

I.N.I.

Our Baptism Is An Installation

Homily for The Baptism of Our Lord, B — 7 Jan., A.D. 2018 ☩

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 2958-59th St., Sacramento, CA

Mark 1:4-11 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." (NRSV)

May grace, mercy and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. Amen. (2 John 3)

Today I'm thinking about water, especially the water in our Baptismal Font.

That water is a reminder of how we are connected to our Maker by our baptism.

Our Maker, our Creator, made that water, you know, at the beginning.

Our OT lesson for today reads, Genesis 1:

1 In the beginning, ... God created the heavens and the earth... 2 And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

There they were— "the waters."

All the water in the world, even that water in our font, was made in the beginning.

Do you believe that? Let me ask those of you in school: has your science teacher ever said that you can make water in a lab?

No? Yes? Well if it could be done, you'd have to combine two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen to make one molecule of H₂O, right? to get water?

OK, do a 'google search' on how to create water! I did.

Think of the marvel of water: our bodies are made of 55 - 78% water, depending, and we need to drink 6 - 7 glasses of water every day to stay hydrated.

We wash our dishes—our hands & bodies—our clothes in water, the *universal solvent*.

Btw, I just saw an ad for a new way of doing laundry—have you heard this?

They say that laundry detergent makers do NOT have to list all the ingredients in their product, and that one of the main ingredients is formaldehyde—you know, embalming fluid.

Detergent doesn't all get rinsed out, so we wear clothes laced w/ detergent & formaldehyde on our skin—that can lead to itching and rashes.

A new way of doing laundry is with two powerful magnets in the washing machine.

The magnets do basically what detergent does, which is to break the 'surface tension' of water, thus making it more slippery, so it gets into fabrics and pushes out the dirt and your clothes come clean—see, detergents don't clean--water does!

Wow! Think about it! No more paying for detergent--think of the savings!

Water. Our planet earth is 71% water--think of all it means to us—look it up in an encyclopedia sometime--what a marvelous creation God gave us.

That's Point 1, God's gift of water.

Point 2, Our Lord's Baptism on this Day in River Waters.

Here in Mark 1, almost 30 years have passed by since Christ was born.

During those years the only news we have of him is of 12-year-old Jesus in the temple. Now at 30, Jesus, born to be the Messiah, walks out to the Jordan River to receive the Baptism of John.

Lo and behold, as He came up out of the water,

v. 10b, 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."

What have we just witnessed? It is an **Installation Service**, the installation of Jesus into his vocation as Messiah, the Anointed One.

Today we celebrate that **all of us, like Jesus, were installed by our baptism** into our vocations, our callings as ministers in "the priesthood of believers."

So Point 3 We Need to Ask: How Are We Doing in our Calling as Priests?

St. Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus that when we receive God's grace in baptism, **"... we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."** (Eph. 2:10)

Thus, not only are we created, called into being, by God--He's the reason we are alive-- but He also created us **anew**--we are **born again** by baptism—to walk in good works.

So how are we doing in our vocations? Are we doing good works?

Are we Christians different in our daily lives, different from unbelievers?

If we're **struggling** to live our Christian calling as we live our lives, could it be that --

Point 4 We Have Doubts About God? We Think God Isn't Much Help?

We want to live up to our calling as Christians—but we pray and we pray: no results.

Someone said, "God is an underachiever"—bad things happen to good people.

It's true that there is no real proof of God's existence—we walk by faith, not by sight.

So do we ever doubt? trust in other gods?

Luther said that the meaning of the First Commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," is this: **"We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things."**

"Trust in God above all things?"

But that's impossible! you say--and you're right! So we all stand under judgement, the judgement and the dread of death.

It is our fear, our dread, of death that drives more of our actions than we realize.

It is just that fear that gets us in trouble with other people, our family, our friends.

When we try to fix things, we dig ourselves into a hole.

C.S. Lewis knew that's a common experience of we humans.

He knew that when we dig ourselves into a hole and are in bad with one another, we're really "in bad"--"in a hole"--with God. He writes:

"Now what was the sort of 'hole' man had got himself into [with God]? [Man] had tried to set up on his own, to behave as if he belonged to himself. In other words, fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: **he is a rebel who must lay down his arms....** This process of surrender--this movement full speed astern--is what Christians call **repentance**. Now repentance is no fun at all. It is something much harder than merely 'eating humble pie.' It means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death."

Repentance, a kind of death--what a coincidence! Notice this:

St. Paul tells us: **"We were buried therefore with [Christ] by baptism into death."** (Rm. 6:4)

"Buried." What a picture! Indeed, "buried ... into death." Which means - - -

Our death is already behind us, that death which separates us from God forever. Baptism gives us power to repent, to undergo a kind of death each new day. Not only that, our **dread** of death is taken away by this promise, “...just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” [Rm.6:4b]

Point 5, Now, Why Jesus Was Baptized Makes Sense!

Mark tells us: 7[John the baptizer] 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.”

“The one who is more powerful than I...”

Not long after John proclaimed it, Jesus came to John asking for baptism.

So John heard the voice from Heaven announcing to Jesus, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Mk. 1:11) God the Father spoke words of installation!

John also saw the Holy Spirit coming down upon Jesus, thus he knew that his word, “...he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” would come to pass.

And Jesus took that assignment as He was installed into His ministry by His baptism.

Point 6, Now here’s the rest of the story.

Messiah’s calling, His vocation, took Him thru suffering, death and resurrection *for you and me.*

Because of what our Savior did *for us* in His ministry on the cross, we have access to the power our Sacrament of Holy Baptism has given us—it comes by our faith.

Therefore, by our trust in our Savior’s ministry for us, we are *able* to repent and change, to *die* to our old sinful ways, to be lifted out of our hole, and be forgiven.

So, as we remember our own baptism today at the Baptismal Font, we are reminded of our calling--our installation--into our priestly ministries.

We know we have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

In conclusion,

Today we thank God for creating water, and we remember our baptism.

Remembering our baptism today is not just recalling an event in the past—we are remembering the power that comes to us to this day by the fact of that event.

Luther advises us to remember that power, that grace of baptism, every morning by beginning the day making the sign of the cross and saying, “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

St. Paul calls it “...the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” (Titus 3:5)

Then, as our Lord Christ was this day installed into his ministry by baptism, *so we have been installed into our callings as Christians by our baptism.*

Our dread of death is taken away, and we have the power to do good works and fulfill our ministries in the priesthood of all believers.

Remember then, and lean upon your Baptism - - - every day.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

S.D.g. --The Rev. Dr. Donald Schedler, Ph.D., Snowline Hospice Chaplain, retired.

[1580 spoken words] Iowan Old Style 11; Georgia 10; Times New Roman 10.