

Dunk Your Babies

Matthew 3:13-17

Next Steps

OPENING PRAYER:

Give us, O Lord, a steadfast heart, which no unworthy affection may drag downward. Give us an unconquered heart, which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside. Bestow on us also, O Lord our God, understanding to know you, diligence to seek you, wisdom to find you and a faithfulness that may finally embrace you. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. --Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

BREAKING THE ICE:

- What did you agree or disagree with in the sermon this week?
- Was there something new that you learned this week?
- What do you know about your own baptism?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read Matthew 3:13-17.

If you have a peek at the chapter right before Matthew chapter 3, you'll see that there is a large gap in time between the story in chapter 2 of Joseph fleeing with Mary and Jesus to Egypt and then eventually to Nazareth. There is very little written in the scriptures about Jesus' growing years. Just as Jesus experienced impactful events as a very young child, sometimes people go through the powerful experience of being baptized as small children, when they are not aware of the event and have no memory of it later. Sometimes, we then pay very little attention to baptism's meaning in our lives until we become teenagers and sometimes go through confirmation processes or become adults and begin the process of considering baptism for our own children.

- How might this gap in the story in Matthew relate to your own experience with baptism?

In Matthew 3, verses 11-12, John the Baptist says that he baptizes with water for repentance. He also says that the one who comes after him who is more powerful than he is will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.

- What do you make of the fact that baptism is spoken about with these terms of repentance and the Holy Spirit and fire, and then we see Jesus, himself, being baptized in ordinary old water? How do you relate to the ideas of repentance, the Holy Spirit, fire, and being baptized in the same ordinary water that we drink and wash with?
- What is weird about baptism that makes the ordinary water extraordinary?

Notice that Jesus does not baptize himself. In verse 15, he talks about how it's proper for "us" to do this. Perhaps he was describing himself and John the Baptist - but discussing how we *share* in baptism is different from a singular person's experience of diving into water by themselves.

- What does the presence of *community* mean to you, as you consider the meaning of baptism to Jesus and to yourself?

Verses 16 and 17 make up one of a few key scripture passages that show the fullness of the Trinity - God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, together in one scene.

- How does God's presence gathered in all of its fullness feel to you? Why do you think this moment was deemed to be so special?
- How does it make you feel for Jesus to be called beloved and to be named as a part of God's family? How would it make you feel to hear those words prayed over you?

NEXT STEPS:

- If you have not been baptized, what questions do you still have about baptism that would be helpful to discuss?

- If you have been baptized already, how might reflecting on this passage lead you to experience the grace of your baptism more tangibly every day of your life?
- How might this passage impact your perspective when you witness the baptisms of others?
- What role do you feel that you play in those baptisms?

4 EASY QUESTIONS FOR PARENTAL DISCUSSIONS WITH KIDS:

1. If you have been baptized, share with your child stories about your own baptism and what baptism means to you.
2. If you have pictures or videos of your child's baptism, look at them together and talk about what they mean to you both.
3. Each time you touch water this week - washing hands, having a bath, drinking a glass, ask your child - how can touching and drinking water remind you that God loves and forgives you?
4. When we're having a hard day, sometimes we say it feels like we're drowning. How can our baptism remind us that drowning in sadness, or fear, or guilt is never the end of our story with God?

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

Strength for your Church, integrity for our nations and peace for the world - for these things we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. --Conine,