

Jan 11 – Bible Story – Baptism of our Lord (Mark 1:4-11)

Movie – Toy Story

Theme – Baptism, “You are claimed”

The gospel reading for today is the baptism of Jesus. We are only given a brief account of what happened in the passage we heard from Matthew’s gospel so we have to try to imagine the scene. I doubt though if it even began to approach the woman in Liverpool who arrived on the doorstep of a vicar, handed the baby over and said to him ‘Please could you christen him while I do the shopping.’

Then there was the minister who, during a baptism, rolled up his sleeves, dipped his hands in the font, smiled at the baptismal party and said ‘He should be in there somewhere.’

Or how about the little girl who shouted to the minister in a loud voice in the middle of the baptism of her baby brother ‘be careful, he bites.’

And I realized very young in life that no matter how hard you try, you cannot baptize cats.

Our theme today is baptism and our movie is Toy Story.

Opening Weekend- \$118,543 (USA) November 22, 1995. Reviews were universally positive, praising both the animation's technical innovation and the screenplay's wit and sophistication, and it is now widely considered by many critics to be one of the best animated films ever made.

The film received three Academy Award nominations including Best Original Screenplay, Best Original Score, and Best Original Song for "You've Got a Friend in Me", as well as winning a Special Achievement Academy Award.

In addition to home media releases and theatrical re-releases, *Toy Story*-inspired material has run the gamut from toys, video games, theme park attractions, spin-offs, merchandise, and two sequels—*Toy Story 2* (1999) and *Toy Story 3* (2010)—both of which also garnered massive commercial success and critical acclaim. *Toy Story* was inducted into the National Film Registry as being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" in 2005, its first year of eligibility.

Who has seen Toy Story?

Here is the synopsis: A little boy named Andy loves to be in his room, playing with his toys, especially his doll named "Woody". But, what do the toys do when Andy is not with them, they come to life. Woody believes that he has a good life (as a toy). However, he must worry about Andy's family moving, and what Woody does not know is about Andy's birthday party. Woody does not realize that Andy's mother gave him an action figure known as Buzz Lightyear, who does not believe that he is a toy, and quickly becomes Andy's new favorite toy. Woody, who is now consumed with jealousy, tries to get rid of Buzz. Then, both Woody and Buzz are now lost. They must find a way to get back to Andy before he moves without them, but they will have to pass through a ruthless toy killer, Sid Phillips.

Let's watch this clip from Toy Story. Show Important Clip (ANDY on foot)

Today is Baptism of our LORD Sunday. It is found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist and it signals the beginning of his public ministry. This is the day that we celebrate Jesus Christ's baptism and remember our own baptisms.

We know virtually nothing about Jesus' childhood and early adult life. We have the stories of his birth and one brief mention of a trip to Jerusalem when he was twelve. It is then about 18 years later, Jesus is about 30 years old, and we head out into the desert and meet John the Baptist, who is calling people to repentance and baptizing them in the Jordan river. John baptizes Jesus, and as Jesus comes up out of the water he sees the heavens open, the Holy Spirit descend upon him, and he hears the voice of God speak directly to him.

I'd like you to close your eyes, and listen with your spirit to the voice of God. Here is the message that the voice from heaven, of God the Father, spoke to his Son, Jesus, and that also speaks to you this morning: "As soon as Jesus was baptized, he came up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said: You are my son. Do you hear that? You are my child. The Father is looking at you, and identifying you as His very own child. You are my child - that is who you are, and there is nothing that can stop me from being your heavenly father, and nothing that could ever make me abandon you. You are my child, whom I love. Can you feel that? The God of heaven - your Father, is telling you that he loves you. Allow his

love to fill your heart, and overflow from your heart to all of the people around you. You are my child, whom I love. With you I am well pleased. Your Father is affirming you for who you are in Him. Remember Jesus had not yet begun his ministry, so obviously God is not commending him on his activity; he's not saying I am pleased with all that you have done, but with you. With who you are. With your character and your identity as my child. You are my child, whom I love. With you I am well pleased.

Open your eyes.

God speaks to us in the same way as he reminds us that we too are his beloved children. God tells us that we are His chosen people. Just as Woody and Buzz are claimed by Andy, we are claimed by God. God reminds us that he loves us and cares for us, holds us in his loving arms and will never let us go whatever we go through in life. And this is something important in today's world where so often we are just a number or a reference. People today need to know that they are loved, special, cared for.

We are claimed by God! Ok, so maybe God has not written his name with permanent marker on our foot. But God has written his name upon our hearts at our baptisms. Have you been baptized? If so, then today we will renew your covenants. If not, think and pray about being baptized.

Jesus desired to be baptized to set an example for us to follow. Jesus led by example; he said to his disciples "Come and follow me; learn from what I do; become like me". Jesus was 30 when he was baptized! I was not baptized until a week before I was confirmed. So you can be baptized at any age. Baptism is the time that you publically recognize that you are claimed by God and that you believe. If you have not been baptized, consider it and we can celebrate your baptism with you! As a family! Because at our baptisms, we were claimed.

So today we will renew our baptisms. We will renew our commitments and make our annual promise to serve God wherever he calls us and to do whatever he asks us to do.

God offers us equipping and empowerment as we seek to do his will in the world. Sometimes we may feel inadequate or useless to God, hopeless as we try to follow Christ and serve him in the world. We may feel we are not gifted, not

knowledgeable enough for God to use, not strong enough to do what he calls us to. But we are wrong to assume that, because of our limitations, God won't, or can't use us. Whoever we are, however partial our knowledge or understanding or ability, God can use us. And he uses us effectively because he offers us his strength and power through his Spirit.

Let's watch another clip.

We feel like that sometimes, don't we? We look at others and we make a judgment about how wonderful they are and how insignificant we are. How often do we look down on ourselves- every day, week, and month? And though we may feel inadequate in the face the small and the large issues of life, God will equip us by his Spirit for the task he has called us to as individuals and churches. God sends us his Spirit to fill us, equip us and empower us for his work. And that's the other part of the Covenant promise – God's continued promise to always be with us. Because we are claimed! Amen.