

## Mark 1:4-11- “The New Creation”

Pr. Kurt A. Van Fossan - Epiphany 1B - The Baptism of our Lord - 2021

Our Gospel reading for today, which includes “The Baptism of Our Lord,” is packed with Good News for all people who repeatedly become entangled in the sins, troubles and riots of this fallen world. Through the voice of His servant John and through His own voice “*out of the heavens*” God the Father proclaims that His eternal Son has become flesh in Jesus Christ to not only break us free from the entangling sins, troubles and riots of this world, but to also assure us of our life as part of the New Creation (eternally free from all sin, troubles and riots) through the waters of Holy Baptism.

All three of our readings work together to strengthen our faith in this Good News by assuring us of God’s almighty power to do what He promises. Not only did God bring all creation into existence through His Word and Spirit (who was “*hovering over the face of the waters*”), but He also gives order to the “*formless void*” on the first day through the light of His Word. This was not the light of the sun in the sky, which He created on the fourth day. This was the mysterious light which proceeds, and continues to proceed, from His spoken Word. “*And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.*” It’s good because through the light of His Word God continues to create and sustain life eternal life.

That brings us to the time of Jesus’ baptism, where we hear of some things that are similar to the time of creation. The word “*baptism*” means to wash with water. So you have some of the same water that God created on the first day (it hasn’t left our atmosphere but is simply recirculated); and water is certainly an essential part of our lives.

You also have the same Spirit of God “*hovering/fluttering*” over the water, “*like a dove.*” The Spirit of God is the Giver of life. Jesus said, “*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all*” (John 6:63a). And the image of a dove has, since the time of Noah and the ark, been a sign of peace and order out of disorder. This correlates with the order that God established in the beginning, out of the “*formless void.*”

Add to all this the Word of God which proceeds from God the Father, like Jesus proceeding from the Father. “*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14). And Jesus, who proceeds “*from the Father,*” emphasizes the unity of our Triune God’s creating work when, after saying “*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all,*” He continues by saying “*The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life*” (John 6:63b). Taken together, all that took place at Jesus baptism speaks of The New Creation, which God brings forth through His “*beloved Son.*” And when God the Father tells His Son, now in created form as a man, “*with you I am well pleased,*” He echos His Word in Genesis which speak of the light of the world as being “*good*” because, as I said earlier, through the Light of God’s Word now made flesh, God continues to create and sustain eternal life.

But God doesn’t get rid of us, who are a part of His old creation. Instead, the sinless Son of God is not only willing to take on our flesh at the time of His conception, neither does He hesitate to take on and be associated with our sins. That’s why He was baptized with John’s “*baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*”

To make that forgiveness possible for all people, Jesus continues to demonstrate the almighty power and wisdom of God by allowing the very same forces of evil (which seek to separate us from God forever in hell) to do just the opposite—to unite us to God forever in heaven.

By allowing the devil through sinful man to crucify Him on a cross, Jesus fulfilled God's judgement of death upon the sins of all of mankind. Then, through His glorious resurrection from the dead He demonstrated His power to overcome our sins and all their effects, so that we can too can rise from the dead and ascend to heaven with Him. Think about these things the next time you wonder if God is still in control during times of trouble in this world. In Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension we see most clearly how God can work through the greatest times of trouble for our greatest good.

In our Epistle reading from Romans, the Holy Spirit through St. Paul enables us to see how all this Good News is given to us by God when we are baptized in the name of our creating God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. *"All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death. We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."* Our unity with Christ in Baptism works both ways. While He inherits our sins and all their fruits through His Baptism (which He is able to destroy through His death and resurrection), we inherit His death in payment for our sins together with His victorious resurrection from the dead, that we may live according to the New Life which is ours now and forever in Jesus Christ.

How does our New Life in Christ affect what's left of our lives in this world? The more we receive this Good News, breathed into our ears through the voice of His called under-shepherds, like John, and placed into our mouths through the bread and wine/body and blood of Jesus in the Lord's Supper, the more at peace we are in the midst of the entangling sins, troubles and riots of this fallen world as we await our certain, God-promised, inheritance in the New Creation to come. But it's not only our peace that God desires. His peace is for all people. And, despite our sins of the past or the physical handicaps which are naturally part of our lives in this world (especially as we grow older), God seeks to work through us to give His eternal peace to others.

Because God has given you faith in the Good News of your eternal life in new world to come through Jesus Christ, the same Spirit and Word of God that brought all creation into being out of nothing is at work in and through you to give eternal life to others through your faith empowered words and actions. It can happen through something as simple as inviting someone to church. That's why, in all your church mailboxes, I put a folder with information about Redeemer. If you don't have a church mailbox, or would like more than one of these folders, there are more on the table in the Narthex or entrance. I encourage each one of you to give this folder to someone, along with your personal invitation to come to church.

The more people see things, like the recent riots at the Capitol, or the far reaching effects of things like COVID-19, the less resistant they may be to accept your invitation. All glory be to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

[Children's Sermon] Have you ever been invited to a birthday party? What if you were invited to someone's birthday party but you didn't have a birthday gift to give the person who invited you? You probably wouldn't go.

I was just talking to your parents about inviting people to church. Do you think that some people might not accept their invitation because they don't have very much to put in the offering plate? That's why, when we invite people to come to church—to Jesus' birthday/resurrection party (which we celebrate every week), we want to let them know that no gifts from them are required. Church is mainly about what God has to give to us; our birth as children of God through the Good News of Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection, and through Holy Baptism.

So, here's a card for each of you to write in (with the help of your parents), to invite someone to Jesus' birthday/resurrection party here at Redeemer. And don't forget to say something like, "No gifts from you are required. But Jesus does have a priceless gift to give to you!"