

**Seedling Group Questions for Baptism of Our Lord “Crossing the River”
(January 12, 2020)**

The sermon can be found at www.lipstosing.wordpress.com

Questions for Opening Up

What is something that you know you need to do in your life right now but you would rather postpone or forego altogether?

Who is someone who has loved you unconditionally in your life and what has that relationship been like for you?

Read Acts 10:34-43

Peter crosses the sharp religious boundary separating Jews from Gentiles and proclaims the good news of God’s inclusive forgiveness in Jesus’ name to Cornelius, a Roman centurion. As a result of Peter’s preaching, Cornelius and his family become the first Gentiles to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. We could call this the “Conversion of Cornelius” but we could also call this the “Conversion of Peter,” because the latter comes to see that God is doing a new thing and “anyone (not just Jews!) who fears God is acceptable to him.” Whose life – Peter or Cornelius – do you imagine changed more from the encounter?

What economic or social or religious boundaries do you think need to be crossed now?

Read Matthew 3:13-17

Using your knowledge of other Biblical texts and stories can you find any echoes of other parts of scripture in this passage? Why might these echoes be significant or what might they tell us about who Jesus is?

All four gospels make a point to tell us that John baptized Jesus in the Jordan. Even scholars who are skeptical of the historicity of some of the biblical stories about Jesus believe Jesus’ baptism happened because it passes the “embarrassment test” – that is, some would think it embarrassing that the One that Christians claim is God submitted to another person. Why do you think it is so crucial to include this event (as Peter does to Cornelius’ household) when we tell the story of Jesus?

Putting Things Together

What does it mean for Jesus to hear that God looks at him and says, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased?”

What does it mean for us?

Making It Personal

Sometimes it can stretch us to live our faith publicly (Joseph suggests our relationship with God is personal but cannot be private). Why does God call us to be public with our faith and what does that look like for you? What does it look like for our congregation? Are there any ways that we could stretch in this area just a bit further?

Second Reading: Acts 10:34-43

³⁴Peter began to speak to [Cornelius and his household]: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶And 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. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”