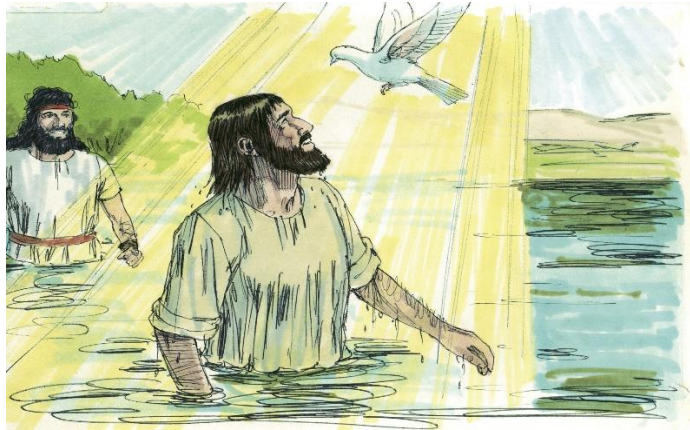


BAPTISM OF THE LORD
JANUARY 7, 2024



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Organist – Sharon Banjavcic

Ushers –

Liturgy – Rev. Rosemary McCombs Maxey

Communion Liturgy – Rev. Thom Shuman

(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able.

Respond with words in bold print.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

**PRELUDE: “Shall We Gather at the River/
Deep River” Tom Fettke**

PENNIES FOR MISSION: Dubois Camp

EPIPHANY: In the church calendar, Epiphany is January 6. What is Epiphany? In Greek the word Epiphany is translated “manifestation” or “revelation”. The first manifestation of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles is represented by the Magi (the three kings). That story is told only in the Gospel of Matthew. The manifestation of the divinity of Jesus, or that he was the son of God, occurs at the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River. That’s why Epiphany is an important observation in some church traditions.

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP is our Psalm for today,
Psalm 29.**

One: Give to our God, O heavenly beings,
Give to our God glory and strength.

People: Give to our God a glorious name;
worship our God in holy splendor.

ONE: The voice of our God is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders over
mighty waters.

People: The voice of our God is powerful; the

voice of our God is full of majesty.

One: The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars;
Our God breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

**People: God makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.**

One: The voice of our God flashes forth
flames of fire.

**People: The voice of the Lord shakes the
wilderness; Our God shakes the
wilderness of Kadesh.**

ONE: The voice of our God causes the oaks to
whirl, and strips the forest bare;
and in God's temple all say, "Glory!"

**People: The Lord sits enthroned over the flood;
Our God sits enthroned as ruler forever.**

One: May our God give strength to the
people! May the Lord bless the people
with peace!

***INVOCATION:**

Creating, Calling, and Faithful God,
we come to this time and place to be with you,
to worship you, and to learn from you. May our time
together be like your creation of light in the darkness that
you called good. May it be that you would call us good
while we respond to your call and as we listen to
you. Amen.

***CALL TO CONFESSION:**

People of God, we desire to be refreshed, renewed and
changed. Let us listen again to God's calling our names to
encourage us and strengthen our resolve to be God's
people in faithfulness and peace-loving justice.

***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

**O God, we hear your voice
and we see the way of Jesus set before us.
But it's hard, dear God, to try again and again
to live up to our baptismal vows
and maintain our resolve to be your people in the world.
In repentance we ask you to forgive us.
Set us once again on a holy path that leads to
you. Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF GOD'S CALL:**

Friends, God hears our prayers and sets before us the way
of Jesus. God calls us and gives us enough grace and
mercy to follow the way. Thanks be to God.

***GLORIA:**

**Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so
near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One
God always here. (repeat two more times.) (end) One
God always here. One God always here.**

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Genesis 1:1-5

1 When God began to create^[a] the heavens and the earth—² the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God’s wind swept over the waters—³ God said, “Let there be light.” And so light appeared.⁴ God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness.⁵ God named the light Day and the darkness Night. There was evening and there was morning: the first day.

EPISTLE LESSON: Acts 19:1-7

Paul in Ephesus

19 While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul took a route through the interior and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples.² He asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you came to believe?” They replied, “We’ve not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”³ Then he said, “What baptism did you receive, then?” They answered, “John’s baptism.”

⁴ Paul explained, “John baptized with a baptism by which people showed they were changing their hearts and lives. It was a baptism that told people about the one who was coming after him. This is the one in whom they were to believe. This one is Jesus.”⁵ After they listened to Paul, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.⁶ When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in other languages and

prophesying.⁷ Altogether, there were about twelve people.

TODAY I’m going to put together the Gospel reading and the message as written by Rev. N.T. Wright. I have found his reflections and descriptions excellent. You’ll hear more about John the Baptizer.

GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 1:1-8

As translated by Rev. N.T. Wright

The preaching of John the Baptist

1. This is where the good news starts – the good news of Jesus the Messiah, God’s son.
2. Isaiah the prophet put it like this (“Look! I am sending my messenger ahead of me; he will clear the way for you”):
3. “A shout goes up in the desert: Make way for the Lord! Clear a straight path for him!”
4. John the Baptizer appeared in the desert. He was announcing a baptism of repentance, to forgive sins.
5. The whole of Judea, and everyone who lived in Jerusalem, went out to him; they confessed their sins and were baptized by him in the river Jordan.
6. John wore camel-hair clothes, with a leather belt around his waist. He used to eat locusts and wild honey.
7. “Someone a lot stronger than me is coming close behind,” John used to tell them. “I don’t deserve to squat

down and undo his sandals. 8. I've plunged you in the water; he's going to plunge you in the Holy Spirit."

DR. WRIGHT'S REFLECTION:

"You are sound asleep and dreaming, when suddenly the door bursts open and a bright light shines full in your face. A voice, breaking in on your dream-world, shouts, 'Wake up! Get up! You'll be late!' And without more ado, the speaker splashes your face with cold water to make the point. Time to stop dreaming and face the most important day of your life.

"That's what the opening of Mark's Gospel is like. It's a great way to start, because what Mark is telling us is that that's what John the Baptist was like to the Jewish people of his day. John's ministry burst in upon the surprised Jewish world. Many had been looking for a sign from God, but they hadn't expected it to look like this. Many had wanted a Messiah to lead them against the Romans, but they weren't anticipating a prophet telling them to repent.

"John was a voice, shouting across the dreams, and perhaps the nightmares, of the Judaism of Herod and Caiaphas, the Judaism that told again and again the story of freedom but had no idea what freedom would look like when it came. Some thought John was mad, that it was him who was dreaming, but here he was, splashing cold

water all over them and telling them to get ready for the greatest moment in Jewish history, in world history.

"The bright light he was shining in their faces was the story they all knew very well, but with a new twist. Every year, at Passover-time, they recited the story of the Exodus from Egypt, telling over and over how God rescued Israel from Pharaoh, bringing them through the Red Sea and away across the wilderness to their promised land. Along with the creation story, it's the most important story in the whole Old Testament, and John's hearers would have known it well. But instead of simply hearing the words and remembering the story, John was turning it into a drama, a play, and telling his hearers that they were the cast. They were to come through the water and be free. They were to leave behind 'Egypt' – the world of sin in which they were living, the world of rebelling against the living God. They, the Israel of the day, were looking in the wrong direction and going in the wrong direction. It was time to turn around and go the right way; after all, that's what repentance means. It was time to stop dreaming and wake up to God's reality. Someone was coming! But were they ready for it? They certainly weren't ready.

"The main thing the author of the gospel of Mark gets us to do in this opening passage is to sense the shock of the new thing God was doing. If you're sick, and unable to sleep much, sometimes the night seems to go on

forever. But then, just when you're dozing a bit, suddenly the alarm clock goes off; it really is morning. That's the mood here. It raises the question for us too; where are we asleep today; in our churches, our communities, our personal lives? What might it take to wake us up?"

RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL VOWS

Introduction

Our God created new life forms and brought them up from the waters of chaos, embraced them, and called them good.

Jesus, baptized in the river Jordan by John the Baptist, became living water for us and embraces all of us. Jesus embraces those who are poor, oppressed, marginalized and all others who come seeking.

We follow Jesus with our Baptism, marking a starting place for new life and new ways of being. We join Jesus in love and service.

Let us prepare our hearts and minds to see, feel, and hear again the vows of Baptism.

***RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL PROMISES:**

(FROM BOOK OF WORSHIP)

Do you renew and affirm the promises made at your Baptism?

I do.

Do you recognize the call of God to be God's people

always?

I do.

Do you embrace the way of Jesus in faith and ministry?

I do

Do you accept the nurture of the Holy Spirit who renews your spirit each day?

I do.

Do you accept and embrace others who seek a liberating faith in God?

I do.

In renewing your baptismal vows, remember your Baptism as a mark of acceptance and welcome into the care of Christ's church where you may begin again your Christian faith and life.

***UNISON PRAYER:**

O God, we rejoice in your grace, given and received. We thank you that you claim us, that you wash us, strengthen us, and guide us, that you empower us to live a life worthy of our calling. In the way of Jesus, make us as water in a dry and thirsty world.

Establish us to be places of refreshment.

Root us and nurture us in love, that with all your people, that we may rightly and justly serve you.

Fill us with your fullness that our lives may overflow in service and love. Amen.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

In Thanksgiving for all we have received, we enlist in the ministry Christ demonstrated and inspired. We have nothing apart from God's gifts. We have everything when we allow God's Spirit to work through us. This offering demonstrates the depth of our awareness.

***THE LORD'S PRAYER:**

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

***HOLY COMUNION:**

May the Creator of heaven and earth be with you!
And also with you!

People of God, lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the One who gave his Heart to heal us.

Let us give thanks to the One who made everything and called it 'good'.

How right it is to give our thanks and praise to the One who calls us 'Beloved.'

Into the shadows of silence, you, Gracious God, hummed

the first chords of creation, your Word crafting the sun to welcome each day, the moon and stars to guide the night. You cradled us in your love and joy in a garden where we could have lived with you forever.

But we continue shaping our own foolish dreams, chasing after sin, and always being caught. Prophets came, sent from your heart to call us back to you, but we could not hear them over the shouts of our desires. So, when we had no hope, you sent your Child, Jesus, the One who was willing to take on anything, and everything, which kept us from you. With our beloved sisters and brothers in every time and place, we rejoice in your love:

Holy, holy, holy! Creator of Light and life.

Heaven and earth sing forever of your love and joy.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who comes to be baptized by water and the Holy Spirit.

Hosanna in the highest!

On this day we remember our baptism, as we proclaim the life which was Jesus' and the hope which is ours in that mystery we call faith:

**Bathed in your tears, Christ died for us;
washed in the resurrection waters, Christ rose for us;
bringing the waters of life to us, Christ will come again.**

As your Spirit changed chaos into creation,
may these simple gifts of the bread and the cup
be transformed into your life and peace for us.

**We come to this table, your baptized and beloved
children, hungry for your hope in our lives, yearning for
your peace to fill us.**

**And when we have been fed by you,
we would go forth into the world**

**to bring the homeless off lonely streets,
to feed the hungry with more than clichés,
to welcome the stranger as our sister,
to embrace the outcast as our brother.**

Today we are gathered as your family
around the Table of grace, as we will join our hearts
together, praising you through all eternity
Amen.

SHARING THE ELEMENTS:

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:

**Creator God, we thank you for your presence in the
simplicity and splendor of this holy meal. By the power
of your Holy Spirit, unite us with all whom Christ
welcomes, that we may be the servant church of the
servant Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.**

***BENEDICTION:**

Thank you, God, for blessing us with memories of Jesus'
baptism and ours.

Thank you for removing our reluctance, doubt, and fears,
for replacing them with courage and commission. We go
forth with your calling, direction, and blessing. Amen.