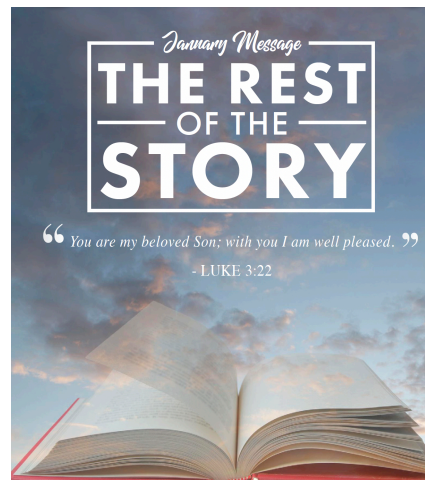


THE REST OF THE STORY January Message Series

January 9, 2022
Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

*IS 42:1-4, 6-7 or IS 40:1-5, 9-11;
TI 2:11-14; 3: 4-7; LK 3:15-16; 21-22*



Gospel of Luke

*The people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying,
“I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming.
I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals.
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”*

*After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying,
heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove.
And a voice came from heaven,
“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”*

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

This weekend we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord, a feast that is the bridge between the incarnation narrative of Christ’s story, the accounts of his ministry, and the penultimate chapter of the salvation story of Easter.

The Gospel this week marks the beginning of his ministry. And right from the beginning his story was placed in the context of God’s big story. Scripture tells us:

Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Jesus’ calling was experienced in a vivid, transforming way. It fulfilled him and set his feet on the path from which he would never deviate, even to his death on a cross. It set him on Mission. The Gospels tell us that he went immediately from the scene of his revelation to the desert, there to sort out what all of this meant and to strengthen himself with the power that God would give him. This is yet another part of his baptism experience—and the rest of the story.

DISCUSSION

1. Consider the first 2 readings this week – Old and New Testament work together as God’s story of His people – the triumphs, the sorrows, the hopes, the promises. How does Isaiah in his prophesy preview the John the Baptist story? The story of the coming of Christ? How are the words of Isaiah fulfilled through the Gospel, and affirmed in Paul’s writings?

2. Luke’s account is striking because it underplays the actual water by baptism event at the hand of John. Instead, it highlights the prayer of Jesus, the descent of the Spirit and the heavenly voice proclaiming God’s beloved Son – all this as he prepares to go out in the world. Have you prayed about your purpose lately? Have you experienced Holy Spirit “dove” moments following prayer?

3. Consider your baptism – and even if you were too young at the time to remember your baptism day – how do you reflect on the meaning of your baptism and the place it has in your early narrative? Maybe you are yet to be immersed in the holy waters of baptism. Consider what baptism can mean to start a new chapter in your life? How do you connect baptism to your mission?

LIVING THE MESSAGE: IN YOUR BEGINNING

We love stories – because we are part of a larger story. Scripture tells the story of God and how he interacts with humanity through the course of salvation history. When we see our lives as a story and part of God’s larger story, it brings greater meaning to our life and our choices – our purpose.

- **First**, we hope you will come to know your own story – better. Because the better you know your story looking back, the better you will be able to shape it moving forward.
- **Second**, as you come to know your own story better... we hope you can begin to see God’s hand and design through it. We hope that you discover some of the seemingly random things, even the painful, fearful or challenging things, have a purpose and a point.
- **Third**, we hope you learn how your story has the ability to help and influence others – how God wants to use your story, how we want to hear you tell your story – and most assuredly be with you to write the next chapter and the next and the next.
- **Fourth**, we want to remind ourselves that our stories connect us as the body of Christ – on mission, in communion.

The “beginning” of your story is important, it sets us on a path, it gives us context. But it’s not the most important part – it’s what happens next, how you write the rest of the story.

Reflect on your early life – and how God formed you. **PERSONAL REFLECTION EXERCISE** – See separate attachment. Begin or take home for next week.

As you reflect on your story, keep in mind what God has already told you...

You are my beloved - with you I am well pleased

This is where your story begins too. You are the beloved son or daughter of God – maybe He’s not always pleased with everything you do, but He is pleased with you.