



**PRESTON
MEADOW**
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sunday Morning Grow Groups

January 10, 2021

The Voice of God and the Baptism of Jesus

- Good day, friends, and welcome! Happy New Year to you!
- Carter BloodCare center is visiting us today. If you weren't able to sign up, consider dropping by one of their donation centers this week to participate. Every donation of blood can help up to 3 people with life-saving blood products.
- The Annual Meeting is scheduled for January 31, and it will be a virtual meeting. Registration information will follow soon.
- Pastor Jackie and Tommy Rose will be hosting contemplative prayer sessions on Monday nights for the next several weeks. This hour-long time of prayer leads participants into a closer relationship with God through a variety of prayer techniques. Email Pastor Jackie at jackie.schade@pmlc.org to receive the Zoom links to participate.

Getting to Know You

(spend about 10 minutes here)

Building personal connections is a key component of Grow Groups, and these questions will help foster deeper connections.

- *We know 2020 was quite the year. What are you happy to leave behind? What is one thing you're thankful for from last year?*
- *What are you most looking forward to in this new year?*

Theme: The Voice of God and the Baptism of Jesus

Christmas has officially ended, and we now move into the church season of Epiphany. Epiphany means "revelation," and this season starts by the revelation of Christ to the Magi, who represent people outside of Israel. Jesus is the world's Savior and not just one particular nation's.

Today we look at the baptism of Jesus and what this act reveals to us about who he is. This act is included in all four gospels, whereas Jesus' birth story is only included in two of the gospels. It tells us what the early church thought of baptism -- it's significant!

As Jesus comes out of the Jordan River, a voice declares that he is "the beloved Son" of God with whom God is "well pleased." Our other scripture readings tell us about the "voice of God" and what it accomplishes in life. When God speaks, pay attention.

DIVING INTO THE TEXTS

(Reading today is from the New Revised Standard Version)

Genesis 1:1-5

Background: As we start the new year, we look at the start of creation. Before there was anything, there was God. The breath/wind/spirit of God hovered over the basic elements of life, and our Scriptures tell us that God spoke creation into being. Genesis isn't a scientific textbook. It's a theological document that tells us the story of God's interaction with our world. While science answers the question of "how," Genesis describes the answers to "who" and "what."

+++ (Choose a person to read the following passage) +++

1 In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, **2** the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. **3** Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. **4** And God saw that the light was good; and God 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.

+++

- What do we learn about God's voice here?
- God says that the first day of creation is "good," and we see that God has some sense of satisfaction in his work. What kind of "work" helps us feel good in life and have a sense of satisfaction? On the flip side, what kind of work doesn't make us feel so good?
- Will Mancini of the Auxano Vision Group says that "words make worlds." What do you think this means? How do your words help create reality around you?
- Anything else you notice above that you would like to discuss?

Psalms 29

Background: This psalm of David finds its inspiration from the beginning of creation. David has known the voice of God to be a powerful, creative force in his life, and he believes that it should play an ultimate role in our lives.

+++ (Choose a person to read the following passage) +++

1 Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings,

ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name;

worship the Lord in holy splendor.

3 The voice of the Lord is over the waters;

the God of glory thunders,

the Lord, over mighty waters.

4 The voice of the Lord is powerful;

the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars;

the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.

7 The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.

8 The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness;
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

+++

- What does this psalm teach us about the “voice of the Lord?”
- How is God’s voice “powerful and full of majesty?”
- Have you ever seen the voice of the Lord shake the wilderness or flash with fire? What do you think these metaphors mean?
- How do you notice God’s voice showing up around you these days?
- We are saturated in voices in our culture. Radio/podcast/videos/internet, voices are ubiquitous around us. Some of these voices generate light for us by making us think deeply about what is going on around us, while other voices just generate a lot of “heat.” Who/what a trusted voice in your life these days?

+++

Mark 1:4-11

Background: Mark’s gospel was the first of the four gospels to be written. His writing style is terse and doesn’t contain lots of descriptions and details. He’s a person who gets right to the point, and his picture of Jesus is one who is on an urgent, immediate mission. We pick up his account of Jesus’ baptism in our reading.

+++

4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **5** And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. **6** Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. **7** He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. **8** I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. **10** And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. **11** And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

+++

- With our reflection on the theme of “God’s voice” in the previous readings, what do you notice about God’s voice here?
- What is the Voice’s primary message to Jesus? What would this have done for Jesus’ sense of self?
- What is the audience expected to believe about Jesus from this story?

- Speaking positive words of affirmation gives a tremendous boost to people. Think about a coach/boss who constantly berates his/her team as opposed to a coach/boss who constantly empowers a team with affirmation and encouragement. How does affirmation help us succeed in life? Who has affirmed you along the way and helped you become more of who you were meant to be?
- How would the affirmation of being God's "beloved Son with whom he is well pleased" have boosted Jesus in his mission to love, bless, and redeem our broken world?

Taking It With You

How will you use your voice to encourage and affirm others in your life this week?

Closing Prayer.

Spend a few minutes collecting any special prayer requests from participants. You can finish your time of prayer with this closing prayer from the end of our worship.

God of love,
as in Jesus Christ you gave yourself to us,
so may we give ourselves to you,
living according to your holy will.
Keep our feet firmly in the way where Christ leads us;
help our lips speak the truth that Christ teaches us;
fill our bodies with the life that is Christ within us.
In his holy name we pray. Amen.

Connect to Christ!