 2022
THE BAPTISM OF JESUS
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRAISE AND WORSHIP: Luke Johnson and Praise Team
HYMNS AND LITURGY: Rebekah Olson
READER:
THEME: Lessons from the baptism of Jesus.

PRELUDE: Rebekah Olson

CALL TO WORSHIP: *Psalm 29 "Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. 2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness. 3 The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD thunders over the mighty waters. 4 The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic. 5 The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. 6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, Sirion like a young wild ox. 7 The voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning. 8 The voice of the LORD shakes the desert; the LORD shakes the Desert of Kadesh. 9 The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare. And in his temple all cry, "Glory!" 10 The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King forever. 11 The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.*

HYMN #174 "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"

CONFESSION OF SIN: *Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy and ask You for Christ's sake, grant us forgiveness of all our sins, and by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will and true obedience to Your Word, to the end that by Your grace we may come to eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

PRAYER

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE: THE VOICE (Mothers calling children for supper.) Luke 3:22 *And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *Isaiah 43:1-7*

*But now, this is what the LORD says--
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
2 When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.*

3 For I am the LORD, your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I give Egypt for your ransom,
Cush and Seba in your stead.
4 Since you are precious and honored in my sight,
and because I love you,
I will give men in exchange for you,
and people in exchange for your life.
5 Do not be afraid, for I am with you;
I will bring your children from the east
and gather you from the west.
6 I will say to the north, 'Give them up!'
and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.'
Bring my sons from afar
and my daughters from the ends of the earth--
7 everyone who is called by my name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made."

EPISTLE LESSON: *Romans 6:1-11 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin- 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

READER: Here ends the reading of God's Word.

CONGREGATION SINGS: God be praised, for His glad Tidings!

CONFESSION OF FAITH: 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, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall 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

GLORIA PATRI: *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is not, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING

PRAISE SONGS: songs chosen by Luke...sung by "Praise team...Luke, Krista, Jacob, Hannah, Marretta, etc.)

SERMON TITLE: "THE BAPTISM OF JESUS"
Luke 3:15-22; Pastor Tom Olson; January 9, 2022

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

BAPTISMS: I have witnessed many baptisms in my life. Adults, children, babies, at church, in lakes and in rivers, immersion, sprinkling, pouring of water. They all have been very special. I have heard that in communist and Muslim countries you can claim to be a Christian and often you will be left alone. But once you have been baptized, that is when the persecution against you becomes serious. Baptism is a turning point. Today we look at the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. There is a lot we can learn from this account. Let's talk about it.

I. THE CALL TO REPENTANCE

LUKE 3:15-18 *The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. 16 John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." 18 And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them.*

SEPARATION: Baptism is a time of separation from all that is sinful and evil. When we baptize in the Lutheran Church we have the candidate or parents say this, "I renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways." We also say, "I believe in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." So we separate ourselves from sin and confess faith in the Lord.

SIN: We are born into a sinful world and our soul by nature desires to sin. Sin comes naturally. It is easier to be immoral than to be moral. It is easier to be a glutton than to be a disciplined eater. It is easier to be proud than to be humble. Even the smallest toddlers are very selfish without being taught to be. Sin comes naturally.

LAMB: John is calling people to a new life. According to verse 18 he is preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God. In verse 16 he specifically points to the coming Messiah. In John 1:29 John points to Jesus and says, "The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

MESSIAH: In Luke here he points out two aspects of the Messiah.

1. He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. These are both cleansing and purifying agents.
2. He will gather the wheat and burn up the chaff. This would refer to the final judgement when the Lord returns from heaven for us. In Matthew 25 he said he will separate the "sheep" from the "goats."

TWO: I have noticed that there are two types of people who claim to be Christians. One group is sorry for their sins. They are bothered by the presence of sin and evil in their lives. They desire to have sin removed from their lives. The death of Jesus on the cross for sin is their great hope and joy. The other group claims to believe in Jesus but they are not sad about their sins. If you point out their sins, they justify themselves and get defensive. Jesus doesn't mean much to them. They don't talk about Jesus or the cross.

LETTERS: I noticed in a Christmas letter from friends in Alaska that she and her husband so clearly pointed out that Jesus came to earth to die on the cross. They expressed how precious that was to them. Another letter came from a Pastor and her husband of a liberal persuasion. They mentioned nothing about the meaning of

Christmas and just boasted about what they were doing. Not one word about the meaning of Christmas from a Pastor! Both couples claimed to be believers and are Christian leaders, but only one expressed sorrow for sin and a love for the Savior.

PEACE: Before I came to know Jesus personally, I was terrified by the thought of being lost. My sin troubled my conscience and I was afraid to die. But Christ came into my life and took all of that away from me. That is why I have to boast over and over in the cross. That is where I find my peace. I long to be not only forgiven but totally set free from sin forever.

STEP: John reminds us here today that the first step of salvation is to repent of our sins. One farm wife put it this way to me early in my ministry. She said that she went to church all her life and saw herself as a pretty good person, but Jesus didn't mean much to her. But later in life she saw her sinful heart and as she put it to me, "sin became sinful." She said that when "sin became sinful" then Jesus became precious and the cross of calvary meant something for her. She repented and it opened up her eyes to the cross. Jesus' baptism demonstrates THE CALL TO REPENTANCE.

II. THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

LUKE 3:19&20 But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, 20 Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.

FRIGHTENING: Since rich and powerful people are often living in sin, it is frightening at times to call them to repentance. It is frightening because they might retaliate. That is what happened to John. King Herod was living with his brother's wife. He also had done many other evil things. John rebuked him for it. As a result, Herod had John put in prison. Eventually his live in partner convinced him to have John's head cut off, which he did. John paid a high price to be faithful in his calling to preach the full message of the Word of God.

PERSECUTION: Christians all over the world today are being arrested and put to death because they are being honest about sin and salvation. We live in a generation that loves the pleasures of sin. This Jeffery Epstein situation is a reminder that the wealthy business men and upper-level politicians have been abusing teen age girls for decades. Since they are so powerful, it is hard to find a judge that will convict them. But that doesn't mean they should not be warned about the coming judgement of God and the eternal hell that is awaiting them if they don't repent. But it is frightening to speak up.

TODAY: Many Christians are finding that they can't hold down jobs in corporate America if they believe in Biblical morality of a male husband and female wife. A famous British author had her name removed from a school because she doesn't believe that girls can be male or boys can be female! Communist and Muslim lands punish people for being a Christian. There is a growing cost of discipleship all over the world. Jesus said in ***Matthew 10:22 "You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."*** Even in America we may have to pay a price for believing in Jesus and standing for Biblical morality. That is the cost of discipleship. But considering this life is about 90 years at most and eternity lasts forever, it is a wise decision to be a Christian no matter what the cost is. In fact, the Bible promises special blessing for those who are persecuted. ***Matthew 5:10-11 "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*** Jesus' baptism demonstrates THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP.

III. THE CONFIRMATION OF A SAVIOR

LUKE 3:21-22 *When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

CONFIRMATION: Many things confirm that Jesus is the Son of God. The biggest confirmation is his resurrection from the dead. The miracles he did confirmed him. The prophecies he fulfilled proved He is the Messiah. Here we have several confirmations from His baptism:

1. THE HEAVENS WERE OPENED WHEN JESUS PRAYED *And as he was praying, heaven was opened*

OPENING: I don't know what happened when the heavens were opened. It may be similar to when Stephen was stoned to death and he looked up and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father. Many people have reported that at the time of death that their loved ones have seen a glimpse into heaven. Often their faces will light up and they will start talking to someone or will say something like "Amazing" or "It is so beautiful." And then they will breathe their last breath. In the last days Jesus said that the heavens will open and those who hate him will see him returning in great glory. Luke 23:30 and Revelation 6:16 tell us they will be terrified and call for the rocks to fall on them to hide them.

DOOR: It appears that heaven is actually close to us but in another realm that God is able to open up to us through a type of doorway. C.S. Lewis uses this imagery of a door to another realm in his "Chronicles of Narnia." For most people the crossing over into that realm comes at death. John, the apostle, was caught up into heaven and saw things that cannot be expressed in human terms. I have read testimonies of many people who are alive today who also have been caught up into heaven and returned to talk about it.

DESTINATION: Heaven is real and it is our destination. Heaven opened up when Jesus was baptized and prayed. I am so comforted as I get older and weaker to know that heaven is waiting for me when this body wears out and dies. I love to tell believers on their death bed that "The best is yet to come." I enjoy my life but I also have a deep longing in my heart to go to heaven and be set free from the troubles of this world and enjoy the presence of God in the place He has prepared for me.

2. THE SPIRIT DESCENDED FOR ALL TO SEE *and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove.*

I personally can't imagine what happened here. Did the spirit look like a dove? Or did the spirit look like a body that descended like a dove. An eagle or hawk dives like an airplane but a dove kind of flutters down like a helicopter. The whole Trinity is involved in baptism: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The people who were there saw the Holy Spirit come upon Jesus.

This continues into water baptism for Christians as well. The Bible tells us that when we are baptized we receive the Holy Spirit. ***Acts 2:38-39*** *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off-for all whom the Lord our God will call."* Both baptism and Holy Communion are times when we encounter God in a very personal and supernatural way. I have seen this time and again in those who participate with a sincere heart of faith. I remember the baptism of one baby where the child literally breathed a sigh of relief when he was baptized...it was beautiful. I have seen powerful encounters with God in adult baptisms too...people arise out of the water to a new life!

People like to argue about the mode and meaning of baptism. When people ask me what I think about baptism, I speak from decades of experience and I give them this answer, "I am in favor of it" or "It is a wonderful gift of God."

3. THE VOICE OF GOD SPOKE FOR ALL TO HEAR *And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

The third witness or confirmation of Jesus we notice here is THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN. It was an audible voice. The voice had an intimate and touching message, "You are my Son, I love you, I am pleased with you." That is a message children need to hear time and again. And the amazing thing is that as children of God with Jesus living in our hearts, it is the same message God has for us. We are loved by the Father.

Listen to God's Word speak to you today:

Jeremiah 31:3 "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world..."

John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

1 John 3:1 "See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God."

CONCLUSION: The world is filled with a lot of hatred and anger, selfishness and pride. The world may lash out at us because we are Christians. They may even make us lose our jobs or even take our lives. But what does that matter in light of what we have looked at today. Heaven is real. God is there. Jesus is our Savior who paid for our sins on the cross. We are loved by God. The best is yet to come. Isn't that motivation to live our lives in a way that honors the Lord and spreads the good news of the gospel. Many of those people who hate Christians are really insecure and feel unloved. They need to be transformed by Jesus. Never forget that the great Apostle Paul was once a terrorist killing Christians. If God can change him, God can save anyone. Let's tell the world! Then they too can believe and be baptized and be touched by the Holy Spirit and transformed. Amen

Now may the peace of God that surpasses all human comprehension, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen

HYMN #483 "I Have Heard Thy Voice, Lord Jesus"

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 that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

DOXOLOGY with Three-fold Amen

POSTLUDE: Rebekah Olson

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *Zephaniah 3:14-20 Sing, O Daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem! 15 The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm. 16 On that day they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. 17 The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." 18 "The sorrows for the appointed feasts I will remove from you; they are a burden and a reproach to you. 19 At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you; I will rescue the lame and gather those who have been scattered. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they were put to shame. 20 At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says the LORD.*

GOSPEL LESSON: *Luke 7:18-28 John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, 19 he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" 20 When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'" 21 At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. 22 So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. 23 Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." 24 After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 25 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. 26 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 27 This is the one about whom it is written: "'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' 28 I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."*

READER: Here ends the reading of God's Word.

CONGREGATION SINGS: God be praised, for His glad Tidings!