

A Rerun of
“/n You / Am Delighted!”
Genesis 1:1-5 Mark 1:4-11
from January 11, 2015
“Baptism of Our Lord Sunday”
Adapted by Sara Zallar
for January 17, 2021
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(Touch the waters in the font)
...Long before the time of John the Baptist,
baptism was practiced in Judaism.

Within the Jewish tradition,
one of the ways baptism was used

was as a ritual cleansing required of
Gentiles who wished to become Jewish.

John, himself a Jew, went far beyond that
meaning.

For him, it's not just a matter of cleaning
up your act.

It is not just for those who have not yet
“joined the right religious club”.

For John, baptism is claiming a new
personal and socio-political reality,
not about being in or out of any group.

To each one who came to be baptized in
the water...Jews and Gentiles,
John assertively gave the command
(and the holy permission) to turn their
life around...
not to become a clean, blank slate...

but to write something important there
for yourself to strive towards
in your daily living.

Turn your life around! Repent!

It was about
righteousness/justice...personal and
corporate. Balancing resources, living as
one.

So, this was not some sweet, religious
concept John was trying to put out there
amongst the people.

This was a social political act of hopeful
living fortified by faithfulness.

John provided a new socio-political
religious act of hope:
We can indeed be new individuals and a
new society!

Jesus was about to provide the faith/the
God connection
which brings courage and energy
and support
to empower personal change.

John baptized people in hope...
Hope they could actually stand up against
the oppression of their day...*our day.*

Baptism as an act of defiance.

How defiant?

Well, if we stand up for integrity one baptism,
one person at a time,

soon we're all standing

and if we're standing together,

we're going to have the courage
to go places together...

not because we're ordered to or "should" ...

but because we're called,
baptized,
into a new freedom!

Now, we each hear the words: "You are my beloved
in whom I am delighted!"

How defiant?

John was beheaded by the authorities. He was a threat to the religious and political status quo.

Haven't you ever had your head handed to you
on a platter

when you dared to defy the powers that be
in your home or work or community or church?

But having your head handed to you
doesn't stop you from doing what you need to do...

if...if you're doing it within the spirit of powerful grace and love and self-discipline.

That gifted spirit we were talking about in Advent!

There is amazing power if you find your self-discipline and act from a center
of grace and love...love of your truest self ...first... and for others, second.

Did you see the news on Channel 4 this week about how your self-discipline to love in the
face of tough realities is truly affecting Milwaukee?

John lost his head in honoring his baptismal vows.

Thank God, we only have to lose partial use of our building to live out *our* baptism vows!

John lost his head...but that didn't stop the new order...because Jesus followed him to show the way.

John could only baptize in water...
Jesus baptizes into the spirit...

and the spirit cannot be stopped....emptied, broken.
Never. It can be exhausted/ing at times, yes...
but never stopped.

Using images from Matthew's telling of the baptism.

just when your spirit feels like a bruised reed,
your voice is about to cry out,
your dimly burning wick is about to go out.

you are invited to remember your own defiant baptism
and the heavens open to you...

there is a growing clarity with opportunity
to move your life forward.

And you feel it:

God simply delights in you!
God's soul delights in you.
God's soul...your soul...one soul!
The righteousness that is of God does not force itself
into your life or into the world.

Force is not the answer to what is wrong
or unjust with your life
or in this world.

We cannot forcibly pave over what is wrong
with good intentions, even if the intention is justice/righteousness.

Like the unfolding of the creation story,
like the breath that went out over the deep,
blowing into chaos...

Baptism's fruits happen simply and justly,
creating newness in one person's chaos at a time...

but together, one person at a time,
we change everything!

This is the notion of contemplative justice...
it begins by creating some justice/balance
in your own life...

some God connection in your own life,
really feeling your own baptism again...
and worshipfully living from that place
within you.

As Presbyterians, we remember...we are baptized each time we immerse ourselves in the
spirit.

Each time we find our own spirit,
we get named again as beloved, delightful...
the heaven of possibilities open to us again!

We are enabled to turn our lives around. Oh my!
What are we getting ourselves into here?!

As disciples, Jesus offers us the use of the simplest of elements to be reminded of our true
baptisms.

He transforms from the familiar and comfortable ...bread, wind, breath, water...
into dangerous, risky, subversive
icons...windows through which we can look
to connect to the holy.

These subversive elements are not only a window
through which we see the world and our God—
they are windows through which God sees us.

The power is in the way we receive and use
these subversive elements,
for blessing or for curse,
in generosity or in hoarding or abuse.
Our deepest selves become visible to God.

Do you see yourself?

Ready yourself for renewal.

We have come to a crossroad, and you must choose.

Come, we religious folk,
come and hear God's message anew.

Come, we leaders,
come and listen to the voice of the Redeeming One.

Come, all of us,
for God is calling you to a change...
not simply to volunteer.

Come to the water
and get ready to find a new purpose in life,

a new focus for living, and a new Word from
our ever present God.

Don't hold your breath,
worship with the whole of your life.

Don't dilly dally, come to the edge now!

God is calling you, and you, and you...

In water we are bound together;
in love, we are made one;
in grace, we are renewed...turned around!

So we celebrate our belonging.

Hey! This is really radical stuff!
It is a radical change for each of us
to think of ourselves
as beloved, as delightful, as able.....
as baptized.

We are God's people, radically traditional...
baptized "into" the Spirit to:

Think more clearly,
Feel more deeply,
Speak more truthfully,
Love more extravagantly,
Serve more creatively,
Give more lavishly,
Live more fully, ...and...

**Stand up for righteousness/justice/balance/civility
with grace and compassion...**

Let there be some quiet...