

Baptism of the Lord - B - 2021
Isa.55.1-11///1 John 5.1-9///Mark 1.7-11

→it can be said that baptism may be both the most unifying and the most divisive rite in the Christian faith

→for most of us, baptism takes place near the beginning of life...

→///...water is either poured or we are immersed in a basin of water as infants...in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit announcing the beginning of our Christian journey.

→for others...baptism takes place much later in the journey...in many Protestant and Pentecostal churches an individual is totally immersed in a pool of water at a much later age.

→these deeply believe that baptism follows after a person's personal confession that Jesus Christ is Lord...

→[but] whatever the case may be...**baptism is the moment when we are birthed into a community of faith by a physical splash...**

→put frankly...there is no way to experience baptism without coming out on the other sidedripping wet...

→baptism and water are inseparably linked to each other

→and the scripture readings today from Isaiah, Mark and the first letter of John all speak of water in profound terms...

→we enter the journey of life through the waters of birth...and cannot exist without it.

→the earth is nourished by rain and dimpled by streams, rivers, lakes and oceans...and after air, water is the most precious required elements to sustain our lives.

→so what is God saying to us today as we celebrate the baptism of the Lord?

→first and foremost I believe is the reminder to us that God is the giver of all life.

→when a person is baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we confess that all life, in all its wonder, complexity, and beauty is a gift from God.

→and we should be reminded that it does us well to honor the sanctity of life because in doing so...we honor the giver of all life...

→and yet today...more and more people seem to live as if life springs from every other imaginable source except from God.

→even though every poll taken in our country reveals that we overwhelmingly declare our belief in God...fewer and fewer these days live in ways that honor God's life, God's values, and God's presence, much less God's call to faithfulness.

→the prophet today...shouts God's invitation to "come to the waters"...an invitation given to every one of us at our baptism and throughout our Christian journey...yet fewer and fewer people these days seem to be responding to that invitation.

→when you consider...the violence, corruption, inequality, division, and conflicts being played out daily in our homes, families, communities, and even in our politics,

→and when less and less people think it not important to practice their faith...or remain a part of the Church... it is difficult to see the invitation of God to “*come to the waters*” and even harder to live it

→yet baptism continually calls us...to the waters...not only on a given day and place...but throughout our entire lives.

→... so what **is** God saying to us today as we celebrate the baptism of the Lord?

→...I believe “coming to the waters” celebrates the “newness” in ourselves and others....

→it is the awareness that no matter how difficult and dark life’s circumstances may be or become...there is always a newness for us to celebrate and embrace.

--a new attitude...a new commitment...a new faithfulness to prayer, worship, and “being” is always a possibility...

→beyond that, however... “*the new-ness*” is living fully aware that as a baptized person we are dripping wet with God’s grace...called to be his people and part of his family.

→when our Lord came to John to be baptized...his very presence in the muddy Jordan River said to all who were there... “God is doing something ‘**new**’ in our world...that we need to celebrate, embrace and cherish.”

→as baptized people...we need to continually celebrate the “new” that is a part of each one of us.

→and finally what is God saying to us today as we celebrate the baptism of the Lord?

→I believe he is telling us that we belong to each other even in the midst of our divisions and differences.

Without a doubt we may see life and our mission through lenses of different colors...but no matter what may happen or come our way...no matter what may influence, or impact us, or change us...all of us, baptized in Christ are dripping wet with God's mercy and blessings.

→so where does this leave us on this day when we celebrate the baptism of the Lord and the challenges of our own baptism.

→we are still dripping wet...living out the confession of our faith and the invitation to "come to the waters."

→as our Lord was baptized as a sign of his commitment to God...we remember that we too have been committed to God [as well]

---dripping wet in faith... as a community of believers...celebrating the "new" in each of us...and always being called....to come to the waters!