

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Baptism of Our Lord - Year A

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Isaiah 42:1-9

Psalm 29

Acts 10:34-43

Matthew 3:13-17

01/12/2020

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew:

<sup>13</sup>Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.  
<sup>14</sup>John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" <sup>15</sup>But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. <sup>16</sup>And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup>And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

The Gospel of our Lord.

### **Prayer**

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

### **The Everyday**

Good morning! When the publication The Lutheran did a poll of people in ministry (people like pastors and deacons, and other ministry leaders), something like over 75% cited places like church camp or weekend retreats as the major influence in them working in ministry. It was the same for me, at Camp Luther in 2004 I was called to ministry. We call these mountain top experiences. They're wonderful because they become these bright beacons of our faith. We can look back at them when we're at our lowest and find hope and assurance.

There's only one problem... When you go up the mountain, you gotta come back down! With mountain top experiences, you can't stay there, you gotta come back down to everyday life. In Younglife, they know this, and so on the last day of camp we would meet together with everyone who went to talk about how wonderful this experience was and how hard it can sometimes be when we return home. It's one thing for God to find us when surrounded by friends at a time devoted specifically to the task, it's something else when you get home and the stresses of life all return. This was the experience of a friend of mine who after having a powerful faith experience still had to deal with the drug addiction of one of their parents.

The older we get the more we realize this too. It can't all be highs and lows, sometimes life is just... well, life. The comedian John Mulaney has a wonderful bit that captures this feeling. He says *"When I was younger, I thought that the world was gonna be simple and nice, but now, at the end of my life, I'm not so sure. I'm getting grumpy, which I don't like. Like, I don't like any new songs. Because every new song is about how 'tonight is the night' and 'how we only have tonight.' That's the message in*

*ninety percent of songs. That's such nineteen year old garbage. I wanna write songs for people in their thirties called 'tonight's no good, how about Wednesday? Oh, you're in Houston on Wednesday? Oh, ok, well then let's just not see each other for six months and it doesn't matter at all!'"*

While that's at the extreme end, you get the point. I think the writer of the Gospel of Matthew was after a similar realization with this morning's Gospel reading. The Baptism of Jesus is recorded in all four Gospels, and in Mark, the first of the four to be written, things get a little crazy. When the Heavens open up they're literally torn apart, the Greek used in the story conveying a sense that the rip cannot be undone, God has come to earth. Contrast that with Matthew and well... it's a little dull. As the commentator Stephanie Buckanon Crowder points out, *"God is not ecstatic. The Creator is not jumping for joy. The Divine is merely pleased. The Holy One simply says, 'very well.' ... the Creator is merely pleased or as the Greek eudokeo notes, content. One would expect more."*<sup>1</sup>

Contentment... If you're anything like me, that's a strange word. In our do-everything, go-faster consumer world, when was the last time you were told to be content? In fact, let's talk about that! I would like you to talk with someone near you for about 5 minutes about what burden you're carrying, about when you last felt like you could take a breath. When was the last time you felt like you could relax?

*5 minutes later*

Ok! Let's come back now. I hope you found that helpful. And it's at this moment that I need to call my wife out. I didn't prepare her for this, so I'm sorry! Every Sunday

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=4307](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=4307)

morning we get here early and Megan goes and gets the bulletin, a book created to help people worship, to find God, to center themselves, and she uses it to create a list of all the things she needs to do here at the church! And just like that, the bulletin's primary use has been changed. When I look at my life, it was the everyday moments that I've found the hardest in my faith. It's easy to find God in the incredibly good moments, and it's another thing to call out to God at the lowest of lows. But in the mundane, the day-in-day-out? That's been a little more challenging.

And yet, here in our story today that's exactly what God enters into. Where as most of our lives are full of everyday moments, God in Jesus similarly begins his earthly ministry in what is almost a "just another day" approach. So I'm here to tell you that you're doing your best. That sometimes, it's ok if you can't give it your all. You don't need to be perfect, in fact, you can't. God knows this, and has come to free us from this pain and self-hate and self-loathing. We'll never be able to get it perfect, and we're going to mess up a lot. But that's OK. We don't come to worship because we have everything right, we come because we know we have so much that we need God to take. God has called you to be content, to find that this life is enough.

I gave you all a piece of paper. I want you to write something that has been holding you back from being content, and as you come up for communion, I want you to put it the wooden offering bowls. Give it up to God, let it go, and may God show you the immeasurable power of being enough. Let us pray... *"Behold, Lord, an empty vessel that needs to be filled. My Lord, fill it. I am weak in the faith; strengthen me. I am cold in love; warm me and make me fervent, that my love may go out to my neighbor. I do not have a strong and firm faith; at times I doubt and am unable to trust you altogether. O*

*Lord, help me. Strengthen my faith and trust in you. In you I have sealed the treasure of all I have. I am poor; you are rich and came to be merciful to the poor. I am a sinner; you are upright. With me, there is an abundance of sin; in you is the fullness of righteousness. Therefore I will remain with you, of whom I can receive, but to whom I may not give. Amen”<sup>2</sup> - A prayer from Martin Luther*

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<sup>2</sup>*Evangelical Lutheran worship*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006. Print. p. 87