

Home Service for

Welcome and Announcements

You might notice a few changes. You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

Speaking words of love, God creates us, calls to us, and claims us as God's own. Speaking words of love, we too can create, call and claim god's beauty and glory in the world.

Call to Worship:

God's Strong voice calls us to worship, calling us to sing and offer praise. God's creative voice calls us to worship, calling us to life and light. God's loving voice calls us to worship, calling us to love and be loved. Listen, for God's voice calls to us now.

Opening Prayer:

Most wonderful God, foolish and flawed though we are, we too delight in your beloved Son. As in his name we gather in the house of many praises, may the heavens be opened for us, that we may catch a glimpse of that Light and Love that transforms our common days with a beauty not of our making. Through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen!

Prayer of Confession:

Loving Lord, we confess we have not always heeded your prophets' voices. We admit we have not acknowledged John the baptizer who proclaimed a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. We acknowledge in our failure to do so we missed John's all too important declaration about the greater One who was coming. God, today we gather needing grace and the gift of forgiveness granted through your Son. Amen.

Words of Assurance

*When we confess our sins and shortcomings, God shows up and shows out!
Receive God's forgiveness. Put regret behind you and walk in the joy of the Lord!*

Read Psalm 29

- Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings,
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^[a] 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 leap like a calf,
Sirion^[b] 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^[c]
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.

Prayers of the People:

Most gracious God: For your choice of one people among the world's peoples for the revealing of yourself and of your will for human life, we praise you. Through Moses, you gave your people the Law. Through your prophets, you charged them so to live by your Law that their lives might be a guiding light for all the nations.

In your own good time, O God, you moved to reveal yourself firsthand, fully, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. We give you thanks for the cherished stories which surround his birth, particularly for the story of that bright and wondrous star that guided wise men from far away to his side. With them, we hail the light of your love, for your creation and for us, which shone from that little boy and would shine with dazzling radiance from the adult he grew up to be.

On this holy day, we praise you for expanding your circle of witnesses to include, beyond his people, all those who find in him the Light of the World; for creating, out of his sacrificial death and resurrection, a new people, a worldwide community of his disciples, his ecumenical church. We pray for the church; for that strange, richly diverse company of women and men who have found in your divine Son a fresh start for human history and an unquenchable source of light.

Help us, O God, to let his light shine from us that we may be sources of light for others who stumble about in ignorance, anxiety, self-destructive passion, hatred or any other form of darkness. Grant that we may serve as messengers of your grace for loved ones and friends whose lives have been darkened by illness or who are at this very time walking through the valley of the shadow of death. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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 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

Read the Lesson: Genesis 1:1-5

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Acts 19:1-7

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ² and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when ^[a] you believed?”

They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

³ So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?”

“John’s baptism,” they replied.

⁴ Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues ^[b] and prophesied. ⁷ There were about twelve men in all.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Mark 1:4-11

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with ^[a] water, but he will baptize you with ^[b] the Holy Spirit.”

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

Message

The power of speech flows through each of today’s scriptures. God speaks and creation begins over the waters, displaying god’s glory. Paul speaks and people are convinced to receive baptism in the spirit’s power. And at Jesus’s baptism, God

speaks a blessing of love, and claims Jesus as God's own child. With our words and with God's word, creation begins, as does our own re-creation in baptism.

Looking at this morning's Gospel we have several characters that have important roles in the message. The characters are John the Baptist, the people who came to John, Jesus, the voice of God, and the dove.

Let me begin with John the Baptist. John was a rough character. "He lived in the wilderness, beyond the Jordan River." He wore a camel's skin, or more likely, a rough, coarsely woven camel hair garment. He ate locusts and wild honey. If he was more than likely from Nazareth, and tradition says his hair would never have been cut. His message was not one of comfort. He called for repentance. I feel John the Baptist is in each of us as our consciousness. John is calling us to repentance each day. He is our little voice inside that says, don't do that. It is that voice that reminds each of us that we are less than God intended for us to be. We are sinners and we daily need to ask for forgiveness.

John called for repentance and to repent means to turn or to change. It is a change of one's mind and turning around of one's life. No one can turn in two directions at the same time. When we turn left we cannot be turning right. It is the same with our spiritual life. When turning away from sin we turn to God. As we turn to our Lord we cannot be turning toward Sin.

In order to turn away from sin we first need to acknowledge that we are sinful. Sin is a word that our society would love erase from every dictionary. Sin is still alive and well in the hearts of humanity. Sin daily reveals itself in wicked words and evil actions. Sin cannot be denied nor dismissed. BUT sin can be and is forgiven. Remember 1 John 1:9, which states, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness". By his blood, Jesus purifies us from all unrighteousness in other words, sin.

Next are the people who came to John or the crowd present at Jesus's baptism. The people who came to John to be baptized for repentance were so desperate about the condition of their souls that they were willing to go to a man as strange as John was. They were sinners, prostitutes, and tax collectors. They were people who felt they were doomed. They were many times condemned by the larger society, and those who were religious scorned them. Sometimes though, they were even religious leaders who felt the need to be baptized and to repent. The people who came to John were people who understood their human predicament. They knew they were sinners and they knew they needed help. And John offered that help with

the Baptism of repentance. John asked them to repent, to turn away from sin and turn to what? Turn to the one who was coming who was mightier than John, in other words, Jesus.

Jesus is the next character to look at. Jesus came and had John baptize him. Why did Jesus need to be Baptized? He was without sin, right? My answer is that he was Baptized so that the folks at the river could identify with him and he with them. Jesus wanted the outcasts of society to know that He understood their predicament of sin. He wanted those at the river to know that he cared, he knew where they were coming from.

Jesus wanted the crowd to know that he had empathy for them. He understood their human condition.

The next characters at Jesus' Baptism came almost at the same time. As Jesus came up out of the water the text says;

" immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove;

and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased."

The crowds saw and heard that Jesus was indeed someone special. The dove came upon Jesus and a voice coming from heaven saying that this Jesus was indeed the Son of God and that God was pleased with him. Jesus had not started his public ministry yet, but now he had a seal of approval upon what He was embarking to do. The seal of approval from God Himself.

I think there is a point here in Jesus' Baptism that relates to us. Jesus knew when he stepped out of that water that he was changed. Something happened to Him. He knew and understood that He was God's Son and he had a ministry to do.

We are reminded of our baptism for in the same kind of way, our Baptism makes us special. We are no longer just us, but we are Christians.

Our names are changed in our baptism. We are given the name that our parents have chosen for us, and at the same time we are given the name of Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, a person who has begun a relationship with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. When we introduce ourselves, we might want to say, our given name and I am a Christian. Now that tells everyone

something special about us. We are God's people. We are in a relationship with God. More important is that our actions and words should tell them we are a Christian, too.

An unknown author once wrote this about baptism, "Whether an infant or adult, the person baptized answers from that moment to the name Christian. No other loyalty comes before this and being a Christian should be the baptized person's most distinctive characteristic."

We are special and our text reminds us of that unique stature that we have. We are God's children through our Baptism.

These characters in Jesus' Baptism help us to remember who we are. John reminds us of our need for repentance. The crowd reminds us that we all fall short of what God intended for us to be. We are all sinners. And Jesus reminds us of His saving grace. The act of Baptism reminds us that we are indeed something special. We are God's children. We are Christians! Amen!

Benediction:

Amidst a noisy world, make way to listen for God. In the busiest of days, find time to listen for God. For in listening, we finally hear this truth: We are beloved children of God; created in love, created for love, created to love. Let us go out there to listen and love. Amen.